INCLUDING VICTIM INPUT IN THE SUPERVISION OF SEX OFFENDERS

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MISSION, VISION, BELIEFS

• Promote justice
• Victim centered
• Believe in victim rights
• Importance of remaining sensitive to and respectful to the needs of victims
• Enhancing safety

WHAT VICTIMS SAY ABOUT HOW THEY ARE TREATED

VICTIMIZED
BROKEN PROMISES
INSENSITIVE
HELPLESS FORGOTTEN
DISEMPLOYED
IGNORED
COMPLAINTS CJ PROFESSIONALS HAVE ABOUT VICTIMS

• They don’t understand
• They have unrealistic expectations
• They don’t know what they want
• Too busy to deal with their drama
• I don’t know what to say
• They make minor issues into big issues

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS NEED TO CHANGE THEIR VIEW OF VICTIMS TO “CLIENTS”

WHAT DO VICTIMS NEED/ WANT?

• To be heard and validated - Empowerment
• Accurate Information
  • Status of the case
  • Location of offender
  • Criminal Justice process
  • Conditions
• Personal Safety
• Acknowledgement and enforcement of their rights
GENERAL VICTIM RIGHTS PERTAINING TO COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

- Information and notification of status of case
- Participation in sentencing and revocation hearings
- Input into sentencing, release, and revocation decisions
- Protection from unwanted contact
- Restitution to help pay for losses

*Promising Victim Related Practices in Probation and Parole Training Curriculum Package, APPA

COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF SEX OFFENDERS

- Key aspects of Supervision
  - Public Safety
  - Offering meaningful opportunities for positive change
  - Risk and Needs Assessment
  - Specific Rules
  - Development of Case Supervision Plan
  - Regular Contacts
  - Referral to Treatment
  - Therapeutic Polygraph to assist in treatment and to verify compliance with conditions

COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF SEX OFFENDERS

- Key aspects of Treatment
  - Accepting responsibility and modifying cognitive distortions
  - Developing victim empathy
  - Controlling sexual arousal
  - Improving social competence
  - Developing relapse prevention skills
  - Confronting/challenging discrepancies, cognitive distortions
  - Both approach and avoidant goals
DEVELOPING A PROGRAM

• Victim Empowerment Through Input Tool (2005)
  • Very insensitive form and mostly about probation’s needs
• General Questions for Victims (2008)
  • Open ended questions full of jargon and still all about probation’s needs
• Focus group (2011)
• Developed and Implemented Program (2012)

FOCUS GROUP

• Invited 6 victims to an anonymous focus group co-facilitated by VSC and APO
• Discussion points:
  • Prior attempts to talk to probation in past
  • Desire to have dialogue with probation
  • Do they feel that they have information that would be valuable to probation and treatment
  • Do they have questions about probation
  • How can probation help victims
  • How can we increase willingness of victims to talk to probation

• Introduced them to our concept
• Follow up discussion points:
  • Where and who should attend meetings
  • How should they be scheduled
  • What information should be provided
  • How can we limit re-victimization
  • How should we approach sensitive questions
  • Thoughts on brochure
WHAT VICTIMS TOLD US

• They thought meetings would be beneficial and empowering to victims
• We need to recognize that each victim is different and their willingness and degree of participation will vary with victims and over time
• VSC should provide information about program and schedule meetings
• VSC Advocate, Counselor (if in treatment), Probation, and any support person (if desired) should be at the meeting

WHAT VICTIMS TOLD US

• Meetings should occur at VSC and be informal (no suits or badges)
• We should provide information conditions; what probation can and cannot do; what input victim can have; and contact information (avoid jargon)
• Victim should have an opportunity to discuss offender and the offense understanding that the choice is the victims
• The need to make sure we train staff on how to talk to victims

PROGRAM DESIGN

• Victims are provided with brochure early in the process
• Meetings are scheduled through VSC, are held at VSC, and are at convenient times
• Meetings include Victim, APO, VSC, and other support persons
• Meetings are informal
PROGRAM DESIGN

- Introduction/ Confidentiality
- Goals of probation
- Purpose of the meeting
- Explanation of our SO unit/ Contact information
  - Sentence and conditions
  - Explanation of what probation can and cannot do
- Their concerns - safety
- Do they feel they will do it again? Why?
- What do they feel will prevent them from doing it again? Why?

- Do they think there are other victims? Why?
- Are there places the offender should not go?
- Are there things that we should not allow offenders to do?
- Do you feel comfortable talking to us about what happened?
- Next steps/ Support and Safety Plan (if needed)

BENEFITS REPORTED BY VICTIMS

Empowered
Believed
Respected
Heard
Educated
Validated
Safe
BENEFITS REPORTED BY PROBATION

• Enhanced Assessment
• More comprehensive Case Plan
• Able to ID risk factors/ Warning signs
• Reduced period of denial

BENEFITS REPORTED BY TREATMENT

• Enhanced Assessment
• Reduced period of denial
• ID and break through cognitive distortions
• Targeted polygraph questions
• ID and target risk factors
• Gained vital information to assist in treatment

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

• Victim fed up by the time they get to us
• Not all victims engaged with VSC
• Victim has already invested so much time and loss money in the system
• Re-victimization
• Feelings about sentence (Probation is a joke)
• Probation and advocates lack a relationship
IMPLEMENTATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

• Develop relationship with key partners
• Assess current victim centeredness in your jurisdiction and specific needs of your community/area
• Panel of survivors
• ID key players
• Slow and deliberate
  • Don’t get frustrated when things don’t start overnight