

Unit 2: Introduction to Victim Impact



Time Required: 2.5 hours

Resources Needed

- Chalkboard or tear sheets
- Crime Clock activity
- Ripple Effect activity
- “I Am Not A Victim” activity

Prior to the Session

Prepare for the Crime Clock activity:

- Review the Crime Clock activity scenarios in appendix B and update any crime statistics, as necessary.
- Ensure that the scenarios are appropriate for your class and state crime statistics.
- Cut each scenario and its corresponding statistic into slips of paper, to be handed out later in class. These also will be used in the How Are People Harmed activity.
- Fold up the paper slips so that participants cannot see what is written.

Prepare for the Victims’ Rights activity by compiling a list of your state’s victims’ rights and offenders’ rights.

Prepare for the “I Am Not a Victim” activity:

- Turn to the “I Am Not a Victim” statements in appendix C.
- Cut the statements into slips of paper, to be handed out later in class.

Objectives

- Define **primary and secondary victims**.
- Discuss victims’ rights.
- Discuss how the effects of crime ripple throughout a community.
- Discuss areas of impact.



Facilitator Tip

- Use interaction techniques to foster learning and self-discovery versus lecturing or browbeating.
- Keep the focus on victims.
- Reinforce ground rules and structure.

Introduction



10 minutes



Set the tone for a structured, yet interactive class.

- Review ground rules if necessary.
- Write the following questions on a tear sheet or chalkboard:
 - What rights do victims have?
 - Who is harmed by crime?
 - How are victims harmed?
- Randomly hand out one Crime Clock paper slip to all but two or three participants. Give those two or three participants two slips of paper. Instruct participants to set the paper aside and not look at it, and have a participant note the time.

Victims' Rights



20 minutes

Be sure to review the materials on victims' rights and the victim experience before conducting this group activity and followup discussion.



Facilitator Note

As offenders go from arrest to disposition, they tend to focus on themselves and what they experience. They focus on making sure that they can exercise their rights and tend to think they have very few rights. The goal of this activity is to show the imbalance between victims' rights and offenders' rights. Seeing this imbalance may help offenders begin to shift their thinking from themselves to crime victims.



Rights of Offenders versus Rights of Victims Activity

- Write the words "Offenders' Rights" and "Victims' Rights" in two columns on a tear sheet or chalkboard.
- Without prompting, have participants discuss and then list the rights of each under the two categories. Refer to the copy of your state's victims' rights and offenders' rights as needed.



Discuss the following with the group:

- Did anything surprise you about these lists?
- How do you think a victim would feel about these lists?
- What rights do you think victims would like to add?
- What have you learned from this activity?

Core Victim Rights

List the following core rights to which victims are entitled and discuss them with the group:

- **Information/referral:** The right to information about the offender, the case proceedings, and the offender's disposition. The right to be referred to people and agencies that can assist them.

- **Notification:** The right to receive notice of offender status such as arrest, release on bail, and release to parole.
- **Safety:** The right to protection beginning at the crime scene and continuing through the offender's release on parole.
- **Restitution/compensation:** The right to seek restitution directly from the offender for losses resulting from the crime. In addition, victims have the right to apply to their respective State Victim Compensation Fund for financial assistance.
- **Participation:** The right to attend certain proceedings and/or submit a victim impact statement.

Crime Clock Activity



20 minutes



- Have a participant note the time.
- Ask participants to stand one at a time, read the scenarios and statistics on their slips of paper, and remain standing. (Participants may ask for reading assistance.)
- After the last participant reads his or her slip of paper, quiet the group and have participants look around the room.
- Tell the group that in the time period since the class started, each of these scenarios has occurred.
- Have participants sit down.
- Allow 2–3 minutes of quiet time, and then collect the slips of paper.

Ask participants the following:

- Those of you who had one slip of paper, what are you thinking and what are you feeling?
- Those of you who had two slips of paper, what are you thinking and what are you feeling?
- How did it feel not to have a choice about which type of crime you encountered?
- What have you learned, if anything?



Facilitator Note

This activity teaches or reminds participants about the prevalence of crime and violence. Most participants have been exposed to violence and have probably become desensitized. The goal of this activity is to make crime more personal and to confront participants with a victim's perspective about the world.

Remind participants that all of these crimes will occur either while they are in class or by the end of the day. Statistically, their families, friends, and acquaintances could be victimized. Remind them that victims do not have a choice about what will happen, when it will happen, or how often they may be a victim of crime. Being victimized once can be devastating for people . . . have participants imagine being victimized more than once.

Defining Who Is a Victim



10 minutes



Facilitator Note

For purposes of this class, "crime victim" includes a person, a group, business, or organization that has been harmed and/or injured due to criminal activity. Do not allow offenders to debate the legal definition of a victim or argue whether or not someone is a victim because the criminal charges were dropped. The focus should remain the impact of crime on victims.

Who Is Harmed?



30 minutes

It is important for participants to understand who they have harmed. The preferred language for referring to the people who are harmed varies from state to state and person to person. Encourage participants to understand these concepts and not to memorize the definitions.

Types of Victims

- The categories **victim**, **primary victim**, **immediate victim**, and **direct victim** include people whom the offender directly harms. Some victims prefer to call themselves survivors.
- **Survivors** are usually considered family and close friends of a homicide victim. Some survivors call themselves “victims.”
- **Secondary victims** or **covictims** have a close relationship with the victim.

Crime affects more than the immediate victim. It can have a ripple or domino effect that spreads to victims’ extended families, their social circles, their professional communities, and to community members in general. Even people living in other states or countries who hear about a crime may be deeply distressed.



Conduct a Ripple Effect Activity



List the following categories on a tear sheet or chalkboard:

- Extended family
- Social circle
- Professional community
- Community

Divide participants into small groups or pairs and assign the following relationship words to each: grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, half-brother, foster sister, best friend, mentor, teacher, faith leader, walking/running partner, workout partner, neighbor, BBQ buddy, football partner, store owner, mayor, Boys & Girls Club staff, taxi driver, newspaper delivery person, mail delivery person. Next, have the pairs list the words under the categories that best match.

How Are People Harmed?



30 minutes



Being victimized is a shocking experience for people. Regardless of the type of crime, victims may experience intense fear, helplessness, or horror, and may even develop posttraumatic stress disorder. Crime victims may become afraid of people who share the offender’s characteristics (e.g., age, race, voice tone, clothing, body language, or distinctive features). They may react negatively to smells or noises that remind them of the crime scene. Their behavior may change toward the people around them. Symptoms may last for a short time or linger for years.

Although victims react in individual ways, there are common themes that offenders need to understand. Facilitators do not have to be experts in this area: the goals are to simply focus on the basic areas of impact (physical, financial, emotional, and religious/spiritual) and to facilitate offenders’ discussion and activities.

Areas of Impact Activity

Discuss the four areas of victim impact: physical, financial, emotional, and religious/spiritual. (Be sure to review The Victim Perspective before leading a discussion.) For each type of victim impact, ask participants to name one example of a crime using their Crime Clock slips of paper (e.g., physical impact: “A drunk driver hit my car and killed my Dad. I was hurt badly.”).

**Facilitator Tip**

Remind participants that these areas of victimization are a constant theme throughout the class. During activities, speaker presentations and video clips, they will be asked to focus on the four areas of impact and will be provided with specific examples of how victims are harmed.

“I’m Not a Victim” Activity



15 minutes



Hand out the “I Am Not a Victim” statements that you prepared before class.

- Have participants read each statement in order.
- Ask: “What did you notice as more statements were read?” “What did you learn about victimization?”

**Facilitator Note**

The goal of the activity is for participants to understand how people are affected even if they are not a direct victim or do not come into contact with a victim. The statements progressively show how sometimes just hearing about a crime can change people’s thoughts, feelings, and lifestyles.

After a Crime Victimization



10 minutes

Review the aftereffects of crime victimization with participants. Have participants come up with additional points.

After the crime, victims:

- Worry about being believed or about being blamed or second-guessed for their behavior before, during, and after the crime.
- May become upset and/or have flashbacks in reaction to certain noises, smells, times of day, or times of month that remind them of the victimization.
- May become afraid of people who share the offender’s characteristics: age, race, voice tone, clothing, body language, or distinctive features.
- Spend much time filling out forms for the police, finding paperwork to give to the insurance company, making decisions about funeral arrangements, paying their bills, and caring for their distraught families.

Review Lessons



10 minutes



Solicit feedback from the group and record responses under each of the following questions:

- What rights do victims have?
- Who is harmed by crime?
- How are victims harmed?

Discussion/Wrap-Up

Discuss what participants learned in the Introduction to Victim Impact unit. Address any questions they may have.