



Office of Restorative Practices

Report to the Legislature

February 2026

For more information contact:

Department of Children, Youth, and Families
Office of Restorative Practices, Economic Opportunity and Youth Services
444 Lafayette Rd
St. Paul, MN 55155-3802
612-431-3830
restorativepractices.dycf@state.mn.us
mn.gov/dcyf.mn.gov

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I. Executive summary

The Office of Restorative Practices (ORP) was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 2023 to promote restorative practices (see Appendix A) across systems serving children, youth, and families. In 2025, ORP focused on building statewide infrastructure, administering grant funding, coordinating community partnerships, and establishing Minnesota's first comprehensive map of restorative resources. On June 18, 2025, ORP transitioned to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

In partnership with the University of Minnesota's Liberation Lab, ORP completed a statewide assessment and the [2025 Minnesota Restorative Services Directory](#), identifying more than 200 programs and practitioners. This baseline confirmed strong community leadership while also revealing gaps in sustainable funding, training access, cross-system coordination, and evaluation approaches that reflect community definitions of success.

ORP administered its first statewide Restorative Practices Grant Program in September 2025, awarding \$8 million to 30 initiatives across Minnesota. Grants were reviewed by 51 trained community reviewers using standardized rubrics that assessed program quality, alignment with restorative principles, community need, and geographic distribution. Funding reached schools, Tribal Nations and county governments, youth-serving organizations, and community-based nonprofits.

Throughout 2025, ORP held regional engagement sessions, convened learning communities, and co-hosted a statewide gathering for restorative practitioners and youth. These activities not only strengthened relationships and knowledge sharing but also informed ongoing grant administration and statewide strategy. ORP staff additionally joined a Restorative Evaluation Community of Practice to advance culturally grounded and community-led evaluation frameworks.

ORP identified five priority areas to guide its work in 2026. These priorities were informed by statewide engagement and strategic planning, including regional sessions, Tribal consultations, practitioner learning communities, a statewide gathering, and a University of Minnesota landscape analysis. Together, these efforts ensure ORP's direction reflects community voice, practitioner experience, Tribal partnership, and long-term restorative ecosystem development (see Appendix A). **Looking forward, five priorities will guide ORP's continued development in 2026:**

- Sustaining and expanding multi-year restorative funding.
- Supporting statewide communications, convenings, and practitioner networks.
- Establishing coordinated training and capacity-building pathways.
- Strengthening local leadership through Restorative Practices Advisory Committees (RPACs; see Appendix A) development and Tribal partnerships.
- Advancing shared evaluation approaches that prioritize healing, accountability, and belonging.

II. Legislation

[Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 142A.76, subdivision 8 \(a\) and \(b\):](#)

Subd. 8 Report.

(a) By November 15 of each year, grantees must provide the following information to the director: (1) information on their program's impact on recidivism, public safety, and local financial investments in restorative practices; and (2) summary data on the amount of grant funds paid to restorative practice participants, as defined in section 595.02, subdivision 1b, paragraph (a), clause (2), and the purpose of the payment to the participants.

(b) By February 15 of each year, the director shall report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over public safety, human services, and education, on the work of the Office of Restorative Practices, any grants issued pursuant to this section, and the status of local restorative practices initiatives in the state that were reviewed in the previous year, and the information submitted under paragraph (a) for the previous year.

III. Introduction

Purpose of report

This report is submitted to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over public safety, human services, and education, pursuant to [Minn. Stat. §142A.76, subdivision 8](#). It provides an overview of the work of the Office of Restorative Practices during the previous year, including grants awarded and the status of local restorative practices initiatives reviewed across the state. Funds were awarded on September 1, 2025, and, consistent with the reporting requirements in Minn. Stat. §142A.76, grantees have not yet submitted the outcome data required under subd. 8(a); those outcomes will be included in the next annual report.

This report covers the activities of the Office of Restorative Practices from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025. As required by statute, it was prepared by Alicia B. Nichols, LSW, Director of ORP, with insights and contributions from ORP staff, community practitioners, system partners, and restorative leaders across Minnesota whose collaboration and shared wisdom informed its findings and recommendations.

IV. Office of Restorative Practices

Establishment of the Office

ORP was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 2023 under [Minn. Stat. §142A.76](#) to promote restorative approaches across systems that serve children, youth, and families. Its statutory duties include:

- Advancing restorative practices statewide.
- Administering and evaluating grant programs designed to expand restorative practice efforts.
- Supporting local Restorative Practices Advisory Committees (RPACs) to strengthen community leadership and coordination.

Additionally, ORP is responsible for developing and maintaining statewide communications and training networks to build shared understanding and capacity, as well as conducting and commissioning research to inform policy, practice, and continuous improvement of restorative models throughout Minnesota.

ORP was initially established within the Department of Public Safety’s Office of Justice Programs (DPS-OJP) with the understanding that it would transition to the newly forming Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) once the new agency was operational. Housing ORP at DCYF enables stronger integration with youth development programs, school-based restorative efforts, child welfare transformation initiatives, and community violence intervention strategies—all of which benefit from restorative approaches that emphasize relationship-building, accountability, and repair.

On June 18, 2025, ORP officially moved to DCYF and joined the Economic Opportunity and Youth Services Administration, positioning the office to more effectively collaborate with partners, expand statewide infrastructure, and support restorative practices across diverse systems and communities.

Leadership and Organizational Development

ORP hired its inaugural director in August 2024 to establish the foundational infrastructure of the newly created office and guide the early implementation of its statewide mission. Shortly thereafter, a grant coordinator position was added to manage the administration of the restorative practices grant funds and support the office's growing portfolio of community-based partnerships. Following the departure of the inaugural director in April 2025, Alicia B. Nichols, LSW, was appointed as the new director on July 2, 2025. Under her leadership, ORP continues to build on its early progress by advancing equity-centered restorative practices across Minnesota and strengthening collaboration among local, tribal, and state partners.

Strategic Planning

In early 2025, ORP partnered with the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) to support the agency's initial planning and implementation efforts. IIRP attended and facilitated portions of a statewide Priorities Workshop held January 17, 2025, and participated in follow-up discussions on February 6, 2025. Through these engagements, participants identified three top priorities for ORP's early work:

1. Integrating restorative practices and restorative justice into state and local systems.
2. Increasing public and community awareness of restorative approaches; and
3. Establishing consistent, statewide training to build common understanding, language, and capacity.

IIRP highlighted several strengths emerging in ORP's early development, including leadership with deep restorative justice experience, inclusive community engagement strategies, and the formation of local advisory committees across jurisdictions. The report also noted the agency's early commitment to honoring cultural sovereignty and elevating diverse voices, including Indigenous, immigrant, and faith communities.

Participants and IIRP also identified early challenges, such as navigating shifting political dynamics and funding uncertainty, addressing growing social division, and ensuring fuller inclusion of education stakeholders. They emphasized that proactive restorative practices—those that build trust and connection before harm occurs—should be elevated alongside responsive practices.

Looking ahead, IIRP encouraged ORP to focus on:

- Expanding proactive community-based restorative practices to increase impact and public understanding.
- Developing consistent baseline and trainer-of-trainers models to grow statewide capacity.

- Supporting local evaluation methods that reflect community definitions of success, including both outputs and outcomes; and
- Establishing clear expectations and sustainability strategies for grants and funding.

This collaboration provided ORP with actionable insights, affirmed emerging strengths, and outlined considerations that can inform statewide implementation, community partnership, and long-term effectiveness.

V. Restorative Practices in Minnesota

Overview of the Minnesota Restorative Practices Landscape

As a newly formed office, ORP commissioned a statewide assessment to gain a clearer understanding of the restorative practices (RP) landscape across Minnesota. The report, [State of Restorative Practices in Minnesota in 2025](#), was completed by the University of Minnesota's Liberation Lab in June 2025 and serves as a foundational baseline to inform the ORP's future direction.

The report documents what existed prior to the ORP's formation and identifies the needs, strengths, and opportunities within Minnesota's restorative ecosystem that the ORP can help address as it becomes an integral part of the state's restorative practices landscape.

The report recommends that the ORP and Legislature focus on five key areas:

- Improving communication and coordination among practitioners and agencies.
- Expanding funding and sustainability, especially investments in rural programs and community-based practitioners with strong local ties and demonstrated effectiveness in addressing longstanding community needs.
- Supporting community self-determination through Restorative Practices Advisory Committees (RPACs).
- Developing evaluation and reporting systems grounded in community-defined outcomes; and
- Maintaining an updated Restorative Services Directory as a living, public resource.

It also calls for regular statewide convenings and recurring scans of the restorative landscape every three to five years to monitor growth and impact. Ultimately, the report positions Minnesota at a pivotal moment ready to build on its community-led foundation to create a coherent, equitable, and sustainable restorative practices ecosystem statewide.

2025 Minnesota Restorative Services Directory

In partnership with community researchers at the University of Minnesota’s Liberation Lab, ORP commissioned and completed the [Minnesota Restorative Services Directory \(2025\)](#) a comprehensive statewide mapping of restorative programs, practitioners, and service providers. The directory was designed to connect practitioners and organizations across Minnesota, inform communities and state agencies about local restorative resources, and support grantmaking and RPAC planning by identifying existing infrastructure and gaps.

Through this effort, more than 200 practitioners and organizations were identified, spanning education, justice, youth, family, and community sectors. The findings highlight leadership grounded in lived experience and strong rural participation, underscoring the diversity and statewide reach of restorative practices. Importantly, the directory includes both formal programs and community-based practitioners who are often excluded from institutional databases, ensuring a more accurate and inclusive representation of Minnesota’s restorative ecosystem.

The directory is now publicly available online and will be maintained by the ORP as a living, searchable resource to strengthen connection, collaboration, and coordination among restorative practitioners and partners statewide.

Supporting the Expansion of Restorative Practices

Community and System Engagement

Over the past year, ORP actively engaged practitioners, community partners, and state agencies to strengthen Minnesota’s restorative ecosystem. ORP convened regional and statewide listening sessions, facilitated learning communities, and supported cross-sector collaboration among schools, Tribal Nations, community-based organizations, courts, and youth-serving systems. In May 2025, ORP co-hosted a statewide gathering of restorative practitioners and youth leaders, creating space for shared learning, storytelling, and vision-building across generations and communities. ORP staff also joined a Restorative Practices Evaluation Community of Practice led by the University of Minnesota’s Liberation Lab to deepen collective understanding of restorative measurement and develop guidance for community-centered evaluation approaches.

These engagement activities were not merely relational—they directly informed ORP’s grant administration by surfacing community needs, lifting up effective local models, and clarifying where resources could have the greatest impact. By building trust-based relationships and creating ongoing spaces for connection, reflection, and peer support, ORP has helped nurture a more coordinated and resilient statewide network committed to advancing restorative approaches rooted in healing, accountability, and community well-being.

Building Partnerships with Tribal Nations

ORP recognizes that Tribal Nations have long-standing, sovereign traditions of restorative, relational, and community-based approaches to healing, accountability, and collective well-being. ORP approaches its work

with respect for Tribal sovereignty, cultural knowledge, and self-determination, and acknowledges that restorative practices have deep roots in Indigenous communities.

In alignment with this understanding, ORP participates in DCYF's Tribal consultations and shares information with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council to increase awareness of ORP's statutory role, resources, and activities, and to support opportunities for dialogue grounded in government-to-government relationships. These efforts are intended to ensure transparency, promote shared understanding, and create pathways for Tribal Nations to engage with ORP in ways that reflects their priorities and interests.

ORP seeks to engage with Tribal Nations in a spirit of listening, learning, and relationship-building to better understand how restorative practices are currently used within Tribal communities and how ORP's role, resources, and responsibilities might be aligned to support Tribal priorities—if and where that support is desired. ORP's intent is not to define restorative practices for Tribal Nations, but to explore how state-level resources, funding, training, and technical assistance may be responsive to Tribal-identified goals and approaches. As part of this engagement, ORP also seeks partnership with Tribal Nations to explore potential additional investments in restorative practice approaches within Tribal communities, consistent with Tribal priorities and self-determination.

Through these partnerships, ORP hopes to build ongoing, trust-based relationships that honor Tribal leadership and knowledge, create space for shared understanding, and support Tribal Nations in ways that are respectful, voluntary, and grounded in community-defined needs.

Grants Administration

In 2025, ORP then housed within the Department of Public Safety's Office of Justice Programs (DPS-OJP), administered its first Restorative Practices Grant Program. The program included two separate Requests for Proposals (RFPs): *Restorative Practices Initiatives (RPI) Grants* and the *Restorative Practices Advisory Committee (RPAC) Planning Grants*. A total of 61 applications were received—55 for RPI and six for RPAC Planning—requesting a combined \$20,282,952 in funding. This level of demand far exceeded the \$8 million appropriated for the program and reflects a substantial need for additional financial investment to support the expansion and sustainability of restorative practices statewide. Ultimately, 30 grants were awarded across twenty-two counties

(see Figure 1.), including 29 RPI and 1 RPAC Planning grant, distributing \$8,000,00 statewide, reaching 14 programs in Greater Minnesota and 16 in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Applications were reviewed by a panel of 51 trained community reviewers, supported by ORP and OJP staff, using standardized rubrics that assessed program quality, alignment with restorative principles, community need, and geographic equity. This review process emphasized shared decision-making and transparency, ensuring that funding decisions reflected community priorities as well as statutory intent.

Funded organizations included county attorneys’ offices, schools, and community-based nonprofits. Awards were structured to prioritize long-term sustainability and balance funding across geographic regions. ORP provided technical assistance throughout the application process, hosting three public information sessions and extending deadlines for communities still forming their RPACs. This approach ensured that the grant program modeled the core values of restorative practice, inclusivity, collaboration, and shared accountability, in both design and implementation.

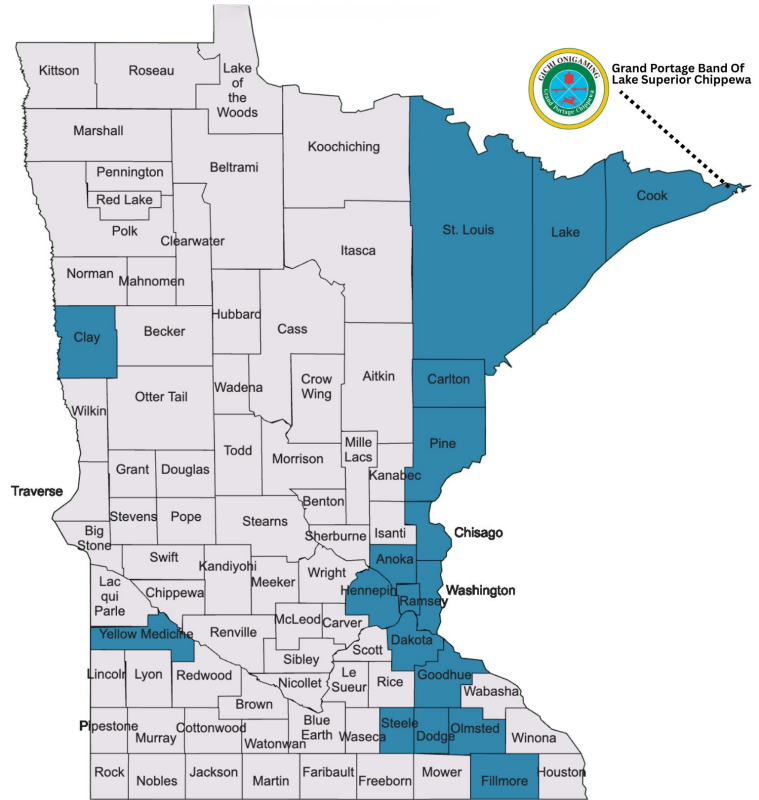


Figure 1. Geographic distribution of ORP grant funding across Minnesota in 2025

VI. Report recommendations

ORP identified five priority areas to guide its work in 2026, informed by statewide engagement and strategic planning, including regional sessions, Tribal consultations, practitioner learning communities, a statewide gathering, and a University of Minnesota landscape analysis. The following recommendations reflect those priorities and outline key strategies to strengthen Minnesota’s restorative practices ecosystem, ensuring communities across the state have access to resources, support, and healing-centered approaches. They emphasize sustained investment, coordinated statewide infrastructure, culturally grounded governance, high-quality training, and community-defined evaluation methods—providing a roadmap for building a durable, responsive, and relationship-centered restorative ecosystem.

Sustain and Expand Funding

- Continue and expand the Restorative Practices Grant Program.
- Shift toward multi-year funding cycles to promote stability and growth.
- Prioritize funding investments to rural programs and community-based practitioners with strong local ties and demonstrated effectiveness in addressing longstanding community-needs.
- Strengthen ORP's internal capacity for staffing, research, and evaluation to support grant administration and statewide monitoring.

Strengthen Statewide Infrastructure

- Maintain and annually update the Minnesota Restorative Services Directory.
- Support statewide convenings, communities of practice, and communications networks to foster connection, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration.

Invest in Training and Professional Development

- Establish a Minnesota Restorative Practices Training Collaborative.

Support Local and Tribal Governance

- Expand RPAC planning grants to enable local and tribal communities to design restorative systems that reflect their values.
- Ensure all ORP-supported work honors tribal sovereignty, cultural grounding, and community self-determination.

Advance Research and Evaluation

- Fund participatory research and shared data systems to assess reach, outcomes, and long-term impact.
- Use community-defined evaluation approaches, prioritizing learning and accountability over compliance metrics.

VII. Appendix A: Core Terms

Core Terms

Terminology Note:

Definitions of “restorative practices” vary across academic, community, and practice-based contexts due to differences in historical development, cultural application, and system use. For purposes of clarity and consistency in this report, core terms are defined in accordance with Minn. Stat. §142A.76.

Restorative Ecosystem: a coordinated network of people, practices, organizations, and systems that work together to prevent harm, address conflict, repair relationships, and support accountability and healing across community and institutional settings.

¹**Restorative Practices:** a practice within a program or policy that incorporates core restorative principles, including but not limited to voluntariness, prioritization of agreement by the people closest to the harm on what is needed to repair the harm, reintegration into the community, honesty, and respect. Restorative practices include but are not limited to victim-offender conferences, family group conferences, circles, community conferences, and other similar victim-centered practices.

²**Restorative Practices Advisory Committees (RPACs):** Restorative Practices Advisory Committees (RPACs) are community-based collaborative bodies established to support the use, growth, and sustainability of restorative practices within local jurisdictions (counties, Tribal Nations, or multi-county collaborations) in Minnesota. They play a pivotal role in advising how restorative approaches are shaped and implemented in communities and in partnership with state systems.

¹ Minn. Stat. § 142A.76, subd. 1 (2025) (definition of restorative practices).

² Minn. Stat. § 142A.76, subd. 6 (2025) (restorative practices advisory committees; membership and duties)