

Office of Victim & Restorative Justice Programs Annual Report – FY2012

The office of Victim and Restorative Justice Programs assisted victims and communities in Iowa with direct services and training including: registration, notification, safety planning, information, and victim/offender dialogue sessions. The Office handled over **1,184** phone inquiries, and **1,440** new victims were assisted with registration alone. Each of these newly registered victims received information specific to Iowa DOC victim services, the Iowa Crime Victim Compensation Fund, and the VINE program. At the end of this fiscal year, **6,341** victims had active registrations with DOC.

The Victim Offender Intervention Services (VOIS) program allows for direct and indirect facilitated communication between victims and offenders. This fiscal year, **fifteen** victims participated in preparation sessions to initiate communication with an offender. Of these, **five** victims and offenders engaged in a face-to-face Victim Offender Dialogue, **three** of the victims engaged in indirect communication through letter writing and presentation of the letter directly to the offender, and **four** victims continued in preparation. In addition, the Apology Letter Bank received new submissions from offenders.

This year, a new program was introduced to the Office of Victim & Restorative Justice Programs: **Victim Wrap Around (VWA)**. This program is available in situations where an offender has leveled a threat, and victim safety is of concern. The VWA allows for direct participation of all parties with a role in victim safety, i.e., correctional staff, victim advocates, and local law enforcement. One case was referred this past year and all parties were able to provide victim notification and participate in the development of a safety plan directly with the victim. Collaboration with a variety of agencies ensures this program will provide greater security for victims whose safety is of concern prior to an offender's release to the community.

The DOC Victim Advisory Council (VAC) focused on the role of victims in our reentry efforts. Katrina Carter presented basic information about the DOC's reentry process for offenders, and the VAC reviewed national reentry guidelines to determine where we are strong in meeting victim needs, and areas that may need attention. The National Reentry Resource Center and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, US Department of Justice 2010 Council of State Governments Justice Center published, "Involving Crime Victim Services to Ensure Successful Offender Reentry." Basic victim rights related to reentry include: notification, protection, participation and input, restitution (as a priority), and information/referrals. The VAC advised that the DOC is strongest in notification, information and referral efforts, but lacks sufficient victim participation and input into our reentry efforts. These are areas that need improvement.

The VAC also conducted a Restitution Meeting, including staff from probation/parole, victim witness coordinators, the Attorney General Crime Victim Assistance Division, and correctional staff. The meeting highlighted the continued need to ensure victim restitution remains a priority, and to educate all those present on changes in collection efforts. It appears that, for those county attorney offices with a collection department, victim restitution payments have increased considerably. Probation and parole agents are encouraged to utilize their Victim Witness Coordinator in setting up payment plans through the county attorney's office.

Finally, the VAC sponsored a Restorative Justice Training, featuring Dr. Mark Umbreit, professor and Director of the Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking at the University of Minnesota. The VAC collaborated with the Iowa Attorney General's Office, Iowa Organization for Victim Assistance (IOVA), Polk County Attorney's Restorative Justice Center, Iowa Mediation Service, Iowa Association of Mediators, Youth Justice Initiative, Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Iowa Board of Parole, and the Learning Resource Center of West Des Moines.

The [Victim Advisory Council's Victim Fund](#) has been critical in supporting victims who volunteer to speak on our Victim Impact panels, as well as reimbursing those who participate in a Victim Offender Dialogue. The VAC Fund received donations from the following individuals and organizations this year:

Jen Foltz/Mary Avaux – 5th District fundraiser
NCCF Offender Veteran's Organization
5K for 5 Charities (5th Judicial District)

[Victim Impact](#) classes continue to be facilitated in the institutions and a few of our judicial districts. This fiscal year, **702** out of 781 referred offenders completed the class and attended victim panels as part of the curriculum – an 89.9% successful completion rate. The class continues to receive active support and participation of many crime victims who volunteer to share their experience of victimization and healing, and motivating offenders to make needed changes in their lives.

Research on the effectiveness of the curriculum used by the Iowa DOC indicates statistically significant changes in offenders' understanding of victimization, and a marked increase in their sensitivity to the plight of crime victims (Gaboury, M.T., Sedelmaier, C.M., Monahan, L.H., and Monahan, J.J. (2008). "A Preliminary Evaluation of Behavioral Outcomes in a Corrections-Based Victim Awareness Program for Offenders." *Victims & Offenders* 3(2), 217-227). In addition, research regarding the effect of speaking on panels for victims indicated significant improvement in panelists' post-victimization adjustment, and better overall well-being and life happiness (Mercer, Lourden and Lord, 1994).

[National Crime Victims' Rights Week 2012](#): This year, the theme of "Extending the Vision/ Reaching Every Victim" was brought to life by our guest speaker, Larry Wohlgemuth, who shared his experience of victimization and recovery. The DOC Victim Advisory Council collaborated with the Southern District US Attorney's Office, the Attorney General's Office Crime Victim Assistance Division, the Iowa Organization for Victim Assistance, and the FBI Victim Assistance Program. The IOVA John and Kay Egan Award was presented to DOC's Fred Scaletta for his many years of dedication and service to crime victims, both directly and through the development of DOC victim programs.

[Staff Victimization and Support Services \(SVSS\)](#): SVSS teams provided critical staff support services throughout this fiscal year. Teams reported **432** staff contacts in the following institutions:

CCF – 140
FDCF – 36
ISP – 62
MPCF – 70
NCCF – 124

This year, a training session was provided at ISP for new SVSS members, and continuing education and support was provided for the FDCF SVSS team. SVSS Teams were active at CCF, FDCF, IMCC, ISP, MPCF, and NCCF.

[Training](#) was provided throughout this fiscal year to a variety of DOC staff and community groups:

1. Workplace Violence Prevention training was provided to new staff in the 5th Judicial District.
2. A special presentation for Domestic Violence Awareness was provided in the 1st Judicial District.

3. Grandview College students received training on Restorative Justice Practices and Programs of the DOC.
4. Des Moines Area Community College's Criminal Justice Department received training related to DOC victim programs and restorative justice initiatives.
5. DOC victim services were presented on a special program aired on KUNI Radio's River to River program.
6. Staff at ISP received the Staff Victimization Support Services training.

Through the various programs provided or overseen by the Office of Victim and Restorative Justice Programs, the Iowa DOC is continuing to expand our outreach to crime victims, provide critical services, and work toward an Iowa "with no more victims."

Submitted by
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