Law and Justice Interim Committee
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panelist

1. How did you initially become involved in restorative justice and in founding the victim impact panels at the boot camp?

As superintendent at Treasure State Correctional Training Center (boot camp), I wrote a victim impact curriculum and prepared offenders to participate in the victim impact panel program. This occurred in 1997 and the program continues. Anita Richards, a victim rights advocate whose son was murdered, identified crime victims willing to speak to offenders about the ripple effects of crime, and prepared them. In 2007, I retired. Mrs. Richards passed away in 2008.

2. What do you do now with respect to victim-offender dialogues for DOC?

Since I retired, I have volunteered with DOC as a facilitator for victim-offender dialogues. I typically co-facilitate the cases with the victim programs manager. I participated in basic and advanced training for victim offender dialogue facilitation in 2006 under two national leaders in restorative justice.

3. What policy or changes, if any, do you think the legislature should consider with respect to restorative justice?

Restorative justice programs can cause offenders to change their criminal behavior. These programs also help victims find healing by providing opportunities for them to speak about how crimes have affected them, their families, friends and communities.

Victim impact panels and victim-offender dialogues should be expanded throughout DOC and contracted facilities. A public awareness campaign would help DOC locate victims who wish to participate as victim impact panel speakers, and to inform them of the opportunity to meet with their offenders in a dialogue. Current and ongoing training for victim-offender dialogue facilitators is essential.

DOC must have adequate funding for these restorative justice efforts. In addition, volunteer victim impact panel speakers and victim offender dialogue facilitators must be reimbursed for travel and mileage. They volunteer their time and emotional resources for these programs, but most cannot afford to travel at their own expense.