Victim Impact Panels

Helping Victims Heal

What is a Victim Impact Panel?

Victim Impact Panels (VIPs) consist of two to four victims of felony crimes who volunteer to talk with a group of convicted adult offenders about how crimes have harmed them, their loved ones and their communities. Each volunteer speaks for a designated amount of time, then offenders may be invited to ask questions.

Why would a victim want to participate on a VIP?

VIPs provide victims an opportunity to express their feelings about the crimes committed against them. This typically helps victims in the healing process.

Those who have participated on VIPs report that they feel empowered by telling their stories to a listening audience. Some appreciate an opportunity to make a difference by holding offenders accountable.

Where do VIPs occur?

VIPs are conducted at community corrections programs, such as prerelease centers, drug and alcohol treatment facilities, and some Montana prisons. Offenders attend VIPs as part of a victim impact curriculum.

The volunteers decide where they wish to speak at panels.

Will my offender be there?

No. The DOC will ensure your offender is not part of the group attending the panel on which you are speaking. The VIP is not an appropriate forum for victims to face their actual offenders.

If you would like to meet directly with your offender, call or email DOC Victim Services to discuss a Victim-Offender Dialogue with a trained facilitator.

Will I be safe during the VIP?

The safety and security of victim volunteers and all other parties are the most important considerations in the preparation for a VIP. All parties learn in advance about appropriate behavior at a VIP. We work with our victim volunteers to ensure the environment is safe. In most situations, security staff is nearby. A VIP should not be frightening for anyone.

Do offenders benefit from attending a VIP?

VIPs allow offenders to confront the personal harm they caused their victims, families, friends and communities.

Some offenders view themselves as victims because they were caught. If no one was physically injured during the crime, offenders might believe the crime had no victims. Most offenders report that the VIP was an important factor in their decisions to take responsibility for their criminal actions, participate in treatment, and change their lives.

How do you find volunteers for VIPs?

Victim advocates, prosecutors, DOC staff, and other victim volunteers spread the word about VIPs. If you are interested in participating on a VIP, DOC Victim Services staff can help you decide if this is the right decision for you. You can change your mind at any time.

Will I be paid for speaking on a victim impact panel?

Most contracted facilities provide a small stipend. DOC facilities cannot provide a stipend. DOC may reimburse victims for their travel expenses and meals.

Volunteer Victim Impact Speaker | Montana Department of Corrections

I would like to discuss the possibility of speaking on a Victim Impact Panel. I am submitting this form with the understanding that I may decide at any time not to participate.

Name: _____

City: _____

Zip Code: _____

Email: _____

Crime: _____

Court case (optional): _____

Offender's name: _____

Sentenced? _____

Address: _____

State: _____

Phone: _____

Have you ever participated in a victim impact panel? If so, where? _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Was the offender convicted? _____

Where is the offender now? _____

_____

Mail to the Montana Department of Corrections Victim Services Bureau at P.O. Box 201301, Helena, MT 59620 or email to CORVictimLiaison@mt.gov.

Where is my offender?

The Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) closely monitors the location and custody status of offenders under its supervision. Register for our free, confidential, automated VINE (Victim Information & Notification Everyday) service to track your offender's whereabouts.

To register, call VINE at (800) 456-3076 and follow the instructions, or register online at vinelink.com.

You may also download a free mobile app for your smart phone at itunes.apple.com/us/app/vinemobile/id625472495?mt=8 or play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.appriss.vinemobile.

More than 80 percent of all adult offenders supervised by DOC are in the community rather than prison. Alternatives include probation, parole, drug treatment programs and prerelease centers.

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DOC Victim Services Program

Victim Services Helpline: (406) 444-0447 | Toll Free: (888) 223-6332

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