



National Association of Victim Service Professionals in Corrections

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www.navspic.org

WINTER 2009



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

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Dear Colleagues,

IT IS WITHOUT A DOUBT one of the most challenging times for victim advocates within correctional agencies to sustain our services within our ever-shrinking department budgets. Not only do we personally need jobs in this tough national economy, but we know the importance of our work on a case by case basis. We're making a difference in the lives of every family we work with, and they need us!

Imagine a world without victim advocacy. It's difficult enough for crime victims to obtain information about inmates or protect themselves when in danger, but think about how different your agency would look without victim advocates to assist these victims. Who would they call for help? Obviously, direct services to victims would be non-existent, unless they happened to come in contact with a correctional professional who truly cared and took the time to help them. Also, think about the not-so-obvious impact not having victim advocates would have on your department. How would policies look in your department? How would legislation be different without your input? Would victims ever get any restitution?

Now that I've reaffirmed your opinion that we provide a vital service, how do you convince your governor, legislator or agency director of the same, when they're facing the reality that many officials across the nation are dealing with? All non-essential services are being eliminated, or at least cut severely. It's not that they don't want victim services, but they just don't see any other option. Many valuable, proven services are being reduced or abolished purely as fiscal decisions.

What decisions would you make if you were responsible for your department's budget? I can only imagine how gut wrenching these decisions must be for those in charge.

As victim advocates, we don't hesitate to stand up for victims when their rights are being violated. But for some reason, when it comes to ourselves, we might not speak out as easily and wake up one day to find that our jobs

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A Survivor's Story

September 27, 2002

THE SUN WAS SHINING BEAUTIFULLY on that Friday as I remember it. There was an anxious feeling to the air as our family was preparing to watch our sophomore son in a varsity high school football game. Football Fridays meant fun for our 12 year-old son to be with his friends and play their own game of football behind the bleachers. It meant pack the car with warm clothes and spend time with our friends. This was an exceptionally busy Friday for our family with lots to do.

Our sophomore son not only was preparing for his game, but also a trip with the school to Okoboji for a field biology weekend. Our youngest son had friends out anticipating the rivalry game, so I was hustling to finish work to get home to supervise and tend to the household chores. My husband who farms for a living also had an extremely busy day managing livestock and the harvest. This typically chaotic day for our house was not unusual, as was the same for the children already attending college.

Our oldest two children were attending Iowa State and our daughter Lisa went to UNI. Lisa was finishing classes on Friday to drive with a few friends to watch the Nebraska vs. Iowa State game with her boyfriend, siblings, and us. We were already packed and ready to go see our children living the dream we had always wanted for them. Everything was going as planned on this chaotic Friday UNTIL.....

11:00 p.m. we received a phone call from our son in Ames and asked if we had heard from Lisa. I shook it off due to her usually being late, but my husband was certainly suspicious. It was not until I got a call from our niece telling me to get somewhere in which I could hear her. My heart stopped and so did my world in an instant. My niece told me to get to Ames as quick as we could, and that there had been a terrible accident in

which she didn't know all of the details. I could hear the fear in her voice. I knew my precious daughter Lisa was dead. We got on the road as my husband and I were using our cell phones frantically trying to find someone to tell us anything about the accident.

My mother had now called my husband and told him to come home instead of going to Ames. I was screaming "She is dead, isn't she?" My poor mother finally replied "Yes, she is!" My husband and I were both screaming and crying, making noises I never thought possible.

We were on the interstate and a police officer pulled us over for speeding and allegedly swerving. All that I remember is I was so glad to get stopped so I could throw up and TRY to catch my breath. My husband evidently explained the situation in which he told us to please slow down and drive safe. No one else needed to get killed that night.

We were both silent the rest of the way home. I was sure when I got home someone would be there to clear this up and tell me they were wrong. I was sure Lisa would be O.K. until we pulled into our driveway. All I remember is cars lined up all the way down and it hit me that this is real.

I crawled up the steps as I could hear the wailing. I couldn't imagine who or what it was. It was my moth-

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NAVSPIC Newsletter
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A Sense of Humor is a Self-Help Tool

By Angie McCown, LMFT

Director

Texas Department of Criminal Justice-Victim Services Division

HUMOR CAN ALLOW US to experience laughter and light-heartedness even when much of our work involves trauma and sadness. There can be therapeutic consequences to using humor as a stress management tool. Finding humor in a situation and laughing freely with others can be a powerful antidote to stress. Laughter can temporarily banish feelings of anger or fear, to be replaced by more lighthearted and hopeful feelings. An excellent example of this technique is what Herb Kelleher encouraged his crews to do at Southwest Airlines. They use humor to alleviate some of the passenger stress about flying by telling jokes or singing silly songs while in flight. A sense of humor allows one to find delight, experience joy and release tension, providing an effective self-care tool.

Webster's dictionary defines humor as "the quality of being laughable or comical; a state of mind, mood, spirit." We have known for a long time that humor can have a positive impact on one's life. As early as the 1300s, Henri de Mondeville, a professor of surgery wrote: "Let the surgeon take care to regulate the whole regimen of the patient's life for joy and happiness, allowing relatives and special friends to cheer him, and by having someone tell him jokes." More recently, Norman Cousins spent the last twelve years of his life at UCLA Medical School in the Department of Behavioral Medicine exploring the scientific proof that negative emotions have a negative impact on health and that positive emotions have a positive impact on health. He established the Humor Research Task Force which coordinated world-wide clinical research on humor.

For Victim Services Professionals, a sense of humor can be an excellent tool for coping with stress. Humor and laughter lead to a more positive and hopeful attitude. We are less likely to suffer from stress, burn-out or

compassion fatigue, if we

have the capacity to laugh at ourselves. Humor may allow us to have a different perspective about our problems. Remember the folk wisdom of "Laughter is the best medicine"



How to Build Humor and Fun into the Workplace



- Hire competent employees who already value fun and have a sense of humor.
- Be sure humor and fun are modeled by top management.
- Establish a fun committee.
- Provide challenging work.
- Plan structured fun activities at special events or meetings.
- Encourage spontaneity on the job.
- Be aware of cultural differences.
- Create a humor bulletin board.
- Create a humor break room.
- Create a tension release area.
- Have fun dress up days.
- Have cartoon caption contests.
- Create a funny basic truths bulletin board.
- Encourage employees to develop funny skits about themselves and their work.
- Add pertinent cartoons or funny quotes to meeting agendas
- Do a photo board of employees when they were children.

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have been eliminated. I urge everyone to be prepared and to act at any moment to defend the importance of our work and fight for our services. While the decision to reduce or eliminate victim services might still occur, at least you can know that those making the decision made an informed decision.

You might be asking, “How can I prepare?”

There are several things that you can do. First and foremost, know your state laws related to the work that you do. What is required by statute...notification?...restitution?...other services? Next, know what victim-related services are required by policy for your department. Who provides all of these statutory and policy required services? If the answer is you, can your agency still provide those services without you? It will be very important that you be able to present all of this in a very organized manner and prove that only victim advocates can effectively provide most or all of these services. After working so hard over a period of years to build comprehensive victim services, it will be painful to think of eliminating anything; however, you should be able to prioritize your services from ‘nice to offer’ to ‘services required by law’, so that those in charge will see that you truly understand the reality of the situation. In this way, you will demonstrate your willingness to sacrifice services that don’t impact

as many people or aren’t mission critical, but are not willing to waver on those most critical services required by statute or possibly even policy. Have a PowerPoint presentation or report summarizing this information ready so when you’re called into a budget meeting, you’re prepared with facts.

Don’t we all wish we could turn back the hands of time? I know several years ago, someone advised me to take advantage of the good times and institutionalize our services as much as possible. I didn’t fully understand how important this advice would later turn out to be... or I might have done even more. At that time, we in Ohio were better able to pass laws related to victims than we currently are because there was more money. We were able to write into law the minimum number of staff we should have in victim services and even such details as our role would include making publications available to victims about the services and practices within our department. Those laws are what are now helping us to continue to exist now, during these hard budget times. Obviously, laws can be changed or reversed, but within the justice system, there is no stronger validation for a process law.

Is it too late for all of us? Are we stuck with whatever laws or policies exist within our states? Possibly...but possibly not. Depending on your situation, you might still be able to clarify wording within the

law that could strengthen your position. At the very least, you need to know how your laws are written to most effectively demonstrate the need to continue providing the services you provide.

When you do have opportunities to have input into laws that are being written, take advantage and craft the most effective language that will sustain your services far into the future, no matter how desperate the situation gets down the road.

In addition to laws, it is very important that you diversify your services. As we all know, victims have different needs in the aftermath of crime and the importance of having as comprehensive services as possible to best meet those needs. But an added benefit to being diverse is that it makes you more visible within your agency. The more visible you are within your agency, the better you will be able to weather storms you might encounter. Internal relationships you have with department staff will go far in having them help promote the importance of victim services, even when you are not present.

What are some other tools or resources available to us? While the fairly new ACA Standards (American Correctional Association) have not yet been fully implemented in some states, and some might argue they already need tweaked or clarified, we do have Standards in existence and should incorporate them

into any overview or description of our services. You should become actively involved with your ACA Coordinator or NAVSPIC to affect change if you would like to strengthen these standards even more.

Next, make sure you have a strategic plan that clearly identifies your mission. It's hard to prove the importance of victim services if you don't even know where you are headed in the future. Your strategic plan should be concise and realistic. It should be a living, breathing document that everyone feels a part of accomplishing. If you do not have a strategic plan, there are great resources available through the OVC website that could help you get started.

Once you have gathered information and put together a report or summary describing how victim services within corrections operate within your state and the importance of the work that you do, it's important to also include your successes. Highlight past achievements and share your future strategic plan or direction.

As agencies struggle to balance budgets, victim advocates must quickly adapt their services. Just because budgets are being cut, doesn't mean that crime has stopped and that there are no new victims. We in Ohio are taking a closer look at the services we provide and expanding our focus in a completely new direction. In the past, we have

focused primarily on victim notification related to offenders within our prison system or under parole supervision. New laws in our state are redirecting more and more inmates from prison to more local control (ie: halfway houses or community based correctional facilities). The victims of these offenders still need notification and information. Many of these facilities are not fully equipped to implement notification systems or have victim advocates available to support them and for the most part, notification was not a process they had to consider until now. We already have all of those services in place and can more easily expand our system to include these victims.

In addition to adapting your operation, have you applied for grant opportunities? I know, you might think you don't have time to write a grant...but there are still some (although fewer and fewer) funding opportunities available. We marked a milestone in the past year with OVC including corrections-based victim advocacy as a funding priority within one of their grant applications for the first time! Did your state apply? If you are successful in securing grants, while it might not sustain an entire operation, they can certainly help you maintain programs or services that might otherwise be eliminated.

As we all face these tough times, it is important to remember that more we stay connected, the bet-

ter we are able to help and support each other. While we recognize that offenders receive services from correctional agencies, equally important, the victims they have harmed must never be forgotten. Ultimately they are the ones who pay the price when budgets are cut. Victim Services should be considered by administrators as critical in continuing to meet their agency's mission. Now more than ever, as more and more offenders are being released from systems that are burdened by shrinking budgets, victims need support. As they find out that offenders are not serving the time they originally anticipated or are being placed in the community, victim services should be strengthened all the more to help them adapt to this new understanding of how the justice system operates.

We as advocates need to continue to share ideas nationally with each other about how our operations can be more efficient in these ever-changing environments. We also need to support each other as we surely will continue to struggle during these difficult times.

I wish everyone the best for 2009, and look forward to seeing you at our conference in Austin in October!

Take Care!

Karin Ho

Victim Services in Corrections Around the Country

California



California voters passed the “Victim’s Bill of Rights Act of 2008: Marsy’s Law” on November 4, 2008. Marsy’s Law changes the California constitution and state law to expand victims’ rights during criminal, juvenile and parole matters. It increases victim notification timelines, expands the definition of “victim” related to participation in parole proceedings for prisoners sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole, and increases the length of time between parole hearings. It assures that restitution is ordered from the convicted offender in every case where the victim suffers a loss, regardless of the sentence or disposition imposed, and that any funds collected from the offender go to pay restitution first.

Marsy’s Law is named after Marsy Nicholas, a 21-year old college senior at U.C. Santa Barbara who was preparing to pursue a career in special education for handicapped children and had her whole life ahead of her. She was murdered on November 30, 1983 by her ex-boyfriend, Kerry Conley. Marsy’s

Law was written on behalf of her mother, father and brother and inspired by hundreds of thousands of victims of crime who have experienced the additional pain and frustration of a criminal justice system that too often fails to afford victims even the most basic rights. Submitted by Katie James, Adult Offender Victim Services, CDCR

Montana



A hundred men in matching navy blue scrubs file into a sparsely furnished prison classroom and seat themselves in four long rows. A few seem at ease with treatment staff and each other. Most keep to themselves, gazing straight ahead or studying their folded hands.

They have received a heads-up that two DOC victim advocates are here to give them an earful.

“How many of you guys are victims of crime?” we ask. This is not a trick question but it elicits dead silence until one inmate voices what others may be thinking. “We’re all victims because we’re here,” he says, convinced his answer is a no-brainer. Uneasy laughter follows.

We have succeeded in breaking the ice in the intensive treatment unit (ITU) at Montana State Prison (MSP), but we don’t indulge this particular line of discussion for long. We have 60 minutes to deliver our crash course in victim awareness and “poor-me-I-got-caught-and-locked-up” isn’t part of our curriculum.

These offenders, who have chemical dependency and mental health issues and/or a domestic violence background, have earned their way, with clear conduct, onto the “low side,” the less restrictive housing units at MSP. Most will leave prison soon.

MSP is our state’s largest prison with about 1,400 men in seven custody levels. The rest of our male offenders are in three contract prisons scattered across the state. All 200 female inmates are in Montana Women’s Prison in Billings. (Population of Montana is less than a million; total offender population is 11,000 with 80 percent in community corrections.)

Chemical dependency treatment staff invited Linda Moodry, MSP victim information officer, and me to bring our victim impact message

to the ITU last year. This was an opportunity not to be wasted. The team approach works well for us. When I become tongue tied, Linda steps in, and vice versa. We refer to our script if we lose our focus.

Based on statistics about the U.S. population as a whole, we know that 15 or more people in the room are victims of at least one crime, but few volunteer information. We are not surprised, and this is our opener to discuss why victims often don't want to talk about it. These men seem to feel safe acknowledging friends and family killed by drunk drivers, but no one discloses that they are victims of rape, assault or other violent crimes.

Linda and I are off and running. Perhaps 10 of the inmates have engaged. The remainder will remain in their shells. "Most victims of crime don't want to admit to themselves or others that they or people they love were beaten, raped, shot, stabbed, or lost their property in burglaries, robberies, or arson. When people become crime victims, their lives are changed forever," we tell them, emphasizing the "forever."

We talk about victim self-blame: "At least initially, victims might be-

lieve the crime was their fault. They feel embarrassed and stupid. If only they'd only locked the doors, stayed home, left home earlier, left home later, taken a different route, driven faster, driven slower, gone to a different business, not let the kids ride their bicycles, worn different clothes, had his dinner ready when he came home, cleaned the house better, not called the police...or called the police sooner."

Linda tells the group that victims remain terrified of their offenders years, even decades, after the crime. She explains DOC victim services, including VINE, victim-offender dialogue, victim impact panels, and our new offender accountability letter program. We discuss how these men have victimized their own families, particularly their children. The hour passes quickly and it's time to wrap it up. "We cannot stress enough how profoundly victims are traumatized by crime. This loss of control and feeling of helplessness changes how people live their lives in the days, months, years after the crime..."

Inmates asked so many questions during and after our first presentation that we felt empowered and

successful. The second ITU group shook our confidence because fewer participated and some regarded us with cold stares. We are brainstorming new ways to reach this challenging group before our third trip to the ITU in March.

Please let us know if you would like a copy of our script, or if you have suggestions. Email me at shilander@mt.gov or Linda at lmoodry@mt.gov.

Survivor; continued from page 3

er! These horrifying shrills were later explained to me as the same sounds I was producing. We were greeted by family and friends crying and sobbing right along with us. It was not only the sounds that were upsetting, but also the look in our 16-year-old's eyes when he got home that night. The horror, the helplessness...Unexplainable. I am sure he saw the same in us as he came crying to us! Our 12-year-old had to be woken up in the middle of the night to be told his sister was killed. He just wanted to be held. He did not even know if he was sleeping or awake.

As for our other son and daughter, it was a whole different kind of hell for them. They kept on trying to call Lisa. Of course, no answer. Lisa's boyfriend finally re-traced the way she was supposed to be coming. He came upon the accident not knowing who it was. He told the cops he was looking for his girlfriend and her friends. Her boyfriend had to explain to the cops the color of the girls' hair, who was driving, and the names and phone numbers to their parents. The officer also told him that Lisa had passed away. Her boyfriend called our son and said, "Lisa is dead." The cop removed the phone before he could completely explain the situation.

Our two kids rushed to the hospital. They were moved from room to room. No one wanted to tell them

the truth! A chaplain came in and finally told them about the other 2 girls in the accident and where the paramedics took them. He then informed them that their sister was dead. This was not until 2 a.m. in which they spent three whole hours not knowing the truth. We did not know, they did not know, and they did not know we even knew about the accident.

Our oldest two children were nearly 4 hours away and alone except for their friends. We will never be able to forgive ourselves for not being there for them, but we also had to be home for our other children. We were not suitable to travel as we were completely out of our minds.

Our oldest daughter and her boyfriend decided to come home the following morning. Our son, on the other hand, went out to the scene and took pictures. He also got Lisa's bag and items that were in the car. One officer told him he could have it, and then 45 minutes down the road someone called him and told him he needed to bring Lisa's driver's license back for the autopsy! The man that killed Lisa had the opportunity to refuse a blood alcohol test, but our family was not asked for them to do a pregnancy test, blood alcohol test, and an autopsy on Lisa! Go figure! This detour caused our son to not get home until 4 p.m. on Saturday

afternoon. This was a lot of strain on a 22 year-old, pressure that I know he will never forget.

We were now onto tons of phone calls, visits, and total chaos. We were trying to plan a funeral, not eating or sleeping, throwing up, constantly crying, dehydration, and shaking, and the list goes on and on! That is all a big fog right now. The next minutes, hours, and days filled with questions. What type of person could do this? Who could run from the cops for any reason, let alone driving that fast? And with no headlights on! Drinking! Not only was he driving with alcohol on his breath, he had already been caught two time before this on the same charges. Where is the justice in all of this?

After a few months, we did victim impact statements. We went face to face with the man who killed our daughter. He received 10 years for Lisa, and 5 years for each of the other girls. 20 years total, but we were told he would serve only 2-5 years. Believe it or not, he is still serving time 6 years later.

As time went on, the anger overcomes the hurt. As a mother, I spent lots of time hating everything from the law, God, and life in general. Grief is a non-ending circle. Round and round you continue to go. I had to try to come to some sort of grip on life. I continued to keep in touch with Betty Brown, a victims'

coordinator. I had asked her about meeting with the man who killed Lisa. She explained all of the pros and cons about this procedure. It definitely was not the right time for me yet. I pondered on it for awhile and then decided I was ready. After following the proper procedures, my husband and I met this man in July of 2007. Nervous, anxious, scared, yet yearning for answers to what had changed my life forever!

He came into the room. He looked different than I remember. But I did not really want to remember. We were asked whether we wanted him to talk first or us. We chose for him to speak first. I was expecting uncontrollable anger, tears, and frustration; but what I got was peace and finally some answers! I could see this man in front

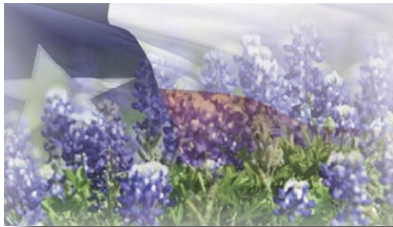
of me trying to explain the reason what had happened. Looking into his eyes, I could see he truly wished he could take this back. This man I had pictured as an animal became a human being to me, a human being that made a horrible decision. He made several mistakes that night that not only changed our family's lives, but his life also. I feel he will carry this with him forever and I also feel he will try to change. I know with his background that changing his life will be hard, so I have tried real hard not to set my expectations too high. I will not take responsibility with where his life goes, but I hope that us meeting and talking with him will help him to make better choices. He can never know what he took from us because I do not think he has ever felt love like

we have. I feel the lack of love in his life is part of the reason he has made the choices he has.

In conclusion, my life was totally put on hold. My heart filled with anger and hurt, my soul feeling some horrible emptiness UNTIL I made some form of peace with the man that had taken our daughter from us forever. Are we completely healed? Never! Have we forgiven him? That is a bit unclear yet, but possibly. Will we ever forget our daughter? Of course not. Will we move on and enjoy life to the best of our ability? That is the goal we strive for everyday, and the reason we get out of bed! We call it "Survival"!

I wish you my best,
Rhonda Johnson

2008 NAVSPIC CONFERENCE & VOD SUMMIT IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



We had extensive training and exchange of information at the annual conference in October 2008. We also had a great time with our colleagues from around the country. We look forward to seeing you at the 2009 conference in Austin, Texas!



VOD Summit Participants



NAVSPIC Banquet



Karin Ho & Anne Seymour



2008 Conference Committee

2008 Member Survey Results

At our national conference, NAVSPIC members were surveyed on their priorities for the year. The survey was designed to help guide the direction of the newsletter and NAVSPIC as an organization. Respondents were asked to select the five highest priorities for their organization from a list of twenty. They were also asked to provide feedback to NAVSPIC as an organization. Below are the responses:

Priorities

1. Outreach to victims
2. Staff victimization
3. Offender apologies/VOD
4. Restitution
5. Policy/legislative issues
6. Volunteer recruitment/development

“What can NAVSPIC do to be helpful to your organization?”

- Keep us gathering and talking
- Continue web-based dialogues on topics of interest
- Offer resource info for agencies nationwide
- Continue offering training opportunities
- Strategize for advocating more funds for corrections-based victim services
- Opportunities for specialized training outside of annual conference
- Utilization of listserve
- Create discussion board for exchange of ideas
- Peer-to-peer guidance on specific cases or situations
- Profiles on web of NAVSPIC members so we can network more easily and see where areas of expertise are located.
- Develop standards or membership criteria so that programs in NAVSPIC can gain greater national attention and funding
- Increase lists of resource agencies or documents
- Expand website, add more links
- Selection of best practices on website

We appreciate all survey participants and will take all of this valuable information into consideration as we develop the newsletter. Thanks again to you all! If you have ideas for the newsletter, please contact Jennie Marsh at (785) 296-7429 or jenniew@doc.ks.gov.