



**STATE OF MONTANA
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
POLICY DIRECTIVE**

Policy No.: DOC 1.8.1	Subject: VICTIM SERVICES
Chapter 1: ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT	Page 1 of 4
Section 8: Victim Services	Effective Date: June 1, 1998
Signature: /s/ Mika Batista, Director	Revised: 10/20/2014

I. POLICY

The Department of Corrections treats crime victims with dignity and respect, complies with victim notification and restitution statutes, offers programs that promote healing, and encourages victim awareness training.

II. APPLICABILITY

Victims of adult offenders under Department supervision.

III. DEFINITIONS

Administrator – The official, regardless of local title (division or facility administrator, bureau chief, warden, superintendent), ultimately responsible for the division, facility or program operation and management.

Facilitator – A person who meets the Department’s requirements to facilitate a victim-offender dialogue or victim impact panel.

Restorative Justice – A criminal justice concept that focuses on offender accountability and healing for victims, families, communities, and offenders.

Victim – The person against whom a felony crime has been committed, or a family member of that person. Other individuals may be recognized as victims on a case-by-case basis.

Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) – An automated telephone, email and text message notification system that DOC purchases on contract from Appriss, Inc., which provides location and custody status updates about adult offenders under DOC supervision.

Victim Information Officer (VIO) – A facility or program staff person who provides information about offenders in the facility or program and about DOC programs for victims.

Victim Programs Manager (VPM) – A Department employee located in the Director’s Office who manages victim programs and policies, responds to victims’ requests for information and referrals, educates victims about the post-conviction criminal justice system, provides victim services training, and represents victim interests in all Department matters.

IV. DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVES

A. General Requirements

1. The Department may allow victims to have facilitated contact with offenders through

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- victim service programs. Facilities and programs participating in victim service programs must comply with the provisions of this policy and [1.8.1\(A\) Victim Services Standard Operations Procedure Guide](#).
2. Administrators, or designees, will determine if a victim services program is permitted at the facility or program.
 3. Participation in victim services is voluntary.
 4. Offender participation in victim restorative justice programs has no effect on an offender's parole eligibility, release date, or conditions of supervision.
 5. Administrators, or designees, and victim services staff, must approve offender eligibility to participate in victim services programs.
 6. The Department will not allow participation in a victim restorative justice program if such participation is in violation of a sentencing order or a current legal order of protection.
 7. Travel expenses incurred during participation in a victim service program by the victim and/or facilitator may be reimbursed by the Department.

B. Victim Programs Manager (VPM)

1. The VPM will:
 - a. collaborate with facility and program staff to ensure Department compliance with victim notification;
 - b. respond to victim information requests via email and a toll-free phone line;
 - c. manage the Department's victim services programs;
 - d. manage the Department's VINE service contract and collaborate with the Information Technology Division and Appriss, Inc. to ensure the system is functional; and
 - e. recommend new or expanded programs to respond to the needs of victims.

C. Victim Notification

1. If victims request notification, the Department will communicate all changes in offender custody status and location to the victim.
2. The Department will maintain an automated electronic notification system, known as Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE), to provide custody status and location information about offenders under DOC supervision.
3. The Department will maintain a separate process by which direct victims, immediate family members and witnesses to a crime may register directly with the Department to receive letter or telephone notification from designated Department employees when an offender's custody status or location changes.
4. Offenders may not appeal any delay of case decisions or actions caused by statutory victim notification requirements or the processing of such notifications.

D. Victim Support

1. The Department assists victims of offenders under Department supervision by providing referrals to services within the Department and in the community, training staff to respond to concerns regarding safety, collecting court-ordered restitution, providing prompt notification of changes in offender location and custody status, and facilitating victim-initiated contact with offenders.
2. Each facility or program administrator may designate a staff member as the Victim Information Officer (VIO); the VIO will provide information about offenders in the facility or program and provide referrals to DOC victim programs.

E. Victim Restorative Justice Programs

1. Victim Impact Panels (VIPs) provide victims an opportunity to speak to offenders about how crime has affected them, and serves to influence future offender behavior.
2. The Victim-Offender Dialogue (VOD) program allows a victim, or an adult acting on behalf of a victim who is under age 18, to discuss the impacts of the crime with the offender in the presence of a trained facilitator. Participation in the program is voluntary for all participants and may only be initiated by the victim.
3. The offender Accountability Letter Program (ALP) allows offenders to write to the victim(s) of the crime for which the offender was sentenced, reflecting responsibility for the crime and remorse for the harm caused to the victim(s) without excuses or requests for forgiveness or pardon.

F. Rights and Responsibilities of Victims

1. Victims are not obligated to participate in victim services or programs.
2. Victims who choose to participate in victim services and programs must provide their current contact information, agree to complete all evaluations, and sign all forms required by the Department.
3. Victims, support person(s), and facilitators must pass visitor background checks in accordance with [DOC 3.3.8, Offender Visiting](#) and follow normal facility entrance procedures.
4. Victims involved in legal proceedings involving the offender may not participate in the VOD program or ALP.

G. Facilitator Requirements

1. Facilitators must meet the requirements of, and complete paperwork required in [DOC Policy 1.3.16, Volunteer Services](#).
2. Facilitators must meet all qualifications as outlined by the Department.

H. Offender Requirements

1. Offenders involved in legal appeals or other legal proceedings involving the victim, may

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not participate in the VOD program or ALP.

2. Offenders must agree to complete all evaluations and sign all forms required by the Department.
3. Participation in a victim restorative justice program does not constitute permission for the offender to make additional contact with the victim.

I. Training

1. The VPM provides training about victim information requests, VINE and other notification procedures, victim sensitivity and staff communications, and programs for victims within the community, when requested, and within the Department.
2. VIOs provide victim services training at respective facilities.

V. CLOSING

Questions concerning this policy should be directed to the Department's Victim Programs Manager.

VI. REFERENCES

- A. [2-15-112, MCA](#); [41-5-1416, MCA](#); [46-18-241, MCA](#); [46-24-101, MCA](#); [46-24-102, MCA](#); [46-24-203, MCA](#); [46-24-212, MCA](#); [46-24-213, MCA](#); [53-1-203, MCA](#)
- B. 4-4447-1, *ACA Standards Supplement, 2008*
- C. *DOC Policies 1.1.1, Purpose, Mission and Management Philosophy; 1.3.16, Volunteer Services; 1.5.6, Offender Records Access and Release*
- D. [Victim Services Standard Operations Procedure Guide 1.8.1A](#)

VII. ATTACHMENTS

None