

Frequently Asked Questions

Why would a victim/survivor want to meet with the offender?

- ◆ Victims are often left with questions that only the offender 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 tell the offender exactly how their life has been affected by the crime.
- ◆ Victims often want to see for themselves what kind of person the offender has become and whether they are sorry.

Why would an offender want to meet with a victim/survivor?

- ◆ Some offenders 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 offenders can demonstrate personal accountability and attempt to make amends.

Is VOD right for me?

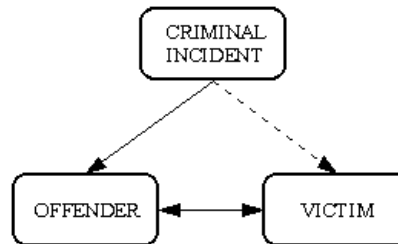
- ◆ Please contact the VOD Coordinator for specific questions.

Where is the offender 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 offender. Over a period of several months, a trained facilitator meets with the victim/survivor and the offender separately to prepare for the actual dialogue. The fundamental role of the facilitator is to build a relationship of trust and honesty with the victim and offender, which allows both participants 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



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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 offender who committed the crime against them, or in some cases against their immediate family member.
- ◆ The experience of interaction with the offender 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 offender will know.
- ◆ When offenders 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 offender agrees, the VOD is assigned to a trained facilitator.
- ◆ The facilitator meets regularly (usually monthly) with the victim/survivor and the offender 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 a dialogue will occur.
- ◆ When the facilitator and participants are ready, a VOD meeting is scheduled to take place at the facility where the offender is assigned.
- ◆ The VOD meeting is a one-time event.
- ◆ Several weeks after the dialogue, the facilitator offers separate follow-up meetings to both the victim/survivor and the offender.

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.
- ◆ Offenders 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. Offenders 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 the VOD.

Will a VOD Impact the Sentence or Parole of the Offender?

No, participation does not impact an offender's sentence, parole, or any other status of incarceration. Offenders receive no tangible benefits or special privileges for participating.