Victim Offender Dialogue:
A Corrections-based Restorative Justice Practice

Daniel L. Torrez, VOD-Coordinator
Agenda

BLUF/Objectives
VOD and Public Safety/Behavioral Health Professionals
VOD Basics
VOD in Violent Crimes
National VOD Program Snapshot
Q&A
What Are We About Today?

VOD Is Strictly Victim-Initiated, Victim-Centered & Victim-Driven
Workshop Objectives

Describe VOD for Victims/Survivors associated with Public Safety/Behavioral Health Professionals
Identify common goals associated with VOD participation
Discuss the development of VOD Programs nationally and VOD participant satisfaction & completion rates
VOD and PS/BH Professionals
VOD and PS/BH Professionals cont.

Public Safety/Behavioral Health Professionals are not immune to violent crime
Family members may become victims of violent crime
Line of Duty Deaths
Workplace Violence
What is a Victim Offender Dialogue?

Facilitated process where victims/survivors:
  Ask ?s, get answers, share the impact/traumatization

Offenders:
  Receive/respond to ?s, hear the impact of their crime(s),
  offer personal accountability
VOD Preparation

A lengthy process of personal exploration
Setting of appropriate expectations
VOD preparation could have a therapeutic effect
Common Goals for Victims/Survivors

To confront the trauma
To gain insight that only the offender can provide
To express current/repressed feelings about the crime
To feel empowered
Have a voice/direct participation in the process
Common Goals for Offenders

To hear the depth of trauma the victim experienced
To face the full human impact of their crime
To honestly answer questions from the victim
To express remorse/accept full responsibility
What VOD is *NOT* About

The “F” word
Getting over it
Closure
Revenge

*Reducing/affecting an offender’s sentence, appeal status, parole status, housing assignment, or custody level*
VOD in Cases of Severe Violence

“A number of programs have now mediated violent assaults, including rapes, and mediations have taken place between murderers and the families of their victims. Mediation has been helpful in repairing the lives of surviving family members and the offender in drunk-driving fatalities.”
Are Sex Crimes Appropriate?

“Evaluations as to whether a case is appropriate for VOD should not be based on the type of crime that has occurred, but based on the people involved and how they were affected by the crime.”
Rape Survivor

Raped by four men
LA justice system barred her from meeting
Wrote letters to rapists after convictions
Met with all four rapists with no facilitator present
“Described her experience as positive and wished there was such a program available from the start.”
VOD = Positive Experience

NY State Office of Alternate Dispute Resolution

Assisting victims of violent crime since 1990

“Every case since 1990 has been extremely positive for the victim and offender alike without exception.”

Victims feel a greater sense of relief/closure and gratitude for not being forgotten and unheard
Satisfaction rates are consistently high for both victims/offenders in violent and non-violent crimes. Typically, 8/9 out of 10 report satisfaction with the process.
Ohio VOD Satisfaction Data

Victims/Survivors -

- 90% very satisfied with preparation
- 10% somewhat satisfied
- 76% meeting with offender was very helpful
- 24% somewhat helpful
Ohio VOD Satisfaction Data cont.

Offenders -

- 81% very satisfied with the process
- 19% somewhat satisfied
- 93% meeting with victim was very helpful
- 7% somewhat helpful
VOD Completion Rates

Nationally - when reported, typically 40%-60% of initiated cases result in a face-to-face meeting

OH VOD completion rate = 25% of initiated cases
1993 - TX Victim Offender Mediation/Dialogue (VOM/D)

Other long-standing programs:

- NY 1990
- OH 1996
- MN 1997-8
- PA 1998
34 states currently offer a VOD program
States with no VOD Program:
  AK, AR, CT, FL, ID, IL, IN, KY, MI, MO, NV, NM, NC, ND, RI, SD
Dialogue vs. Mediation

VOD, V/OD, & V-OD

Mediation refers to Restorative Justice roots

2 states have the term mediation in their programs

VOM/D (AL/TX)
Alternate Dialogue Options

Typically VOD is a one-time face-to-face meeting

Alternate VOD practices:
- Letter exchange
- Videoconference
- Telephone
- Surrogate Dialogue
- Facilitator Go-Between
Summary

BLUF/Objectives
VOD and Public Safety/Behavioral Health Professionals
VOD Basics
VOD in Violent Crimes
National VOD Program Snapshot
Books of Interest

THE LITTLE BOOK OF Victim Offender Conferencing

The Energy of Forgiveness
Lessons from Those in Restorative Dialogue

VIOLENCE, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE & FORGIVENESS
DYADIC FORGIVENESS AND ENERGY SHIFTS IN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE DIALOGUE

Bringing Victims and Offenders Together in Dialogue

Mark S. Umbreit
Jennifer Blevins
Ted Lewis

Marilyn Armour
Mark Umbreit
Contact Information

Daniel L. Torrez
Victim Offender Dialogue - Coordinator
AZ Dept. of Corrections, Rehabilitation & Reentry Office of Victim Services
Office: (602) 542-2026
Cell: (602) 319-8727
dtorrez@azadc.gov
1645 W. Jefferson, Suite 1201
“After all these years and the trauma that I have gone through in my life, my heart never felt whole. After these two days of meeting with my dad, my heart is whole again, thank you.”

(AZ VOD Survivor)

“I kind of feel like my heart was as hard as stone before...after seeing him I felt like my heart woke up and started to beat again...I can’t say this enough, this process has changed everything for me, in a good way.”

(AZ VOD Survivor)
Thank You!

Office of Victim Services