

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
PAROLE DIVISION**



**POLICY AND
OPERATING PROCEDURE**

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SUPERSEDES: N/A

SUBJECT: VICTIM IMPACT PANEL (VIP) ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

AUTHORITY: N/A

PURPOSE: To establish administrative procedures, definitions of terms and appropriate programming when preparing and conducting Victim Impact Panel classes.

DEFINITIONS:

District Reentry Center (DRC) Core Programming

DRC Core Programming includes cognitive intervention, substance abuse education, anger management, victim impact panel classes, and pre-employment preparation classes for unemployed offenders. All offenders on a DRC caseload are required to complete a cognitive intervention class and a Victim Impact Panel (VIP) in order to complete caseload requirements.

Victim Impact Panel (VIP)

The panel provides a safe, appropriate outlet for victims/survivors to express their feelings about their victimization, which promotes personal healing. The VIP setting allows offenders to come face to face with those who have been victimized by crime. The panel consists of approximately 2-3 people who have been victims of crime. The panelists explain how crime has affected their lives, including financial, psychological and physical consequences. The duration of the panel is typically 1-2 hours in length, with offenders allowed time at the conclusion to ask questions of the panelists, and the completion of an evaluation. If a panel is not available, Parole Division staff shall utilize the Office for Victim Services (OVS) DVD that contains individuals who share their experience as crime victims and the impact it has had on their lives. The DVD is utilized in conjunction with the Victim Impact curriculum, Listen and Learn which is utilized as part of the VIP Prep class..

Victim Impact Panel Prep class (VIP Prep class)

The VIP Prep class serves as an introduction for offenders to the VIP by identifying the overall process and what will be expected of them when the panel is conducted. The prep class utilizes the OVC, Listen and Learn curriculum which teaches offenders how crime affects the victim and the victim's family, friends, and community, as well as how crime affects their own families, friends and communities. It is essential that the offender attends and completes the VIP Prep class prior to attending the actual VIP or viewing the DVD. This class is coordinated and conducted by the DRC Unit Supervisor and/or designee.

PROCEDURE:

I. VIP PREP CLASS CURRICULUM PROCESS

The approved VIP Prep class curriculum is the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn*. The curriculum is available on the document library, attached to PD/POP 3.13.1, *District Reentry Center Administrative and Caseload Supervision Guidelines*. This curriculum is also available in an electronic format by accessing OVC's website at https://www.ovcttac.gov/victimimpact/units_toc.cfm. The DRC unit supervisor shall review each crime topic lesson to customize their prep class agenda to fit time frame needs and to address offense histories of the offenders scheduled to attend.

- A. The duration of the prep class is a maximum of three (3) hours. The DRC unit supervisor will determine if the prep class can be conducted on one (1) day, the week prior to the actual panel or one (1) class a week for three (3) weeks leading up to the actual panel, if applicable.
- B. Crime topics discussed include, but are not limited to: property crime, assault, robbery, hate and bias, gang violence, sexual assault, child abuse and neglect, drunk and impaired driving, and murder. Video clips of victims speaking about their experience have been integrated into each lesson.
- C. The lessons discuss:
 - 1. Vocabulary related to the crime;
 - 2. Legal definition of particular crime;
 - 3. Legal consequences;
 - 4. Impact on victims such as health and insurance costs, financial issues, emotional trauma, and time lost;
 - 5. Understanding the importance of holding perpetrator accountable;
 - 6. True stories; and
 - 7. Group activity and discussion.
- D. Advise offenders of VIP protocol, to include appropriate offender behavior and expectations.

II. SCHEDULING PROCESS

- A. When VIP coordination with Victim Services Division (VSD) is an available resource, the following scheduling process shall occur:

1. DRC unit supervisor shall email the DRC program supervisor II, Specialized Programs, requesting a proposed date and time at least four (4) weeks in advance of a VIP. The email shall include the contact person's name/office phone number and the physical address of the location where the proposed VIP is to take place.
 2. A maximum of fifty (50) offenders will be permitted to attend a VIP.
 3. If it is determined that more than (50) offenders have been identified to attend the VIP, additional VIP dates shall be requested.
 4. Prior to submitting the requested date, the DRC unit supervisor shall ensure there are no schedule conflicts within their region.
 5. The DRC program supervisor II, Specialized Programs, shall submit the VIP request to Victim Services and will notify the DRC unit supervisor of approval or if Victim Services has a scheduling conflict with the requested date. Upon approval, the VIP Prep class process shall be pursued.
- B. When VIP coordination with VSD is not available and the use of the DVD will be utilized in place of the in-person panel, the DRC unit supervisor shall determine the VIP class schedule.

III. VIP PROCESS

- A. The role of DRC staff at the VIP is to maintain an environment most conducive to offender management and offender support. Staff shall be stationed in and around the offender audience to observe offender behavior. Staff shall monitor the offender audience to ensure that their behavior is appropriate while being aware of the impact the discussion may have on all attendees. If an offender's behavior needs to be corrected, it should be done in a discreet and effective manner.
- B. In preparation of an in-person VIP, the DRC unit supervisor shall:
1. Designate an appropriate amount of staff to assist in monitoring the scheduled number of offenders.
 2. Identify and secure a room large enough to accommodate VIP attendees, DRC staff, and victim panelists. A separate waiting room shall also be identified to be used by the Victim Services representative and panelists prior to and after the VIP for preparation and debriefing of panelists.
 3. Provide a table and chairs placed at the front of the room for the panelists to sit behind. A table skirt is preferred, but not a necessity. The table skirt provides a visual boundary and can promote the feeling of separation and safety for the victims. Offender chairs are to be arranged in theater style or a similar format.
 4. Provide a microphone, if necessary, depending on the size of the room; and

5. Provide tissue and water on the table for the victim panelists.
- C. At the time of the VIP, the designated DRC staff shall:
1. Obtain offenders signature next to their name on a pre-printed attendance roster (completed by the DRC unit supervisor and/or designee);
 2. Advise attendees that all communication devices (cell phones, pagers, etc.) shall be turned off during the panel and direct them to the panel room;
 3. Maintain an appropriate environment in order for the VIP to occur. Once the panel is in progress, offenders shall not be permitted to enter the room;
 4. If staff instruct an offender to correct any inappropriate and/or disruptive behavior (e.g. using cell phone, disrupting the panelists, sleeping, etc.) and the offender fails to comply:
 - a. The offender shall be escorted out of the room where the panel is being conducted;
 - b. The offender shall not be given credit for attendance; and
 - c. The supervising officer shall address the non-compliance behavior in accordance with PD/POP 4.1.1, *Processing Violations of the Rules and Conditions of Release*.
 5. During the in-person panel, allow the Victim Services representative to facilitate the panel and to call upon offenders for questions. The facilitator will ensure all panelists receive equal “talk time” and questions. Keep in mind the facilitator may use silence as a tool to elicit more questions from the offenders. If there are questions, attendees shall raise a hand in order to be noticed and called upon.
 6. Distribute the *VIP Offender Evaluation* forms after completion of the panel. The facilitator will indicate when to pass them out. Completed originals shall be mailed to the DRC program supervisor II, Specialized Programs.
- D. At the conclusion of the in-person panel, the facilitator will escort the victim panelists to the separate waiting room. Panelists debriefing will take place with Victim Services staff and may last between 15-30 minutes. If more time is needed, the facilitator will suggest the panelists go elsewhere to continue the debriefing. If officers would like to be involved in the debriefing they may ask the facilitator. Some victims are comfortable with this, and some may not be.

IV. STATISTICAL REPORTING

The DRC unit supervisor shall document the total number of offenders referred, enrolled, completed successfully, and terminated unsuccessfully within the “Victim Impact Panel classes” section of the *District Reentry Center Monthly Program Report* form (PSV-27). Refer to PD/POP

3.13.1 *District Reentry Center (DRC) Administrative and Caseload Supervision Guidelines* for additional information on statistical reporting of DRC caseloads.

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