
Community Justice Committees

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Community Justice Committee (CJC)?

A CJC is a group of citizen volunteers who work with Police and other justice professionals to provide justice services in their community.

What do CJC's do?

The CJC's workload varies depending upon the needs and priorities of a particular community. They complement the existing justice system and provide for direct citizen involvement. The work of a CJC might include activities such as those described below:

- **Advisory activities** such as:
 - suggesting to their local government ways to make their community safer;
 - at the request of the Youth Court, providing sentencing recommendations for offenders who have been found guilty; and
 - advising the Police, Crown Prosecutor, the head of the local Legal Aid Office and other justice system officials on matters related to justice in the community.
- **Public education activities** such as:
 - working with local organizations to establish youth recreation programs;
 - speaking to local schools, service and community groups about CJCs; and
 - preparing articles for the local paper about the CJC and information booklets for the public.
- **Crime prevention activities** such as:
 - working with local organizations to establish youth recreation programs;
 - developing, in partnership with local schools, a peer mediation program for resolving conflicts between students; and
 - organizing seminars on ways to burglar-proof homes or businesses.
- **Conflict resolution activities** which usually means bringing the victim of a crime and the offender together and using conflict resolution processes to help them reach an agreement about how the offender should be held accountable for the offending behaviour.

Why are communities establishing CJCs?

Saskatchewan communities are establishing CJCs because citizens and communities want a larger role in the justice system. CJCs are one way of increasing access to the justice system.

Who serves on a CJC?

The members of a CJC are citizen volunteers from the local community. The CJC as a whole should be representative of the community in terms of age, gender and race/culture.

To become members of a CJC, individuals must be known and respected within the community. They must have no outstanding criminal charges, and must never have been convicted of domestic violence, child abuse or sexual assault.

How are the members of a CJC selected?

A CJC usually has between five and 10 members. The process that is used to select the members of a CJC varies from one community to the next. The process used should:

- inform the community as a whole about the intent to establish a CJC;
- give community members information about the purpose and role of the CJC and about the responsibilities of individual members; and
- give community members who are interested in serving on the CJC ample opportunities to make their interest known.

Two examples of processes that may be used to select the members of a CJC are:

- in small communities, the Mayor and Council (or other local government officials) ask for volunteers. People who are interested let the Mayor and Council know by writing or phoning. The Mayor and Council review all applications, interview as necessary, and select the applicants who are most qualified;
- the various community groups appoint members. For example, the Chamber of Commerce, Friendship Centre, Ministerial Association, Block Parents, Neighbourhood Watch, High School and Seniors' Centre might each appoint one member.

Regardless of the process used to select them, potential members of a CJC are required to provide letters of reference, to submit to a Police Records Check and to allow the Department of Community Resources and Employment (DCRE) to check their records for a history of child abuse or neglect.

In addition to the members selected through one of the processes described above, the CJC usually includes a representative of the local Police and a representative of the Department of Corrections and Public Safety (CPS) or Saskatchewan Justice.

Do the members of a CJC get paid?

No, the members of a CJC do not get paid. CJC members are volunteers who contribute their time and knowledge to their communities.

The committee as a whole will probably have administrative expenses such as postage, photocopying and long-distance telephone calls. Local agencies that support the work of the CJC such as CPS, Saskatchewan Justice and the Police may cover these expenses. Some CJCs do community fundraising and accept donations from service clubs and businesses to support their work.

Must CJs be incorporated under the Non-Profit Corporations Act?

CJs that plan to handle cases in which the law has been broken must be incorporated as non-profit charitable corporations under the Non-Profit Corporations Act. Incorporation is not necessary for other work such as advisory, public education and crime prevention activities.

Does a CJC have to be appointed by Saskatchewan's Attorney General?

If a CJC plans to handle cases in which the law has been broken, it must be officially appointed by the Attorney General of Saskatchewan. Appointment is not necessary for other work such as advisory, public education and crime prevention activities.

Under what legislation are CJs appointed?

The legal basis of a CJC's work with youth aged 12 to 17 inclusive is Section 18 of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA), and the Youth Justice Administration Act (YJAA). Liability protection to CJC's dealing with youth cases is provided through the YJAA.

The legal basis of a CJC's work with adults is through a service agreement with Saskatchewan Justice and Section 717 of the *Canadian Criminal Code*. Liability protection to CJs dealing with adult cases is provided through Section 15 of the Correctional Services Act.

Do CJs work with children under 12 years of age?

CJs may work with children under 12 years of age, if requested to do so by the child's parents or guardians. In this situation, the parents or guardians must provide informed, written consent. A CJC does not have to be incorporated as a non-profit corporation or appointed by the Attorney General of Saskatchewan to work with children under 12 years of age.

How does a community group get official appointment as a CJC?

The following is a brief outline of the appointment process. More detailed information and the necessary forms are available in Section 3, *Community Justice Committee - Application Kit*.

1. Develop a constitution for your CJC;
2. Become incorporated as a non-profit charitable corporation;
3. Get at least five letters of support for your CJC (two from agencies within the justice system and three from community organizations);
4. Get applications from the founding members along with their required letters of reference; and
5. Submit copies of the items listed above along with a form requesting appointment as a CJC to the Regional Director of CPS for your area.

Staff of CPS and/or Saskatchewan Justice will be available to help you during the application process. Contact the Regional Director of CPS in your area for more information. When your group is appointed as a CJC, you will receive an official letter of appointment from the Attorney General of Saskatchewan. You will also receive a letter from the Minister of CPS

acknowledging the appointment.

What types of cases do CJs handle?

CJs only handle cases in which the offender admits responsibility for an offence. They do not determine guilt or innocence. CJs do not handle any of the following types of cases:

- incidents involving the use of or threatened use of a weapon;
- violence against the person cases (adult or child) (where the Crown Prosecutor elects to proceed by way of indictment);
- child sexual abuse cases;
- sexual assault cases (where the Crown Prosecutor elects to proceed by way of indictment);
- perjury;
- driving while disqualified cases;
- all *Canadian Criminal Code* driving offences where alcohol was a contributing factor;
- any federal offence other than *Canadian Criminal Code* offences; and
- all family violence cases.

How are cases referred to the CJC?

Cases involving adults and young offenders (youth aged 12 to 17 inclusive) are referred by the Police or the Crown Prosecutor based on the nature of the offence and the background of the offender. Cases involving children under 12 are referred by their parents or guardians.

What are the advantages of having a case handled by a CJC?

CJs are a way to involve citizens in creating safe communities. CJs take a restorative approach to justice - an approach that focuses on restoring harmony in the community and restoring ownership of justice processes to the community.

In cases handled by a CJC, the emphasis is on righting the wrong that has been done in a face to face process wherever possible. The offender is held responsible to the victim and to the community for his or her unlawful behaviour, and is required to undertake actions to put things right again. Putting things right often involves restitution, for example, restoring a park damaged during a party to its original condition, or using earnings from a part-time job to pay for damage caused by vandalism. It often involves actions to help heal the victim's sense of anger and hurt such as public apologies or personal service to the victim. It might involve community service such as picking litter in a park, or volunteering in a hospital or senior citizens' lodge to help heal the wrong done to the community.

Putting things right also sometimes means that the offender must take actions to ensure that she or he does not re-offend. Examples of these kinds of actions include successfully completing a drug or alcohol treatment program or an anger management program, or remaining school.

When a case is handled by a CJC, victims describe the incident and tell how it affected them. They also have an opportunity to have a say in the outcome of the case, if they wish. Victims who have worked with CJs report that they appreciated the involvement the process allowed

them. As a result, victim satisfaction has been high.

What process does a CJC use to resolve cases?

The actual process used to resolve cases varies depending upon the nature of the case and the focus of the CJC in that particular community. CJCs use several different types of conflict resolution processes to bring victim and offenders (and sometimes their friends and families) together. All the processes used by CJCs have two things in common. They give the victim and the offender an opportunity to describe the incident and its impact, and they require that the offender undertake actions to make right the wrong that she or he has done.

For more details about the way that cases are handled, see Section 2, *The Work of a Community Justice Committee*.

Is information about cases and their resolution confidential?

Yes, all CJC members take an oath of confidentiality which forbids them from talking about individual cases with anyone outside the committee and the people directly involved with the case. When handling cases where the offender is between the ages of 12 and 17 inclusive, they are also legally bound by the requirements of the YCJA. The people who get information about a specific case vary depending upon the nature of the case but may include the Police, the Prosecutor, the victim, the offender and his/her family, and Youth Workers or Social Workers who provide information about the victim and/or offender's family circumstances.

What support is available for CJCs?

Staff at the Regional Offices of CPS and staff from the Community Services Branch of Saskatchewan Justice will guide prospective CJCs through the application process and will give them support as they get up and running.

From time to time CPS and Saskatchewan Justice will offer training courses for CJC members on topics such as the youth justice system and conflict resolution processes.

How can we get a CJC started?

The first two steps in establishing a CJC are to:

- **establish a planning committee.** Parents, youth, Police, staff of CPS and Saskatchewan Justice, representatives of community groups and businesspeople are often represented on planning committees. The Police and the Crown Prosecutor play key roles in the justice system and it is important to involve them right from the beginning. Their involvement, cooperation and support is essential for any CJC that plans to handle cases. Talk to the Mayor and Council, the students and staff at the high school, and the community as a whole to get input and support; and
- **contact the closest Regional Office of CPS** or the Community Services Division of Saskatchewan Justice. Staff of these two agencies will help you plan and guide you through the process of incorporation and appointment.

For more information about the process of forming a CJC, refer to Section 3, *Community Justice Committee - Application Kit*.

For more information about Community Justice Committees contact:

Director
Community Services Branch
Saskatchewan Justice
10th Floor, 1874 Scarth Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3V7
Tel: (306)787-5096
Fax: (306)787-0078

Program Manager
Alternative Measures
Young Offender Programs Division
Department of Corrections and Public Safety
7th Floor, 1874 Scarth Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3V7
Tel: (306)787-6290
Fax: (306)798-0012
(Or the Regional Director of Corrections and Public
Safety for your area.)

The publications are available on this website or from the addresses above. Publications about Community Justice Committees include:

- Community Justice Committees – Frequently Asked Questions;
- Community Justice Committee – Application Kit;
- The Work of a Community Justice Committee; and
- Community Justice Committee – Year-End Reporting.