

Susan Cherry, Executive Director, St. Johnsbury Community Restorative Justice Center
Chair of Legislative Committee, Community Justice Network of Vermont

The recommendations for changes to 24 V.S.A. and 28 V.S.A. are related to the changes that have evolved in the establishment of viable Community Justice Centers (CJC) throughout Vermont.

- Initially Reparative Boards were spread around the State with support from the Department of Corrections. These Reparative Boards initially had an advisory board in each community. Since 2000, the Reparative Boards have evolved into Community Justice Centers that respond in a broader way to the needs of each community.
 - Based upon the needs of Law Enforcement
 - Based upon the needs of the community (through forums)
 - Based upon the needs of the court
 - Based upon the needs of individual municipalities.
- There are now 20 Community Justice Centers
 - Some are housed within a municipality
 - Some are housed within a local police department
 - Some are individual non-profits
 - Some are housed within a community non-profit.
- This bill changes the language to reflect these changes in administration and structure
- Duties changed to Scope of Work – since the response of CJC's to community need differs among CJC's – with certain similar and consistent scopes of work.
- Referrals from law enforcement and State's Attorneys allow for a case to be diverted to a CJC prior to filing a charge.
- The language changes in Sec. 5. 28 V.S.A. creates consistency with naming the formerly named Reparative Boards to Restorative Justice Panels.
- The DOC Commissioner no longer appoints volunteers – due to the growth of the CJC's. Volunteers are still vetted through the Volunteer Services Coordinator and background checks are performed on each volunteer. This is still allowing for the volunteers to be covered as if they were workers (signing work agreement) for DOC – including PREA (Rape elimination Act).
- The structure of each RJ Panel is now under the CJC and is included in the structure and operational procedures that are sent to DOC as part of the CJC operating grant deliverables.
- Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) – save approximately \$27,000 per year per CoSA Core member. This is the reentry program that started around 2010.