



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

APPLICABILITY
PRISON
FACILITY/SPANISH MANUAL

REVISION DATE
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POLICY

TITLE
VICTIM-OFFENDER FACILITATED COMMUNICATION

REVIEW/REVISION HISTORY:

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SUMMARY OF REVISION/REVIEW:


Major changes. Read carefully!

APPROVED:

Signature on file

TIM LANG, Secretary
 Department of Corrections

7/21/25
 Date Signed

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REFERENCES:


DOC 100.100 is hereby incorporated into this policy; DOC 200.900 Travel Regulations; DOC 450.300 Visits for Incarcerated Individuals

POLICY:

- I. The Department recognizes the value of allowing crime victims, including surviving family in homicide cases, to participate in facilitated communication with the perpetrator if housed in a Washington State Prison.
 - A. Victim-offender dialogue meetings are intended to assist the victim/surviving family member in dealing with the impact of the crime.
- II. Participation will not be used by the individual as a strategy for influencing custody status, an early release date, or other conditions of incarceration. Participation will be stopped if used for the purpose of facilitating release.

DIRECTIVE:

- I. General Requirements
 - A. The safety of all participants will be the priority in Department decision making.
 - B. A one-time facilitated communication may occur for any crime that has been either charged or addressed in a plea agreement, for which legal proceedings have been concluded, whether the individual is convicted through a guilty plea or a guilty verdict.
 - C. Participation is voluntary and may be discontinued at any time.
 1. The victim/surviving family member must be at least 18 years of age to participate.
 - D. Communication must not violate any court order (e.g., protective/no contact/restraining order).
 1. Participants will be required to disclose any court orders and Department records will be reviewed to determine if any court orders exist.
 2. If there is a criminal no-contact order in place, the Victim Services Program (VSP) Manager/designee will request that the prosecuting attorney file a motion for a one-time exception from the court to allow the communication.

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3. If there is a civil protection order in place, the protected party will be responsible for obtaining an exception from the court to allow the communication.

E. Communication may be stopped at any time and will be stopped if perceived as manipulative, or any party becomes physically/verbally abusive or poses an imminent threat of becoming abusive.

II. Victim-Offender Dialogue Meeting

A. Meeting Process

1. Victim-offender dialogue meetings require Superintendent approval. A meeting will not be authorized if:
 - a. The individual is denying or minimizing responsibility for the crime, as assessed by the VSP.
 - b. It compromises the protection of any participant or facility safety/security.
2. Only the victim/surviving family member may request a dialogue meeting through the VSP.
 - a. The meeting will not occur if there is any indication the request was initiated by anyone other than the victim/surviving family member.
3. The VSP Manager/designee will review material in the electronic file and consult with facility mental health employees/contract staff and/or the Sex Offense Treatment and Assessment Program's clinical personnel, when appropriate, to consider any information regarding potential harm to the victim/surviving family member or individual.
 - a. The VSP Manager will make an initial determination of the individual's ability to participate.
4. VSP employees will provide the victim/surviving family member participation materials to include:
 - a. A copy of this policy
 - b. DOC 02-195 Victim/Survivor Dialogue Meeting Application, and
 - c. DOC 05-370 Request for Criminal History Record Information WASIS/NCIC III Check NCIC/WACIC Check

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5. The victim/surviving family member will complete the application and submit it to the VSP Manager for review and approval.

B. Facilitators

1. The VSP Manager/designee will identify a two person facilitator team to assist in the dialogue meeting process.
 - a. A single facilitator may be assigned on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the VSP Manager.
2. Facilitators will:
 - a. Meet with the VSP to review the application and other relevant information.
 - b. Submit to a background check and complete participation documents.
 - c. Comply with visitor guidelines per DOC 450.300 Visits for Incarcerated Individuals.
 - d. Have completed basic facilitator training curriculum endorsed by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) and facilitated by an NIC certified trainer, or any equivalent training as approved by the VSP Manager, on a case-by-case basis.
 - e. Set and adhere to clear objectives for the meeting and ensure the discussion stays on topic.
3. Facilitators will be reimbursed for travel costs required for the preparation and facilitation of dialogue meetings per DOC 200.900 Travel Regulations.
 - a. Overnight travel costs will be authorized in advance by the appropriate Appointing Authority.

C. Incarcerated Individual Participation and Approval

1. The Correctional Program Manager (CPM)/designee will arrange for the VSP Manager/designee to meet with the individual as soon as possible to provide information about the dialogue process and inquire about the individual's willingness to participate.

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- a. Facility employees/contract staff will not disclose specific information regarding the meeting to the individual (e.g., purpose, name/position of visitor).
2. If the individual is willing to participate, the VSP Manager/designee will:
 - a. Have the individual review and sign the program packet materials.
 - b. Provide a description of the proposed meeting to the Superintendent for final approval/denial.
 - 1) The Superintendent may conditionally approve the meeting subject to completion of additional conditions.
 - a) The VSP Manager/designee will notify the Superintendent once the additional conditions are met.

D. Meeting Preparation

1. Participants will each meet with the facilitator(s) separately a minimum of 3 times to prepare for the meeting.
2. The facilitator(s) will maintain contact with the VSP Manager/designee regarding meeting preparation and notify the VSP Manager/designee when complete, who will:
 - a. Contact the CPM/designee and Captain, or Lieutenant at stand-alone Level 2 facilities, to schedule the meeting and identify a location.
 - 1) Employees will consider safety, security, and privacy when selecting the meeting location.

E. Day of the Meeting

1. The facilitator(s) will meet separately with each of the participants and provide options for the physical configuration of the meeting within the limitations of the facility's design, to include, when possible:
 - a. A room without a barrier and a custody employee present or in direct view of participants, or

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- b. A barrier between the participants to allow visual and auditory contact, but no physical contact, with a custody employee present or in direct view of the participants.
2. The victim/surviving family member may request the meeting configuration be modified for safety and/or comfort. Employees will make the final determination based on the safety/security of all participants and the facility.
3. If the meeting is terminated for adverse reasons, the employee(s) present will complete DOC 21-917 Incident Report and document the circumstances as a Behavior Observation Entry and in the Safety Concerns Narrative section under the Safety Concerns banner in the electronic file.

F. Debriefing

1. Immediately following the meeting, the facilitator(s) will meet separately with each participant for debriefing sessions.
2. The need for additional debriefing/counseling with the individual after the facilitator(s) has left the facility will be assessed by classification, mental health, or health services employees/contract staff and provided by qualified personnel.
3. The facilitator(s) will provide a verbal briefing on the outcome of the meeting to the VSP Manager/designee.
4. Facilitators will conduct a follow-up debriefing with each party separately approximately 30 days after the victim-offender dialogue meeting.


G. Recordkeeping

1. The VSP will maintain general information regarding the meeting process to include names, dates and written participant feedback. The content of the meeting will not be documented/recorded.


III. Accountability Letter Bank (ALB)

A. The VSP will maintain an ALB to provide individuals with an opportunity to communicate the following to the victims/surviving family member:

1. Acknowledgment of fault and responsibility for the injury, insult, and pain caused.

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2. Their understanding of the harm caused by the crime(s), and
 3. The steps the individual has taken toward accountability for their criminal behavior.
- B. The content of the letter will not offer excuses or request forgiveness. Individuals may refer to [Accountability Letter Bank - A Writing Guide](#).
- C. Individual Participation
1. Before submitting a letter, individuals will be encouraged to discuss the process with a support person (e.g., case manager, treatment provider, Religious Coordinator) and receive feedback on the letter's content.
 2. Letters will be submitted to the VSP using DOC 02-395 Accountability Letter Bank - Request to Participate.
 - a. Letters may be written to more than one victim/surviving family member.
 - b. Letters will not be sent directly to victims/surviving family members, victim advocates, or another intermediary.
 3. VSP employees will review the letter(s) before acceptance for deposit in the ALB. Letters will be returned if they do not meet the intended purpose or are inappropriate and may be reconsidered with revisions.
 4. Letters accepted for deposit will be logged and stored until the letter is received by the victim/surviving family member or the individual submits a written request to withdraw the letter.
- D. Victim/Surviving Family Participation
1. Victims/surviving family may register to receive notification when a letter addressed to them is deposited in the ALB.
 2. Facilitated communication between the participants during incarceration will be coordinated and approved by the VSP Manager.
 - a. The victim/surviving family member may:
 - 1) Accept the letter by email or mail,
 - 2) Meet with a VSP employee to read and discuss the letter, or
 - 3) Deny the letter but choose to accept at a later date, if available.

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3. VSP employees will provide information to victims/surviving family member about potential effects from reading the letter and referrals to local support services, as needed.
4. The victim/surviving family member will decide if the individual will be notified that the letter was received.

IV. Information/Training

- A. General information about the facilitated communication processes will be provided to victim organizations to share with victims/surviving family. Additional information and training will be provided to victim service providers, as needed.

DEFINITIONS:

Words/terms appearing in this policy may be defined in the glossary section of the Policy Manual.

ATTACHMENTS:

None

DOC FORMS:

- DOC 02-195 Victim/Survivor Dialogue Meeting Application
- DOC 02-395 Accountability Letter Bank - Request to Participate
- DOC 05-370 Request for Criminal History Record Information WASIS/NCIC III Check NCIC/WACIC Check
- DOC 21-917 Incident Report