

Unit 2: Introduction to Victim Impact

Before we get into the core crime units, we will define who is a victim and talk about victims' rights. Who do you think has more rights under the criminal justice system: victims or offenders?

As a group, we will discuss and list the rights of each 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: There are several general core rights to which victims are entitled. These include—

- **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/or 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.

Defining Who Is a Victim

During this program, the term "crime victim" will stand for any person or persons, group, business, or organization that has been harmed and/or injured as a result of criminal activity. A "ripple effect" describes how the impact of crime can spread beyond the immediate victim throughout his or her family, friends, and community.

Types of victims:

- Primary, immediate, or direct victims have been directly harmed by an offender. Some victims 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.



Areas of Impact: How Are People Harmed?

Being victimized is a shocking experience for people. Regardless of the type of crime, victims may experience intense fear, helplessness, or horror. Some 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 four basic areas of impact for all victims: physical, financial, emotional, and religious/spiritual. Keep these in mind because areas of impact will be discussed in each unit.

After the Crime, Victims—

- May 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.
- May 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.

