



Victims' Voice Newsletter

Volume #3 | Issue #2 | Montana Department of Corrections Victim Services



Announcement...

There are many changes going on within Montana Department of Corrections. The inception of the Domestic Violence Specialized Caseload at the Great Falls Probation and Parole Office is among the most exciting for the Victim Services Bureau. We are honored to work with a dedicated team whose goal is to increase safety for victims and the community by reducing the risk of violent recidivism. Read more about the exceptional work this team is doing in this issue. Our collaborative efforts throughout the corrections system build a stronger Montana. We appreciate all you do!

We hope you enjoy this issue of the Victims' Voice newsletter. Please send any feedback, content suggestions, and ideas for future publications to CorVictimLiaison@mt.gov.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASELOAD - A SUPERVISION STRATEGY

By: Monica Huffman, DOC Victim Liaison



DV Caseload Staff (L to R): Monica Huffman, Corey Purves, & Heather Moore

“
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What started as a conversation among Montana Department of Corrections colleagues at the Great Falls Probation and Parole Office evolved into a collaborative effort with the goal of bettering the lives of victims and holding domestic violence offenders to a higher standard of accountability. The Domestic Violence (DV) Caseload Strategy was an idea that developed over time and is now making a marked difference in the way the DOC manages these types of cases in the community.

The strategy involves concentrating domestic violence caseloads with designated P&P officers who understand this unique population; ensuring ongoing communication with DOC's Victim Services team to provide support and assistance for victims; working with the courts to ensure strict requirements for offenders; and connecting offenders and victims with resources in the community.

Wayne Bye, deputy chief at the Great Falls P&P Office, agreed to give this strategy a try three and a half months ago, and while it is a work in progress, many positives have resulted. Communication by the team members regarding contacts with both victims and offenders has been incredible, allowing the group to better connect everyone involved with necessary services.

Heather Moore and Cory Purves, P&P officers dedicated to domestic violence caseloads, are in the field regularly, speaking with offenders and victims (if they are residing together), talking to new romantic partners, checking in at job sites, and assessing and ensuring offenders are participating in Batterers' Intervention programming. When the domestic violence caseload was first implemented, about 50% of offenders were attending Batterers' Intervention; now, 95% are attending this critical programming.

Probation and Parole officers are working closely with the courts to implement conditions in judgments and within the corrections system to ensure strict guidelines for offenders, creating safer outcomes for victims, families, and the community.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASELOAD CONTINUED...



Shauna Downard, a licensed clinical professional counselor with Green Apple Counseling and DV Caseload team member, provides Batterers' Intervention to almost all the offenders on the caseload. Green Apple Counseling is also administering the Violence Risk Appraisal Guide – Revised (VRAG-R) assessment. This assessment provides a numerical estimate of an offender's risk of violent recidivism.

In cases where the victim reaches out (to a P&P officer or victim liaison) and wishes to reunify with the offender, the DOC's Victim Services team offers help with the transition steps to facilitate appropriate, safe contact.

Those steps include:

- Release of Information (ROI) obtained for each party
- Individual counseling until the therapist for each party determines the appropriateness of moving forward
- Offender must attend Batterers' Intervention and therapist approves next step
- Victim completes the Power to break Free Workbook with a DOC victim liaison
- Reunification counseling
- Couples counseling
- Safety plan developed and provided to P&P officer

In some cases, family group meetings are necessary to aid the transition to reunification.

The DV caseload reminds me of a trainer I had who said to a group of young trainees: "I know how to end child abuse!" You could have heard a pin drop in the room as she continued to say: "You send someone in about once a week to check on the children, to talk to them, to ask questions, and look them over." She went on to say, "the abuser will not touch them if you do that." Nineteen years later in my career, I believe that to be true. This is what we are doing with the unique caseload. The team is collectively checking in with the offender, the victim, and the families.

I believe this will do what we intend it to do — reduce the number and severity of violent episodes in the homes where we are providing these services. It will improve lives for offenders and victims of record or a new partner and/or children.



Successes since the inception of the DV Caseload Strategy:

- Increased the number of offenders enrolled in Batterer's Intervention
- Improved conditions of supervision
- Implementation of new conditions in judgments
- Increase in number of home checks
- Better assessment of counseling needs, chemical dependency, and more

Victims are reaching out for services such as:

- Orders of Protection assistance
- Counseling
- Reunification steps
- Divorce assistance
- Impact statements for sentencing
- Assistance with other events in the criminal justice process

INVESTING IN PEOPLE: IMPROVING CORRECTIONS STAFF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Adapted from: National Institute of Justice and Corrections by
Lexipol

Corrections is a people-run organization. Our staff are our most valuable asset, and their well-being is inextricably tied to our ability to effectively carry out our mission. If our staff come to work every day with a healthy lens, individuals in custody are going to be better served.

The subject of correctional staff wellness is being increasingly addressed by correctional administrators, unions, line staff and even family members through grassroots efforts.



- One in three of staff have symptoms of PTSD.
- The average life span of an individual that has spent their career in corrections is 58 years, which is 16 years shorter than the lifespan of 74 years for an average adult male.
- Physically, more than 90 percent of staff were obese or overweight.

*Colette Peters, Oregon Department of Corrections

6 MISTAKES CORRECTIONAL AGENCIES CAN MAKE WHEN ADDRESSING STAFF WELLNESS:

1. Thinking that correctional staff wellness is an unnecessary luxury that their agency does not have to implement.
2. Not using a participatory approach of engaging staff of all disciplines, job types and ranks when exploring which wellness programs and resources to adopt.
3. Not engaging labor unions in agency efforts to design and implement staff wellness programs or offer staff wellness resources
4. Thinking that staff wellness can be addressed by using a “one size fits all” approach.
5. Thinking that it is enough to offer one program or one resource once or for only a short time period.
6. Implementing staff wellness approaches or resources that are not based on research evidence.

To read the full articles, visit: <https://bit.ly/3v7KVSy>; <https://bit.ly/3yUAp28>



National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims

National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims is September 25. This is a day we take to remember our loved ones lost to murder.

During The National Day of Remembrance for Homicide Victims, advocates and community members commemorate murder victims and surviving family members. The day also honors the work of organizations that provide services, including support, advocacy, and counseling for families, individuals and communities coping with homicide-related deaths. Join us in this day of remembrance as we continue to serve those who have lost a loved one to homicide.



World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

World Day Against Trafficking in Persons is Saturday, July 30, 2022. According to the World Day Against Trafficking web page: "At any given time, an estimated 2.5 million people are trapped in modern-day slavery. Men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers both in their own countries and abroad.

1. The average cost of a slave globally is \$90/day.
2. According to the U.S. State Department, 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders every year. 80% are women and children.
3. Human trafficking is the third largest international crime industry, generating approximately 32 billion every year.
4. The most common form of human trafficking is sexual exploitation, accounting for 79% of human trafficking victims. These victims of sexual exploitation are predominantly women and girls.

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply." - Stephen Covey

VICTIM-CENTERED APPROACH EXPLAINED

Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center

This approach is defined as the systematic focus on the needs and concerns of a victim to ensure the compassionate and sensitive delivery of services in a nonjudgmental manner.

A victim-centered approach seeks to minimize re-traumatization associated with the criminal justice process by providing the support of victim advocates and service providers, empowering survivors as engaged participants in the process, providing survivors an opportunity to play a role in bringing their offenders to justice. In a victim-centered approach, the victim's wishes, safety, and well-being take priority in all matters and procedures.

Creating conditions of trust and respect will help victims reclaim their lives and help move them forward toward healing. All victims deserve to feel safe and supported, and provided with quality care, compassionate responses, and essential services.

OTHER NEWS THIS QUARTER:

World Day Against Trafficking in Persons- July 30
National Wellness Month- August
National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims- Sept. 25

**State/Federal Holidays*

CONTACT US

The Victim Services program office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (MT) Monday through Friday except for state and federal holidays.

It is our practice to return calls within 48 hours. Please leave a voicemail including your name, number, and any pertinent information you can provide.

Address:

5 S. Last Chance Gulch
 Helena, MT 59601
 P.O. Box 201301



Fax: (406) 444-4920

Helpline: (406) 444-0447 or Toll Free: (888) 223-6332

Website: <https://cor.mt.gov/victims>

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