



How is a Group Conference run?

Before the Conference, the Convenor identifies and prepares the participants. For the conference to be successful, it is important that the young person accepts responsibility, is willing to talk about what happened and admits it was the wrong thing to do. The Convenor will meet with the young person to ensure this is the case before the process proceeds any further. A Victims of Crime NT (VOC NT) Victim Support Officer will contact the victim to discuss the process with them, to ensure they understand what is involved and whether they are willing to participate.

During the Conference, the Convenor guides participants through a structured process to understand what happened and how people have been affected, and collectively agree on what can be done to repair the harm and set relations right. With the input of the victim and other participants, the young person prepares an Outcome Plan that says how they will make up for what they have done and the strategies they will put in place to not offend in the future. This plan is signed by all participants. The Conference itself usually takes around two hours, involving breaks and refreshments when required. The Convenor ensures that the process is safe for all participants and that everyone's voice is heard.

After the Conference, the young person is supported by the people identified in their Outcome Plan to work towards their goals. The Convenor submits a detailed report on the Conference to the Court, which includes information about the young person's engagement in the process and the agreements made as part of their Outcome Plan. The Court considers the Convenor's report and the young person's progress towards achieving their Outcome Plan when determining an appropriate sentence.



How do I make a referral?

A Judge in any of the Northern Territory's Children's Courts can refer a young person to Pre-Sentence Conferencing, under section 84 of the Youth Justice Act.

A referral is made after a court has found a young person guilty of an offence, and the referral can be made on the application of the young person or on the Court's initiative.

For more information, contact:

(08) 8952 4616

YJGC.Referrals@jss.org.au

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential. We believe that participants in our programs have the right to receive culturally sensitive services and to be their authentic self.

For more information, visit www.jss.org.au.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands that we live and work on in the Northern Territory, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge First Nations' peoples ongoing care for and connection to Country. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



Youth Justice Group Conferencing Program



**Justice and
crime prevention**



What is Youth Justice Group Conferencing?

Youth Justice Group Conferencing enables dialogue between young people who have offended, their victims and the wider community.

The program aims to divert young people from further or more serious offending.

It brings together those involved in or affected by an offence in a safe and structured space to discuss how the young person can make amends for the harm done.

Youth Justice Group Conferencing is a problem-solving approach to offending that is based on principles of restorative justice, which balance the needs of offenders, victims and the community.

Jesuit Social Services delivers Youth Justice Group Conferencing in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. We work in partnership with Elders, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and strong role models to ensure that our process is culturally safe, develops a young person's sense of identity, and strengthens their family and community connections.

Who is it for?

The program is for young people aged 10–17 years at the time of offending, who have:

- pledged guilty, or have been found guilty of, an offence(s)
- committed offences serious enough to warrant an order or a custodial sentence
- consented to participate, and
- been assessed as a suitable participant



Apologies in the form of artwork completed by young people, including a painting for an elderly victim who loved cats, and a painting for a victim who was a prominent local artist.

Who comes to a Group Conference?

A Group Conference is voluntary for all participants.

A Conference cannot proceed without the attendance of the:

- young person
- young person's lawyer
- Convenor (who facilitates the conference)

Victim participation

Ideally, the victim attends in person. However, if they do not wish to attend, they may choose to have their views represented by a trusted friend or a Victims of Crime NT (VOC NT) Victim Support Officer. If the victim does not attend, the victim and community impact may be represented by the VOC NT Victim Support Officer and/or an appropriate community representative.

Other participants

The safety of all participants is paramount and the Convenor will always seek to involve:

- family members and/or other support people for both the young person and the victim
- If relevant, a person with the appropriate cultural authority for the young person (for example, an Elder or Strong Role Model)

It is also highly preferable that the Conference is attended by the:

- Officer-in-Charge or other representative of NT Police

- young person's Youth Outreach and Engagement Officer (YOREO) (if applicable)
- other professionals working with the young person and their family (e.g. Territory Families or NGO case worker)

What are the benefits of Group Conferencing?

Youth Justice Group Conferencing helps to:

- divert the young person from more intensive court outcomes
- reduce frequency and seriousness of re-offending among young people referred to the program
- increase victim satisfaction with the criminal justice process
- engage a network of support for the young person
- effectively integrate young people into the community following the Conference process

What do participants say about Group Conferencing?

"It was like a wake-up call for me that I had to change and stop doing bad stuff and concentrate on my future." — Young person

"(The young person's circumstances) doesn't excuse the behaviour, but it gave me insight into the impact. I thought he was a hardened kid, but actually he was just struggling." — Victim

"I came angry but I am not now. You don't have a face of a criminal... You are a good kid. I can see it." — Victim