

# Social Development IS Crime Prevention: Lasting Solutions for Safer Communities | March 12-14, 2008

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## Thematic Session Summary

Session Title: Rethinking the Court System

Session #: C5

### 1. *Re-Cap the Main Challenges*

Obtaining “buy in” from all the stakeholders – judges, lawyers, Parole officers  
Cost vs. volume  
Societal perceptions/acceptance of current system  
Current system is adversarial  
Cultural shift necessary to make changes – move away from justice as a retributive tool  
We have a “legal” system and not a “justice” system  
Impact on ancillary services  
Seeing people in their current lifestyles and contexts  
Working with difficult to apply laws equally to everyone  
Preserving the “good” in the court system – what works?  
Courts are inappropriate tools for many things – dealing with societal problems  
Courts are more for damage control  
Offenders and appropriate sentencing  
Social engineering vs. due process  
Linkages between systems  
Low risk vs. high risk  
Are diversions and alternative measures working  
Length of time for trial dates  
Legal Aid  
Infrastructure  
Role of restorative justice  
Deterrence

### 2. *What are the Unique Challenges in Your Community?*

Rural/urban differences  
Cultural conflicts  
Transient populations  
Immigrant population  
Risk management – safety of those involved in working with clients of courts  
Relationship building amongst players in the system  
Getting voices heard – in communities to politicians  
Meeting needs - whose?  
Educate public on restorative justice – when is it appropriate  
Will RJ improve case load efficiency?  
Need for shift in thinking about this higher up in the system

Small communities do not have the ability to take on specialized courts

**3. *What outcomes would you like to see in your Community?***

Educating the public, politicians, community leaders

Determining the role of justice – “Process or Product”?

Rehabilitation (removing the stigma)

Community is everyone

Triage of risk of offenders (?)

Courts focus on serious risk offenders, rather than mis-behaviours (or socially unacceptable behaviours)

Develop alternative system to deal with what may not be criminal or harmful

Remove stigmatization of offenders and victims

**4. *Who are the stakeholders involved in realizing these outcomes***

Everyone

Interdisciplinary - developed “with” people

**5. *What strategies would you develop to achieve these outcomes and what resources do you need***

Compulsory volunteerism – to eliminate anti - social behaviours

Citizen engagement

Education of offenders

**6. *How is government involved in the success of these strategies?***

Consistent and long term funding