

FACT SHEET 2

PROMISING VICTIM RELATED PRACTICES IN PROBATION AND PAROLE



COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR VICTIM SERVICES IN COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

In order to effectively assist victims and survivors of crime, it is essential for probation and parole agencies to forge ongoing collaborative initiatives and partnerships with victim assistance agencies and with other entities that share a commitment to crime victims' rights and services. Over the past 2 decades, many strong partnerships have emerged to promote victims' rights and improve victim assistance in the post-sentencing phases of criminal and juvenile cases. These partnerships essentially help community corrections agencies to identify, assess, and address victims' needs throughout probation and parole processes.

DEFINING COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Various terms are utilized in community corrections and victim assistance to describe efforts that bring people together around a common cause. George Keiser (2008), former Chief of the National Institute of Corrections, Community Corrections Division, describes four key terms and their meanings:

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Some recurring words are often used in a very cavalier fashion to describe types of working relationships. It is important to be clear about the depth of involvement contained in the meaning of these various words, and then to use the appropriate word for the relevant circumstances. These words include *cooperation*, *coordination*, *collaboration*, and *partnership*.

COOPERATION

Cooperation does not require much depth of relationship from the parties involved. Typically, a couple of people identify how what they are doing in their organizations would benefit each other. They agree to share what they do, but are not required to do anything differently. The activities engaged in are very informal. No resources are transferred, and the life of those involved goes on much as it has. This may be the initial point of developing relationships between the involved organizations. A key element for initiating cooperation is personal trust.

COORDINATION

Like cooperation, the depth of involvement between organizations is not required to be great. The relationship tends to be more definitive with specific protocols or conventions commonly being established. The business of the various organizations does not change significantly. The number of people involved in the process is increased, and the participants are more cognizant of how their independent activities can be integrated for common benefit, or can influence the work of another organization. This level of working together requires more discipline and more formal structure in following the established protocols. The importance of integrity of the various participants and their activities becomes more apparent.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration introduces the concept of organizations coming together to create something new, commonly a new process. Generally, the organizations bring a business they already know well and identify how, by joint actions, they can redesign a process to their mutual benefit. There must not only be trust and integrity as a foundation, but the parties now need to understand the perspectives of the other collaborators' self-interest(s). This understanding suggests a greater depth of involvement between organizations. It is not merely exchanging information, but developing a sense of awareness for who the other parties are, what motivates them, and what they need out of working together. Unlike cooperation or coordination, for the first time something new is being developed through the relationship of organizations. Even with the increased intensity of involvement, the various organizations retain their independent identities.

PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is the bringing together of individuals or organizations to create a new entity. This may be the extreme extension of collaboration. The depth of involvement is reflected by a commitment referred to as ownership. No longer are there independent organizations agreeing to work together on some initiative as long as it is convenient. Nor is this a group of organizations buying into someone else's plan. With a partnership, there is an agreement to create something new which, through joint ownership, requires that the partners make it succeed. One measure of success is whether the partnership makes all the partners successful.

FIGURE #1

Identifying Victim Services in Your State or Jurisdiction

In many jurisdictions, a directory of victim services is readily available online or in a resource manual. Your prosecutor-based victim/witness program is a good place to start to identify potential partners for collaborative initiatives.

Another source is the Directory of Crime Victim Services, a website developed by the Office for Victims of Crime within the U.S. Department of Justice. The directory can help probation and parole agencies locate non-emergency crime victim services in the United States and abroad by location, type of victimization, service needed, and type of agency. It can be accessed at www.ovc.ncjrs.org/findvictimservices/search.asp.

**These links can be
accessed online at
www.navaa.org.**

The National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators (NAVAA) website also features a "statewide links" page with information about:

- State VOCA administrators;
- State victim compensation programs;
- Offices of the state attorneys general, most of which sponsor some type of crime victim services;
- General state victim coalitions;
- State domestic violence coalitions;
- State sexual assault coalitions;
- State offices of Mothers Against Drunk Driving;
- State chapters of Parents Of Murdered Children;
- State corrections departments, which often include a dedicated office for victim services;
- State juvenile justice agencies; and
- Juvenile justice-based victim services.

PARTNERSHIP IS THE BRINGING TOGETHER OF INDIVIDUALS OR ORGANIZATIONS TO CREATE A NEW ENTITY.

The development of collaborations and partnerships equates to a collective commitment for *permanent change* that can not only better assist victims and survivors of crime, but also contribute to community corrections agencies' missions to promote public safety.

THE PURPOSE OF PARTNERSHIPS

It is helpful to identify specific goals when creating partnerships with victim assistance and allied professional programs. Some examples of potential goals for these partnerships and collaborative initiatives are:

- Identifying and addressing gaps and potential duplication of community corrections-based victim services;
- Helping develop victim-centric policies and procedures for probation and parole agencies;
- Promoting awareness about available victim services in the community and facilitating the referral process;
- Generating awareness among both victims and the public about victims' specific rights in a jurisdiction, including their rights after offenders are sentenced;
- Educating the public about crime victim assistance and probation and parole services; and
- Providing training and cross-training among providers of community corrections and victim services about issues of mutual concern.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

There are over 10,000 victim assistance programs in the United States today that are important partners for probation and parole agencies. They fall into three categories:

- Community-based victim assistance programs;
- System-based victim assistance programs; and
- State coalitions and associations.

Community-based victim assistance programs serve a variety of crime victims, including victims who report crimes and go through the justice system as well as those who do not. Examples include:

- Rape crisis centers and sexual assault awareness programs;
- Programs and shelters for battered women and their children;
- Homicide support groups (such as Parents Of Murdered Children chapters);
- Drunk driving victim assistance programs (such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving);
- Children's advocacy centers that provide multidisciplinary services to victims of child abuse and neglect;

- Legal clinics that provide advice and, in some cases, representation to victims;
- Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs that advocate for abused and neglected children;
- Elder protection programs that assist victims of elder abuse and neglect;
- Specialized victim assistance programs, including those sponsored by institutions of higher education, schools, and businesses; and
- Multi-faith-based victim assistance programs, which are increasing in both number and scope of services, helping victims of different faiths to cope with the spiritual impact of crime and providing other support and assistance.

System-based victim assistance programs operate within the context of the criminal or juvenile justice system or may exist as separate state agencies. These programs oversee victim assistance programs, help victims understand and exercise their rights, and offer referrals to other victim assistance services. Examples include:

- Victim assistance programs in law enforcement, prosecutors' offices, courts, institutional corrections, and offices of state attorneys general;
- State victim compensation programs; and
- State Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) assistance agencies, which oversee the distribution of victim assistance funding authorized by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. This funding is gathered through fines, fees, and forfeitures collected from convicted federal offenders by the Crime Victims Fund, which is administered by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) within the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), an agency within the U.S. Department of Justice.

State coalitions and associations advocate for local victim-specific programs and issues. Examples include:

- General victim assistance coalitions that involve all types of crime victims and those who serve them;
- Sexual assault coalitions;
- Domestic violence coalitions;
- State offices of Mothers Against Drunk Driving;
- State associations of professionals in the victim/witness field;
- State offices of adult protective services;
- State offices of child protective services; and
- State victim assistance academies.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, BUSINESSES, AND OTHER ENTITIES

Probation and parole agencies also can find partners outside the victim services community for projects promoting crime victim assistance and community safety. Some potential allies are obvious, natural partners, and others require careful consideration of mutual concerns and issues.

In 2009, the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators (NAVAA) developed a tip sheet on “Expanding Community Outreach Efforts,” which identifies 150 potential partners in victim-related initiatives. Examples include:

- Civic organizations;
- County and municipal services;
- Public safety and justice agencies;
- Allied professions;
- Schools;
- Colleges and universities;
- Health and fitness organizations;
- Faith communities;
- Senior services;
- Youth organizations;
- Veterans organizations; and
- Miscellaneous groups.

The full document, “Expanding Your Community Outreach Efforts,” can be accessed at <http://cap.navaa.org/captips.html>.

KEY ELEMENTS FOR COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

UPDATING THE AGENCY MISSION STATEMENT

Probation and parole agencies have the opportunity to publicly incorporate victim issues into their major guiding statements, which sends a message that victims are considered “clients” of the agency and emphasizes the availability of services to assist them. For example, the mission statement of Dallas County (Texas) Community Supervision and Corrections agency is as follows:

Dallas County CSCD is committed to protecting society, serving victims and the community, and facilitating positive change in offender behavior through the use of evidence-based intervention strategies.

CREATING AN AGENCY VICTIM ADVISORY COUNCIL

Many community corrections agencies have established Victim Advisory Councils (VACs) to identify victims' most important needs, help develop policies and protocols for victim services, contribute to the implementation of victim/offender programming (such as victim/offender dialogue and victim awareness classes), and assist with staff training. To maximize the benefits of these activities, many VACs include representatives from a variety of community partner groups, including crime victims and survivors, system- and community-based victim service providers, and allied justice professionals. An example is the Crime Victims Advisory Committee of the Arizona Department of Corrections. (See Figure 2 for more information.)

In turn, probation and parole officials often serve on advisory committees sponsored by victim assistance organizations and coalitions at the state and local levels. Such committees address victims' rights and services and often are dedicated to addressing community corrections-specific issues, such as offender reentry and justice reinvestment.

When opportunities are not available for probation or parole professionals to serve on the advisory boards or committees of victim assistance organizations, joining these organizations can be an excellent way to share and receive information about services being provided to victims.

CREATING A VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Increasingly, probation and parole agencies are choosing to establish their own victim assistance programs with dedicated staff who work directly with victims. One example is the Victim Services Program of the District of Columbia Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), which offers full services to victims of crime. (See Figure 3 for more details about CSOSA's Victim Services Program.)

FIGURE #2

THE ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS CRIME VICTIMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) Crime Victim Advisory Committee was established to provide support to the ADC Victim Services Office. Composed of ADC staff as well as representatives from state and local victim services programs and coalitions, the Crime Victim Advisory Committee offers input into the development of ADC policies, programs, protocols, and staff training pertaining to victim assistance and support. The committee also serves as a liaison between ADC and Arizona's victim assistance and justice professional communities.

In some probation and parole agencies, staff members are assigned to assist victims as a collateral duty. For example, the Washington Department of Corrections has Community Victim Liaison staff who provide support to victims and community members at the local level across the state. They also train DOC staff and facilitate safety planning meetings through the agency's "Victim Wrap Around" process before high-risk offenders return to the community after incarceration. More information is available at www.doc.wa.gov/victims/.

Many agencies also partner with local victim assistance programs to help ensure that victims' rights to information, notification, participation, and safety are met. In West Virginia, for example, parole agents partner with local domestic violence protection agencies to conduct safety planning for victims of family violence.

UNDERSTANDING VICTIMS' RIGHTS

Across America, there are over 32,000 state constitutional and statutory laws that define and protect victims' rights (Edmunds and Seymour, 2006). In order to help victims make the most of these rights, probation and parole agencies must be aware of the laws that apply to their own agencies and jurisdictions.

One important resource for community corrections professionals about the rights of crime victims is the VictimLaw website. Developed with support from OVC, VictimLaw offers a comprehensive, user-friendly, online database of victims' rights statutes, tribal laws, constitutional amendments, court rules, administrative code provisions, and case summaries of related court decisions that is searchable by topic, term, and/or jurisdiction. VictimLaw can be accessed at www.victimlaw.org.

INFORMING AND EDUCATING VICTIMS AND THE PUBLIC

Access to basic information about victims' rights and services throughout the probation and/or parole supervision period can help victims—as well as victim service agencies—better understand an often complicated and confusing process. Probation and parole agencies use a variety of strategies to provide information about community supervision and the services they provide for victims. For example, they may develop written materials (such as brochures, fact sheets, and handbooks), promotional materials (such as posters, pens, pins, bookmarks, buttons, and bumper stickers), or presentations for public delivery.

Increasingly, agencies are using their websites to provide information about victim services. Some examples include:

- U.S. Parole Commission, Victim Witness Program, www.justice.gov/uspc/victim.htm
- Utah Board of Pardons and Parole, Online Information for Victims, <http://bop.utah.gov/victim-info-top-public-menu.html>
- Mississippi Department of Corrections, Division of Victim Services, *A Handbook for Victims of Crime in Mississippi*, www.mdcc.state.ms.us/handbook_for_victims_of_crime.htm

Additionally, some agencies are utilizing broadcast media to educate their communities, including crime victims, about the community supervision process and services for victims of crime. For

FIGURE #3

CSOSA VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM

Established in April 2001, the Victim Services Program of the District of Columbia Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) assists District residents who have been victims of domestic violence, sexual offenses, traffic- or alcohol-related crimes, or property crimes. The program works directly with the agency's Community Supervision Officers (CSOs) and other victim services agencies to provide assistance and support to crime victims and to ensure an appropriate level of supervision for offenders, in an effort to reduce recidivism rates and prevent re-victimization.

Specifically, the Victim Services Program is mandated to fulfill the following roles, among others:



- Assisting CSOs in developing recommendations for the court and/or U.S. Parole Commission and reviewing offender supervision levels;
 - Working with CSOs and the court to ensure offenders' prompt payment of restitution to victims of crime;
 - Facilitating information sharing with allied justice agencies and victim service providers;
 - Coordinating with the U.S. Attorney's Office to obtain victim impact statements and carry out victim notification procedures;
- Helping victims to complete victim impact statements prior to offender sentencing;
- Helping victims navigate the Crime Victims Compensation Program application process;
- Providing needs assessments for all referrals and crisis intervention counseling clients;
- Facilitating the development of safety plans with crime victims; and
- Delivering training to CSOSA staff on topics related to crime victimization.

More information about CSOSA's Victim Services Program is available online at www.csosa.gov/supervision/victim_services.aspx.

instance, CSOSA provides a radio and Internet broadcast series on a range of topics related to community supervision, including victim services. Recorded programs on the subject of victim services are available for download on the CSOSA website at <http://media.csosa.gov/podcast/audio/category/victim-services>.

TRAINING STAFF

New probation and parole staff should receive orientation training on the needs and concerns of crime victims and the services available to them within the agency and through community-based victim service providers. Existing staff should receive annual refresher training on victim-related topics to ensure they remain up-to-date on services and resources for victims.

Key issues to be covered in training programs include:

- The impact of crime on victims;
- Victims' constitutional and statutory rights;
- Any services the agency provides to crime victims; and
- Crime victim services available in the community or region and how to access them.

In addition to training their own staff on victims' issues, community corrections agencies also should consider offering training to victim service providers and other allied agencies in the community. Organizations and individuals that could benefit include law enforcement, prosecutors, institutional corrections, other community corrections agencies, private attorneys, juvenile justice agencies, faith-based institutions, social services, medical and mental health care providers, educators, and substance abuse treatment providers. Such cross-training programs should provide information about the community supervision process as well as the services and resources made available to victims through the community corrections agency.

While providing information to other community partners about the community supervision process and the agency's services for victims is important in its own right, the agency may also benefit when the partners reciprocate by providing training for community corrections staff. This can be an excellent source of free or low-cost training for agency staff on such topics as the impact of crime on victims and effective strategies for supporting crime victims.



Training
Knowledge, competencies,
professional development
teaching of vocational or pra
practical skills provides the
on-the-job training tal
training av

DESIGNING COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

Offenders sentenced to community supervision perform countless hours of community service as a condition of supervision. This presents an excellent opportunity for collaboration between community supervision agencies and victim services programs. There are many creative examples of community service projects that can benefit victims of crime and those who serve them. An overview of victim-related collaborative community service projects has been compiled by Justice Solutions, a national non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing rights, resources, and respect for victims and communities hurt by crime. The organization also provides an overview of several institutional and community corrections-sponsored community service projects developed specifically to benefit victims in conjunction with National Crime Victims' Rights Week. These resources are available online at www.justicesolutions.org/art_pub.htm#institutional.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Today, agencies can greatly enhance any victim and public outreach program by harnessing the power of social media to share audio, visual, and print-based content for targeted audiences. For example, the Judicial Branch of California ("California Courts") has posted an orientation video about juvenile court and probation on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRXKIZTKJ-w. The San Diego Probation Department also hosts its own YouTube channel as well as regularly posting updates on Twitter and Facebook about its programs and services. Links to "follow" the agency via these sources are posted on the agency's website at www.sdcountry.ca.gov/probation.

OBSERVING COMMEMORATIVE DAYS

In each calendar year, more than 25 commemorative days, weeks, and months have been set aside in the United States to promote awareness of victims' rights and services. These observances offer an excellent opportunity for probation and parole agencies to collaborate with victim assistance organizations in emphasizing their commitment to victims' rights and services and promoting agency victim assistance programs. OVC produces an annual calendar as part of its National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide that provides information about a range of commemorative observances and events for those victimized by crime. The Resource Guide is available online at <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw>.

The American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) produces a Resource Kit to help promote Probation, Parole and Community Supervision Week. This national observance is held each year in July. The Resource Kit is available online and updated annually. It contains tips for outreach to crime victims and resources for victim assistance. For more information about APPA's Probation, Parole and Community Supervision Week resources, visit the APPA website at <http://www.appa-net.org>.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, victims of crime do not always fully understand the role that community corrections agencies play in holding offenders accountable for their crimes or in providing assistance and support to victims. Victim services providers and other allied agencies may not be aware of the many services and resources made available to victims throughout the community corrections process. Community corrections agencies must therefore take a proactive approach toward educating and informing both victims and the public about the mission of probation and parole work, including its focus on victim services.

Further, community corrections agencies should forge partnerships with community-based victim services programs in order to strengthen their ability to meet the complex needs of crime victims. These partnerships are a proven way to build capacity through cross-training of agency staff in addressing the needs of victims as well as by expanding the agency's range of referral options for direct services to assist them.

REFERENCES

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