



**STATE OF MONTANA
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
POLICY DIRECTIVE**

Policy No.: DOC 1.8.1	Subject: VICTIM SERVICES	
Chapter 1: ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT	Page 1 of 4	
Section 8: Victim Services	Effective Date: June 1, 1998	
Signature: /s/ Mike Ferriter, Director	Revised: 05/12/98; 10/29/99; 03/26/02; 08/01/07; 09/18/08	

I. POLICY

The Department of Corrections treats crime victims with respect, dignity and sensitivity, and complies with applicable statutes and policies regarding crime victim notification.

II. APPLICABILITY

All Department and contracted facilities and programs for adult offenders.

III. DEFINITIONS

Administrator – The official, regardless of local title (division or facility administrator, bureau chief, warden, superintendent), ultimately responsible for the division, facility, or program operation and management.

Advocacy – Writing, speaking and acting on behalf of crime victims.

Crime Victims Advisory Council – The volunteer board appointed by the Department director, composed of crime victims and others closely associated with crime victims. The council provides the Department with direction on policy and legislation affecting victims of felony crimes committed by adults.

Victim – The person against whom a felony crime has been committed, or a family member of that person. Other individuals may be recognized as victims on a case-by-case basis.

Victim-Offender Dialogue (VOD) – A restorative justice program that brings together a victim and offender to discuss the crime and its effects under the direction of a trained facilitator.

Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) – A telephone and email notification system that DOC purchases on contract from the Appriss Company, which provides custody status updates to victims whose adult offenders are under DOC supervision.

Victim Information Officer (VIO) – A Department facility or program staff person who provides information and advocacy services for victims.

Victim Information Specialist (VIS) – A Department staff person in the Director’s Office who manages Department victim programs, acts as staff liaison for the Crime Victims Advisory Council, provides victim information and referrals, and represents victim interests in all Department matters.

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IV. DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVES

A. Advocacy

1. With the understanding that a victim may be an entity, a community or other significant person affected by commission of a criminal offense, the Department will assist crime victims by:
 - a. providing authorized information or referrals to information sources;
 - b. collecting court-ordered restitution as authorized under *46-18-241, MCA*;
 - c. designating victim information officers within Department programs and facilities;
 - d. appointing members to the Department's Crime Victims Advisory Council;
 - e. facilitating contact with offenders, when appropriate;
 - f. training Department staff to be responsive to victim issues and needs;
 - g. providing prompt notification of specified offender data as required by statute; and
 - h. encouraging victim representation on the Department of Corrections Advisory Council appointed by the governor.

B. Access to Information

1. Each facility/program will designate a Victim Information Officer (VIO) to establish and maintain a strategy for providing victims with information regarding offenders, as authorized under *46-24-101, MCA*, and as specified in [*DOC Policy 1.5.6, Offender Records Access and Release.*](#)
2. Such strategies may include automated or manual victim notification systems. Victims must be given authorized information within a reasonable period of time, as established by the system in place. Staff providing non-automated information will be properly trained by the VIS to be responsive to victims' issues and needs.

C. Statutory Notification

1. The Department must provide current offender custody status information to crime victims who register with the Department for such notification, in accordance with *46-24-212, MCA*.
2. The administrator will ensure that when a crime victim has provided the Department with a request for notification under *46-24-212*, staff will have a record of such request and will provide prompt notification to the victims.
3. If a victim has registered for notification, the Department will adhere to the following notification steps:
 - a. the central and offender case files will be annotated by records office staff in such a way as to clearly call to the attention of all staff processing releases and other covered activities that notification is required; and
 - b. the administrator, or designee, will designate a VIO who will be responsible for victim notifications. All notifications will comply with the requirements in applicable policies and statutes.

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4. The central and offender case files will be annotated to reflect the following:
 - a. date;
 - b. person(s) to be notified;
 - c. person performing the notification;
 - d. the information provided to the victim; and
 - e. a copy of any notification letter(s).
5. The notification procedure requires the victim to register with the Department for notification.
6. Notification of victims who request notification is required by statute; therefore, offenders **may not appeal** any delay or other impairment of case decisions or actions caused by notification requirements or processing of notifications.

D. Automated Victim Notification

Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) is an automated system that offers victims and the public an additional mechanism for gaining access to offender custody information. The Department will ensure that all staff members are aware of the system and that appropriate staff members such as public information officers and victim information officers can use, demonstrate and promote the use of VINE to victims and the general public.

1. The Department's Information and Business Technology Bureau staff will maintain the computer system in accordance with the vendor contract.
2. The VIS will ensure that VIOs have a procedure for entering escapes into the computer system in a timely and efficient manner.
3. The VIS will maintain a system for promoting the existence of and use of the VINE system to victims and the general public.

E. Crime Victims Advisory Council

The Department director appoints volunteer crime victims and others closely associated with crime victims to the council. The council provides the Department with direction on policy and legislation affecting victims of felony crimes committed by adults.

F. Facilitated Contact with Offenders

1. The Department allows victims in some circumstances to meet with convicted adult offenders through the Victim-Offender Dialogue program.
2. The Department VIS serves as the Victim-Offender Dialogue program manager.
3. Victim-offender dialogues are facilitated by trained volunteers appointed by the program manager.
4. The Victim-Offender Dialogue program is governed by [DOC Policy 1.8.2, Victim-Offender Dialogue.](#)

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G. Training

1. The Department VIS provides victim services training upon request to Department staff and contracted employees. Training includes victim information requests, VINE and other notification procedures, victim sensitivity and staff communications, policy, and Department programs for victims.
2. The VIS, or designee, participates in annual Probation and Parole Officer Basic Training at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy.
3. The VIS, or designee, responds to community requests for Department victim services training.
4. VIOs at Montana State Prison and Montana Women's Prison provide victim services training at their facilities.
5. The Department Staff Development and Training Bureau and the VIS encourage the inclusion of victim awareness training in curricula for staff, contract employees, and volunteers.

V. CLOSING

Questions concerning this policy should be directed to the Department's Victim Information Specialist.

VI. REFERENCES

- A. *2-15-112, MCA (2005) Duties and Powers of Department Heads; 41-5-1416, MCA, Victims and Witnesses of Juvenile Felony Offenses; 46-18-241, MCA, Condition of Restitution; 46-24-101, MCA, Purpose; 46-24-203, MCA, Prompt Notification to Victims and Witnesses of Certain Offenses; 46-24-212, MCA, Information Concerning Confinement; 46-24-213, MCA, General Requirements for Information; 53-1-203, MCA, Powers and Duties of Department of Corrections*
- B. *4-4447-1, ACA Standards Supplement, 2008*
- C. *DOC Policies [1.5.6, Offender Records Access and Release](#); [1.8.2, Victim-Offender Dialogue](#)*

VII. ATTACHMENTS

None.