

Post conviction safety planning

The story of a small victim services office

This presentation sponsored by the US DOJ Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) and OVC-TTAC

PRESENTED BY: MARY P. ROCHE, LMHC

DIRECTOR OF VICTIM AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

MARY.ROCHE@IOWA.GOV

And now – a word from our sponsor

Office for Victims of Crime
Training and Technical Assistance Center



Objectives

1. Explore corrections-based safety planning techniques/options.
2. Discuss guidelines for victim safety planning with offender reentry.
3. How to develop and use victim safety planning services when you have minimal victim service staff.

Victim wrap around

what is it and its purpose – generalized

- Enhanced safety planning process during offender reentry.
- Victim centered – by victim request.
- Collaborative safety planning meeting including any of the following:
 - Victim/victim family/supporters
 - Local law enforcement
 - Local victim advocate
 - Community-based corrections staff (parole/work release)
 - Institutional counselor
 - Others as needed

The Iowa Story

- Victim Wrap Around – first developed by Washington’s (the state) DOC Victim Services Program
- Presented at the 2003 NAVSPIC (now NAVAC) conference
- Challenges for Iowa:
 - One person office, or, “I can’t because I don’t have help.”
 - Developing a new program, or, “I can’t because I don’t have time/resources.”
 - Training questions, or, “I can’t because.....I don’t have time/resources.”

Then, Dennis O. case.

Dennis O. case

- What did Dennis do?
- Discovery of Dennis' journal writing:
 - Details of torture
 - Description of desire to harm victim
 - Fantasies
- Referred to DOC's Office of Victim Programs – of course!
- Duty to Warn – permissive in Iowa.
- VWA as model for next steps.

VWA as model for victim safety in Duty to Warn situations

■ Concerns:

- Dennis O. – pending discharge to mental health facility - uncertain
- How to notify victim in least traumatic way – “permissive” Duty to Warn

■ Decisions:

- Use VWA as model
- Contact local law enforcement for collaboration (notifying victim, schedule meeting)
- Who to invite?
- Facilitation of meeting and presentation of journal writings.

■ Follow up:

- Connect victim with local victim advocate for more in-depth safety planning.
- Keep team informed of offender status.

Iowa story continued

1. Use Washington State's materials for Iowa's Victim Wrap Around program.
2. Educate correctional staff of VWA in Duty to Warn situations.
3. Offer VWA to **victims** fearful of offender's pending release.
4. Offer VWA when **staff** have concerns for victim with offender's release.

Concerns (or fret, fret, fret):

- How many referrals will come in? Can I manage?
- Will local CJS allies and advocates want to participate?
- Will this process be useful?

Reasons to “just do it”

“The Grim Reaper”

Nick C.

Bart F.

To: (Victim)

JAN., 4, 201: offender HO#

you need to write A Letter to
The County Atty. & to the County
Clerk of the Courts that you do
Not want me in Jefferson County
OR NEAR FAIRFIELD, IOWA. Because
If you don't write them and tell
them this then I will Break into
Your House again when I get out
of Prison. I will then burn your House
to the ground.

Sign!!

OFFENDER

P.S. FEAR the
GRIM REAPER

To: Victim 3, 1-1-~~08~~

I will kill you and kids and their
kids when I get out of prison. You
sent me here and I will get payback
by killing you or by burning your
house to the ground. If you
don't want this to happen then
you need to tell the county Atty.
to put me back into MINNESOTA.
OTHERWISE (FEAR THE GRIM
REAPER FOREVER)!

SIGN: OFFENDER II

Nick C.

Referral from Psych Staff:

- Concerns about homicidal thoughts and homicidal plans.
- Nick reported he is “resentful to his family” and they were “physically abusive to him growing up and no longer support him.”
- Nick stated he had “unwanted thoughts of going to his parent’s house with a gun, tying them up, getting their ATM card, taking their money, and then killing them.”

Nick’s demographics

- 25 years old
- Alcohol/meth/marijuana addiction
- Suicidal ideations
- 11 total hospitalizations - substance abuse tx, psychiatric ward
- Diagnosed: anxiety, depression, anger/impulsivity/drug addiction

Concerns, anyone?

Bart F.

- Bart convicted of Kidnapping 2 cts. /Sexual Assault 2nd Degree 2 cts. 1978. No victim registration in 1978.
- Sentence: 100 years
- Victim told: “He will die in prison. You never have to worry about him.”
- Iowa: Earned time + Honor Time = Discharge date of 2017
- VWA completed and included Attorney General’s Prosecutor/Victim Coordinator
- Court determined he was not an SVP. Discharged.

Note this 

Victims were only notified of pending release due to the potential Civil Commitment of Bart F. as a Sexually Violent Predator.

VWA - Basic steps

I. VICTIM REFERRAL RE OFFENDER RELEASE

- A. Identify primary issues of concern
- B. Ask victim for input on who to include in VWA meeting.
- C. Contact collaborators
- D. Ask for local assistance in scheduling meeting place/date/time
- E. Use EMAIL if possible for scheduling
- F. Schedule and facilitate meeting
- G. Provide follow-up

EXAMPLE –

See Iowa's VWA Form Handout

II. DUTY TO WARN/DOC REFERRAL

- A. Determine best avenue to inform/invite victim.
- B. Same as above

More of Iowa's story

- Another NAVAC Conference and MN's Choice Program
 - Offers enhanced victim communication with DOC regarding concerns during an offender's incarceration and release plans.
 - Utilizes a computer online program.
- Concerns:
 - One-person office, or, "I can't do this – I'm only one person!"
 - No computer program, or, "I can't do this – we have no money for a program!"
 - Develop modification, or, "I can't do this – I don't have time!"

Then...Victor W.'s case

Victor W.

- Convicted of Kidnapping 2nd, Attempted Sexual Assault, Willful Injury

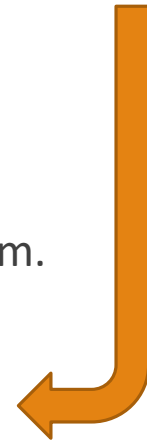
- One of four men who abducted, raped and beat Lisa A.
- One of the other men shot her and all left her off side of a road.
- Lisa crawled to safety.
- Later died in hospital.

How did this happen?

- Important facts:

- Lisa's mother participated in parole hearings.
- Lisa's mother was registered with DOC.
- Board of Parole and DOC Counselors can view victims registrations in our offender file system.

DOC and BOP approved Victor's release to Work Release **2 blocks from Lisa's mother.**



Another safety planning tool: VIS

- Created basic Victim Input Statement (stolen from MN Choice Program and adapted).
- Mail to all registered victims upon registration.
- Post on DOC website for online submissions.
- Provide to Institutional Counselors.
- Educate Board of Parole re the Victim Input Statement.

*EXAMPLE –
See Iowa's Victim Input
Statement Handout*

You can do this, too.

- Garner support from:

- Your advisory council (if you have one)
- DOC Management
- Local victim advocates

- “Steal” from other states:

- Request materials – permission to adapt.
- Adapt to fit what you can handle.
- Find “helpers” where you can – institution staff, community-based corrections, advocates, volunteers

And then....**Just do it.**



Questions/Concerns
