



Victim-Offender Dialogue (VOD) Study

Study Information

Purpose

The objective of this study is to examine the implementation, operation, and efficacy of post-conviction, in-prison Victim Offender Dialogue/Mediation (VOD) programs wherein victims and perpetrators of crime are brought together for a mediated conversation.

This page is for the first phase of the study which will conduct a national survey of prison-based VOD programs to determine how many programs exist, their participation requirements, standard operating procedures, and extent of program participation.

Objectives

1. Create a comprehensive database of in-prison adult VOD programs in the United States
2. Determine what other restorative and/or victim-centered programs exist in adult prisons in the United States
3. Conduct a systematic literature review about adult in-prison VOD programs and their history
4. Publication of a scholarly paper in a leading journal on the current state of adult in-prison VOD and other restorative and victim-centered programs in the United States

Research Team at University of Cincinnati

Please contact a member of the research team with any questions or concerns you may have. Our email addresses are listed below.

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Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

This study has been approved by the University of Cincinnati Institutional Review Board (IRB) #2025-0088 for non-human research.

[Click here for a PDF of the IRB approval.](#)

A Note on Terminology

The researchers recognize that the terms “victim” and “offender” can be stigmatizing or retraumatizing. These labels remain the most commonly used within correctional systems and related programming. Accordingly, this study uses the terms “victim” and “offender” for consistency and clarity, while also acknowledging that some programs and practitioners use alternative language such as “person who was harmed” or “harmed person” and “person who caused harm.”

Programmatic Data Requested Only

This study does not collect any individual-level data. It seems to explore the current state of adult VOD programs in state and federal correctional facilities.

We are requesting information regarding your state’s implementation of restorative justice programming for incarcerated adults. Specifically, we are interested in learning whether your department currently offers, supports, or partners in the delivery of victim-offender dialogue programs within adult correctional facilities, the extent of participation in the program, and any program requirements.

Participation in this research involves only sharing programmatic information and does not require the disclosure of any personal or confidential data. Your insight would be invaluable in helping to develop a national picture of restorative justice practices in adult corrections.

Requested Data

Please review the requested data prior to entering it in the form below.

Data Entry

The form to submit the requested data is located at <https://www.vodstudy.org>. This study uses Airtable, which is a secure and HIPAA-compliant data and project management platform. Information entered in this form will be entered directly into the secure Airtable database.

START OF FORM

About Your Department

Your Correction System

The state, federal, military, or territorial correctional system that you represent.

Department Name*

The department you work for (example: Illinois Department of Corrections)

About You

Your Name*

Your Title*

Your Division Name*

For example: Victim Services

Your Email Address*

Your Phone Number*

**** Note: Please only answer in reference to IN-PRISON programs ****

Do NOT include pre-trial, court-based, probation, parole, or other community-based programs in your answers to these questions

Victim-Centered and Restorative Justice Program Overview

Does your department currently have a victim-offender dialogue program? *

This is often also called a victim-offender mediation program. It is where a victim and the person who harmed them (offender) have a conversation regarding the crime that was committed and the harm that was caused.

Yes No

Does your department offer other restorative justice and/or victim-centered programs? *

Examples: Apology letter bank, victim impact statement, community circle

Yes No

Program - General Information

For the purposes of this study, all victim-offender programs will be referred to as VOD regardless of your department's specific terminology.

What do you call your VOD program?

For example: Victim-Offender Mediation, Victim-Offender Dialogue, Restorative Circle

What division or department oversees your VOD program?

Who may initiate the VOD process?

Select all that apply

Victim Offender Unknown

How are people are recruited for the program?

How do people find out about the program? (Select all that apply)

Attorney – Defense

Attorney – Prosecutor

Church

Community-Based Organization

Court

Police

Probation

Residential Facility

Victim Services – Corrections

Victim Services – Other

Other

Program - Participation Statistics by Year

1. **Requested** means a victim asked the department to participate in a VOD session.

2. **Completed** means a victim and the person who caused them harm met in a dialogue/mediation session.

What year did your department start it's VOD program?

In how many unique facilities does your department offer its VOD program?

Number of requested VOD sessions in 2018

Number of completed VOD sessions in 2018

Number of requested VOD sessions in 2019

Number of completed VOD sessions in 2019

Number of requested VOD sessions in 2020

Number of completed VOD sessions in 2020

Number of requested VOD sessions in 2021

Number of completed VOD sessions in 2021

Number of requested VOD sessions in 2022

Number of completed VOD sessions in 2022

Number of requested VOD sessions in 2023

Number of completed VOD sessions in 2023

Number of requested VOD sessions in 2024

Number of completed VOD sessions in 2024

Offender - Participation Information

Does the VOD Program have certain charges or types of charges that are SPECIFIED TO participate in the program? Examples: Robbery, arson, property crimes, sex crimes, etc.

Yes No

Does the program have certain charges or types of charges that are RESTRICTED FROM participating in the program? Examples: Robbery, arson, property crimes, sex crimes, etc.

Yes No

Are people in certain situations or circumstances restricted from participating in the program?

Examples: Death row, administrative confinement, mental health treatment, etc.

Yes No

Are there disciplinary history or behavioral requirements for participation?

Yes No

Is there a minimum sentence served requirement for participation?

The minimum amount of time the person has to have already served in prison to be allowed to participate in the program.

Yes No

Is participation voluntary for the offender?

Yes No

Does the program require the offender to admit guilt?

Taking/accepting responsibility counts as admitting guilt for this question

Yes No

Session Information

How is the actual VOD session(s) conducted?

Select all that apply

In-Person

Hybrid

Remote

Is there pre-mediation preparation for the offender and victim before the VOD session occurs?

Select all that apply

Yes – Offender

Yes – Victim

No

What is the AVERAGE number of sessions that occur for most VODs?

Are aftercare services offered/provided to the offender and victim after a VOD session?

Aftercare generally includes mental health services, but may take many forms.

Select all that apply

- Yes – Offender
- Yes – Victim
- No

Do the victim and offender form a contract/agreement at the end of the VOD session?

- Yes
- Usually (at least half the time)
- Sometimes (10-49% of the time)
- Rarely (less than 10% of the time)
- No

Are uniformed prison guards present during the session?

Select all that apply

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No
- At the discretion of the warden

Are prison staff that are not guards present during the session? Do NOT include the facilitator.

Select all that apply

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No
- At the discretion of the warden

Facilitator Information

What group(s) provides the facilitators for the VOD program/sessions?

Select all that apply

- Church
- Community-Based Organization
- Corrections
- Courts
- Legal
- Police
- Private Company
- Probation/Parole
- University
- Other

What people act as facilitators for the VOD program/sessions?

Select all that apply

- Community-Based Organization – Employee
- Community-Based Organization – Employee
- Church – Employee
- Church – Volunteer
- Correctional – Employee

- Correctional – Volunteer
- Police – Employee
- Police – Volunteer
- Private Company – Employee
- Other

Are facilitators required to be licensed social workers, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, or other form of licensed mental health professional?

- Yes No

How many hours of training do facilitators receive?

Are facilitators required to receive state certification to conduct VOD sessions?

- Yes No

How many people were authorized to facilitate VOD sessions by your department in 2018?

How many people were authorized to facilitate VOD sessions by your department in 2019?

How many people were authorized to facilitate VOD sessions by your department in 2020?

How many people were authorized to facilitate VOD sessions by your department in 2021?

How many people were authorized to facilitate VOD sessions by your department in 2022?

How many people were authorized to facilitate VOD sessions by your department in 2023?

How many people were authorized to facilitate VOD sessions by your department in 2024?

Financial Information

What funding sources do you have for your VOD program?

Select all that apply

- Department Budget
- Grants – Government
- Grants – Private/Foundation
- Legislative Appropriations
- Private Donations
- Unfunded
- Other

Please enter the average cost per mediation session OR your total VOD budget in 2018

Please enter the average cost per mediation session OR your total VOD budget in 2019

Please enter the average cost per mediation session OR your total VOD budget in 2020

Please enter the average cost per mediation session OR your total VOD budget in 2021

Please enter the average cost per mediation session OR your total VOD budget in 2022

Please enter the average cost per mediation session OR your total VOD budget in 2023

Please enter the average cost per mediation session OR your total VOD budget in 2024

Final Questions

How does the department view success for a VOD program?

Examples: Recidivism rate, victim satisfaction, number of disciplinary reports, etc.

What results/outcomes metrics are tracked about the VOD program?

Select all that apply

Victim Satisfaction

Offender Satisfaction

Offender Satisfaction

Recidivism

Other

None/No Outcome Tracking

What barriers have there been to implementation and/or program expansion?

What entities does your department partner with to evaluate program efficacy?

Are there policy and/or procedures manuals for the VOD or other restorative programs?

What is the status of the request for program documents (such as intake forms, post-VOD forms, etc.)

Examples: intake forms, participant surveys, satisfaction measures, etc.

Is there anything that you think we should know, that is unique about your program, or that you would like us to follow-up with you about?