

Integrating Victim Impact Statement Issues into Offender Casework

In 1999, the California Youth Authority developed a “checklist” for utilizing victim impact statement information in casework with juvenile offenders. Such information should only be utilized *with express permission from victims*, who are often willing to have their VIS information used to help hold their offenders accountable for their actions.

- Compare the offender's version of the offense with the victim's statement and other information in the pre-sentence investigation report.
- What information is the offender omitting?
- What information does the offender need to learn about the impact of the crime on the victim?
- Was the victim physically injured?
- Did the victim require medical attention, counseling or hospitalization?
- Is the victim afraid, or have any concerns for his/her safety and security?
- Is the offender aware of his/her primary victim? Secondary victims and others?
- What issues would the victim like to have the offender address?
- What behavior(s) would the victim want the offender to change?
- Keep the offender focused on the ways victims are affected – financially, physically, emotionally and spiritually.
- Educate offenders about the “longevity” of the impact of crime on victims and the community.
- Focus on what they are responsible for and to whom they are accountable.
- Does the offender owe the victim restitution?
- How can the offender be reminded of these obligations?
- Does the offender understand the purpose and value of restitution?
- Remind the offender that he/she can pay voluntary restitution.
- Remind offenders of the importance and value of community service and “giving back.”
- Encourage community service to be served in a way that heals the harm to the community affected by the crime.
- Encourage the offender to write a letter of apology that addresses the fact that the offender recognizes the impact the crime has had on the victim (such letters should only be given to the victim if it is desired; otherwise, it can be maintained in the offender's case file).