

**Criminal Justice Cross-Training
Conference:**

*Community Safety and Crime
Reduction via Successful Offender
Re-entry into the Community*

Office of the Victim Advocate

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State Victim Advocate

Crime Victim's Role in Offender Re-entry

- Crime victims have a constitutional right to information about the arrest, conviction, sentence, imprisonment and **release of the accused**.
- Connecticut's victim notification system is an **opt-in** system; victim's must register to receive notification.
 - Victim Services Unit; Department of Correction
 - Office of Victim Services, Judicial Branch
 - SAVIN (Statewide automated victim information and notification) (expected start in August 2010)

Victim Notification

Department of Correction, Victim Services Unit (DOC, VSU)

- Pre-conviction and Post-conviction
- Offender must be incarcerated to register
- 24/7 notification
- Confidential Request for Notification of Status of Inmate (JD-VS-5 Rev. 3-07)
 - Applies for a pardon, parole, release from prison other than a furlough or change in sentence;
 - Scheduled for release, other than a furlough, except a re-entry furlough;
 - Applies for an exemption from the registration requirements of the Sex Offender registry;
 - Applies for a restriction of the disclosure requirements of the Sex Offender registry;
 - Dies while in custody;
 - Transfers to a community release program;
 - Escapes/returns from escape.

Victim Notification (cont.)

Office of Victim Services, Judicial Branch (OVS)

- Post-conviction **ONLY**
- Operates during normal business hours/no weekends
- Confidential Request for Notification of Status of Inmate (JD-VS-5 Rev. 3-07)
 - Applies for a pardon, parole, release from prison other than a furlough or change in sentence;
 - Scheduled for release, other than a furlough, except a re-entry furlough;
 - Applies for an exemption from the registration requirements of the Sex Offender registry;
 - Applies for a restriction of the disclosure requirements of the Sex Offender registry;
 - Dies while in custody.

Victim Notification (cont.)

SAVIN (Statewide automated victim information and notification system)

- Soft launch 1st phase expected August 2010
- Free and confidential
- Notification available to victim and the general public
- Notification available in English and Spanish
- Notification 24/7
- Pending criminal case information only AFTER arraignment
 - Court date information
 - Case jurisdiction transfer
 - Defendant failed to appear
 - Change in bail

Victim Notification (cont.)

SAVIN (cont.)

- 2nd phase will include protective order information
- 3rd phase will include notification of post conviction events
 - Notice of Violation of probation
 - Probation violation decision
 - Sentence Reduction
 - Appeal
- Registrant required to maintain current contact information
- Trainings available through the Office of Victim Services
- Requires registration
 - www.vinelink.com
 - 1-877-846-3428
 - 1-866-847-1298 (National TTY telephone text number)

Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP)

- **Pardon**

- Conditioned: A pardon with conditions (conditions not erased)
- Provisional: Relief from barriers to employment or licenses (not erased)
- Absolute: Records erased
- Eligibility for Pardon
 - 3 years after applicant's conviction of a misdemeanor
 - 5 years after applicant's conviction of a felony
 - Exception: Upon a finding of extraordinary circumstances
- At a session held by the BOPP to consider whether to grant a pardon, the Board **SHALL** permit any victim of the crime to make a statement for the record (C.G.S. § 54-130d(b)).
- If the Board is prepared to grant a pardon to a person convicted of an offense involving the use, attempted use or threatened use of physical force against another person and there is no victim registered for notification, the Board **SHALL** make reasonable efforts to locate and notify the victim and permit the victim the make a statement for the record (C.G.S. § 54-130d(c)).

BOPP (cont.)

- **Pardon (cont.)**

- Administrative pardons process
 - Pardon granted without a hearing, unless a victim of the crime requests a hearing (C.G.S. § 54-124a(j)(2));
 - Applicant was convicted of a misdemeanor **AND**
 - Conduct no longer constitutes a crime;
 - Under 21 at the time of conviction and has not had any convictions for five years; **OR**
 - Conviction occurred prior to the establishment of a program for which the applicant would have been eligible has the program existed.

BOPP (cont.)

- **Parole**

- Discretionary
 - An inmate serving more than a 2 year sentence AND
 - Eligible for consideration after serving either 50% or 85% of sentence
 - Eligibility is determined by offense and statute
 - Eligible inmates denied parole after serving 50% of sentence must be considered again after serving 75%
 - Hearing held six months prior to eligible release date
- Suitability for release
 - Reasonable probability that inmate will not violate the law and the release is not incompatible with the welfare of society
- Supervised by Parole Officer
- The BOPP sets the conditions of parole
- Release to a half-way house; other residential facility; or private residence
 - Verification process of residential plan

BOPP (cont.)

- **Parole (cont.)**

- Full panel hearing
 - No less than 2 members
 - All hearings are audio recorded
 - May be recorded by CTN for later broadcast
 - Statements to the Board are **NOT** confidential
 - Hearings are held at the BOPP; 55 West Main Street; Waterbury
- Testimony of Victim at parole hearing
 - Office of Victim Services required to assign two victim advocates to provide full-time assistance to victims who appear before a panel of the BOPP (C.G.S. § 54-220a).
 - Statement to the panel concerning whether or not the inmate should/should not be released to parole and why.
 - Impact of the crime on the victim and/or family of the victim.
 - Request to be notified of panel decision and condition of release, if granted.

Early release through the Dept. of Corrections

- **Community release**

- An inmate who remains in the custody of the DOC, including pre-trial, transitional supervision and residential programs.
- Discretionary
 - Commissioner of Correction → Warden of facility
- Often, inmates that are granted or denied parole are also granted release to community release prior to their parole release date.

- **Transitional supervision**

- Community based program for inmates serving a sentence of less than two years
- Completion of 50% of sentence
- An inmate with parole eligible sentence is not usually eligible for Transitional supervision.
- Discretionary
 - Commissioner of Correction → Warden of facility

Early release through the Dept. of Corrections (cont.)

- **Furlough**

- Temporary transfer of an inmate from incarceration to community custody for an authorized purpose under the supervision of a community sponsor.

- **Re-entry furlough**

- Release to an approved residence in the community consistent with rehabilitation
- Supervised by Division of Parole and Community Services
- Up to 45 days prior to release date
- Discretionary
 - Commissioner → Warden of facility

Early release through the Dept. of Corrections (cont.)

- **Victim's role in early release**
 - Registered victims will be notified by the Department of Correction, Victim Services Unit and/or Office of Victim Services of an inmate's status for early release.
 - Prepare written victim impact statement
 - Impact of the crime on the victim and/or family of the victim.
 - Whether the inmate should/should not be granted early release.
 - Send to Department of Correction, Victim Services Unit or directly to the Warden of the facility where the inmate resides **within 15 days** of receipt of notification.
 - Request to be notified of decision.

Responsibilities of Victim

- Register for notification
- Keep contact information current
- Continually update safety plan
 - Restraining order
 - Address Confidentiality Program
- Report any violations of inmate's conditions of release to reporting authority (parole officer)
- Periodically query inmate information on DOC website
 - <http://www.ctinmateinfo.state.ct.us/>
- Attend OVA Speakers' Bureau Training (optional)

Resources for Victim

- **Office of the Victim Advocate**
 - Toll free in CT 888-771-3126
- **Department of Correction, Victim Services Unit**
 - Toll free (nationwide) 888-869-7057
- **Office of Victim Services, Judicial Branch**
 - Toll free in CT 800-822-8428
- **Board of Pardons and Paroles**
 - Toll free in CT 800-303-2884