

Restoring Victims To Their Rightful Place in Society

THE IMPACT OF SERIOUS CRIME ON VICTIMS AND HOW WE CAN HELP
THEM FIND THEIR WAY BACK INTO SOCIETY

Experiences of Victims of Crime in the Criminal Justice System:

Victims may not have 'their day in court'

Not enough legal evidence to prosecute

Decision not to prosecute

Body of loved one not found

Perpetrator not found

Disregard of victims needs, safety or standing

Lengthy, complex process

Verdict disappointment

Sentence inadequate

Feelings of Victim During and After Criminal Justice Proceedings

- Anger, frustration
- Fear, lack of protection, safety issues, not being heard
- Disappointment
- Perception of disregard of victims rights in preference to offender
- Feelings of being “let down” or not valued
- Trial does not bring anticipated relief
- Disillusion with government and society
- Retreat, withdrawal, depression, illness, long term effects of grief

Services We Can Offer to Help Victims

- Victim Services and Witness Support should have training to guide victims through the criminal justice system—what to expect, how to deal with media, safety issues and managing emotions
- Maintain the dignity of victims and their place in the CJ process
- Address the long-term consequences of grief and losing place in society
- Programs can be developed which help victims feel their loss is honored e.g. National Crime Victims Rights Week in US and Canada. National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims, Sept 25 in US.
- Encouragement of memorials, local, national, art projects, community events
- Information on how to start a charity—the transformative value of their experience and how it can help others
- Remembering anniversaries and if possible sending cards or messages
- Open-Door policy of VS organizations