American Correctional Association

PUBLIC CORRECTIONAL POLICY ON VICTIMS OF CRIME

1985-10

Introduction:

Victims of crime suffer financial, emotional and/or physical trauma. The criminal justice and juvenile justice systems are dedicated to the principle of fair and equal justice for all people. Victims’ rights should be pursued within the criminal justice and juvenile justice systems to ensure their needs are addressed.

Policy Statement:

Victims have the right to be treated with respect and compassion, to be informed about and involved in the criminal and juvenile justice process as it affects their lives, to be protected from harm and intimidation, and to be provided necessary financial and support services that attempt to restore a sense of justice to them. Although many components of the criminal justice and juvenile justice systems share in the responsibility of providing services to victims of crime, the corrections community has an important role in this process and should:

A. Support activities that advocate for the rights of the victims;

B. Promote local, state and federal legislation that emphasizes victims’ rights and the development and enhancement of victim services;

C. Support efforts by federal, state and local units of government to increase funding and improved use of existing resources to support victim services and programs;

D. Advocate for programs in which offenders provide restitution to victims, compensation and service to the community, and whenever possible, hold offenders financially responsible for their crimes;

E. Promote active participation of victims in the criminal justice and juvenile justice processes, including the opportunity to attend and be heard and/or to participate in juvenile and adult institutional release and/or parole release hearings;

F. provide separate waiting areas for victims and their families where offenders and victims may be present at the same hearing;
G. Provide advance notification of institutional release when safe and consistent with applicable law or expeditious notification of an escape to victims;

H. Educate, with sensitivity to culture, language and disability needs, victims and victim service providers about correctional practices and involve correctional personnel in victim advocacy activities;

I. Educate justice officials regarding victims’ services, the impact of crime on victims, and promote sensitivity to victims’ rights;

J. Operate victims’ assistance programs that appropriately fall within the responsibility of the field of corrections. Correctional agencies should, at a minimum but not limited to:
   
   • Designate personnel in each agency to respond to questions and concerns of victims and to ensure that appropriate victim notification and assistance procedures are implemented;
   
   • Develop and distribute materials describing the correctional system and specific victims’ rights within that system;
   
   • Support and facilitate the use of victim impact statements in sentencing, post-conviction reviews and programming processes; and
   
   • Provide appropriate victims’ services to staff that are assaulted, held hostage or otherwise victimized.

K. Promote the use of community resources and volunteers to serve the needs of victims.

This Public Correctional Policy was unanimously ratified by the American Correctional Association Delegate Assembly at the Winter Conference in Orlando, Fla, Jan. 20, 1985. It was last reviewed and affirmed at the 145th Congress of Correction in Indianapolis, IN on August 19, 2015.