

Frequently Asked Questions

Why would a victim/survivor want to meet with the inmate or supervisee?

- ◆ Victims are often left with questions that only the perpetrator of the crime can answer, such as “What happened before and during the crime?” “Why did you pick me?” “Was my loved one in pain?”
- ◆ Most victims who participate in VOD find that the process moves them forward in their healing journey.
- ◆ Some victims want to talk about exactly how their life has been affected by the crime.
- ◆ Victims often want to see for themselves what kind of person the inmate or supervisee has become and whether they are sorry.

Why would an inmate or supervisee want to meet with a victim/survivor?

- ◆ Some may want the opportunity to apologize and express remorse to the victim/survivor.
- ◆ Answering the victim’s questions and providing information about the crime is one way to demonstrate personal accountability and attempt to make amends.

Is VOD right for me?

- ◆ Please contact the VOD Coordinator for specific questions.

Where is the inmate in my case?

- ◆ <http://vadoc.virginia.gov/offenders/locator/index.aspx>

How Long Does the Process Take?

A VOD is not simply a conversation. It requires a rigorous preparation process with both the victim/survivor and the inmate or supervisee. Over a period of several months, a trained facilitator meets with the victim/survivor and the inmate/supervisee separately to prepare for the actual dialogue. The fundamental role of the facilitator is to build a relationship of trust and honesty with both participants, which allows each of them to feel safe and comfortable in order to have a successful dialogue.

The Virginia Department of Corrections makes every effort to accommodate VOD requests from victims/survivors, subject to conditions and restrictions of the Commonwealth and the DOC.

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Virginia Department of Corrections VICTIM/OFFENDER DIALOGUE PROGRAM (VOD)



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What is Victim Offender Dialogue?

- ◆ Victim/Offender Dialogue (VOD) is a victim-centered, confidential meeting between a victim/survivor and the perpetrator who committed the crime against them, or in some cases, against their immediate family member.
- ◆ The experience of interaction with the inmate or supervisee in a safe setting provides the victim/survivor full voice to the pain and trauma they have experienced.
- ◆ The objective is for the victim/survivor to be heard and to provide an opportunity to obtain answers and information only the perpetrator of the crime will know.
- ◆ When inmates/supervisees are able to listen and understand the complexity of feelings about the harm they caused and take full responsibility, they can better understand the devastating effects of their actions.
- ◆ The process is not about forgiveness, compromise or reconciliation. Although forgiveness may occur, that decision is left to the victim/survivor.

How does the VOD process work?

- ◆ When a victim/survivor requests a VOD, Victim Services Unit staff prepares the case for DOC review. If staff recommendations are favorable and the inmate/supervisee agrees, the VOD is assigned to a trained facilitator.
- ◆ The facilitator meets regularly (usually monthly) with the victim/survivor and the inmate/supervisee separately over several months.
- ◆ The VOD process is totally voluntary and any participant may choose to stop the process at any time. Participation in preparation does not guarantee that a dialogue will occur.
- ◆ When the facilitator and participants are ready, a VOD meeting is scheduled to take place at the facility where the inmate is assigned, or at a safe community location if the supervisee is on probation or parole.
- ◆ The VOD meeting is a one-time event.
- ◆ Several weeks after the dialogue, the facilitator offers separate follow-up meetings with each participant.

How Can I Participate in VOD?

- ◆ The victim/survivor must initiate the process by calling, writing or e-mailing the Department of Corrections Victim Services Unit. Contact information is listed on the front of this brochure.
- ◆ Inmates/supervisees are not allowed to initiate a VOD.

What if I change my mind?

Any participant may decide at any time to discontinue the VOD process. Inmates/supervisees rarely discontinue the process once they have agreed to participate. Victim/survivors, at times, process their feelings during the preparation phase and discover that they don't need to go forward with a face-to-face VOD.

Will a VOD Impact the Sentence or Release Supervision of the Inmate/Supervisee?

No, participation does not impact sentencing, parole, or any other status of incarceration or supervision. Inmates/supervisees receive no tangible benefits or special privileges for participating.