

## Ensuring Victims' Rights as a Probation Officer

Probation officers have many responsibilities, including case management, report writing, and supervision. Contact is often not just with the person they are supervising; their work often results in contact with, and the need to understand the rights provided to, people who are victimized by an individual under supervision.

Act 111 of 1998, the Crime Victims Act, awarded victims/survivors of crime specific rights across the spectrum of the justice process. Many entities support those rights and ensure best practices when supporting victims/survivors.

### LISTED BELOW ARE SPECIFIC RIGHTS AFFORDED TO SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN VICTIMIZED BY A PERSON CURRENTLY UNDER SUPERVISION:

#### All crime victims/survivors should be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect.

- People who have been victimized respond in numerous ways to the trauma they have experienced, which may include harmful treatment by the justice system. Best practices for officers encourage a trauma informed approach when interacting with people who have been victimized.

#### All crime victims/survivors have the right to be accompanied to all proceedings by a family member, a victim service provider, or another support person.

- If there is a proceeding involving a victim/survivor of crime—perhaps when someone under supervision violates a condition of supervision—the person who has been victimized has the right to be accompanied to all proceedings and should be referred to their respective victim service agency. That referral can assist with safety planning, which is vital for the safety of victims/survivors and, in some situations, the public. Probation officers should be knowledgeable about local and statewide victim service providers, including those who work with survivors of domestic violence, and refer victims when appropriate.

#### All crime victims/survivors have the right to be restored as they were before the crime—as much as possible through restitution.

- People who are under supervision and owe restitution should be encouraged to pay restitution as a part of their goals. Encouraging payment plans and gaining employment are avenues that support victims' right to restitution. Taking responsibility for attempting to pay restitution is a form of restorative justice.

#### All crime victims/survivors have the right to notification of a person's release from incarceration, including work release, medical release, furlough, and escape, as well as notification of arrest and incarceration.

- All crime victims/survivors should be encouraged to sign up for SAVIN notifications (<https://vinelink.com/classic/#/home/site/39000>) to receive information about the custody status and criminal case of the person who harmed them. Notifications are available via phone, email, text, or TTY.

#### All crime victims/survivors have the right to notification of the arrest of a person under supervision who has violated a PFA order.

- Probation officers can assist victims/survivors by receiving timely notification of Protection from Abuse (PFA) orders for people under their supervision, both when the orders are first issued and when a violation takes place. Probation agencies should ensure they subscribe to the JNet notification system, which provides subscribers a significant amount of information about the people contained in the user's watchlist, including PFA notifications. Additionally, agency leadership should ensure proper training of officers and staff so they can recognize and respond to JNet PFA notifications in line with the agency's policies and procedures.
- Questions about JNet notifications should be directed to your agency JNet representative. You can also request assistance through the JNet helpdesk at:  
<https://www.inet.jnet.pa.gov/nidp/idff/sso?id=200&sid=0&option=credential&sid=0&target=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.jnet.pa.gov%2Fjnet-contacts%2F>