GLOSSARY
Post-Conviction Victim Services

**Accountability**: an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions.

**Abuser**: commonly used term to identify the perpetrator of acts of cruelty or violence against another person or animal especially regularly or repeatedly.

**Apology letter**: a letter written by the offender to the victim. Since contact between the victim and offender is frequently forbidden and considered a rule violation, the letter is usually held in an apology letter bank. There is no guarantee that the victim will ever receive the letter and it should not be factored into an offender’s parole review. (Sometimes referred to as Accountability or Responsibility Letters.)

**Apology letter bank**: considered a form of restorative justice, it allows offenders who are incarcerated to write letters of apology to the victim of their crimes. Letters accepted into the Letter Bank remain there until victims choose to receive them. The Letter Bank is a safe system for the victim to receive the letter of apology from the offender when and if desired. (Sometimes referred to as Accountability or Responsibility Letter Banks.)

**Batterer Intervention Program (BIP)**: an education based program that makes victim safety a primary priority, holds offenders accountable and promotes a coordinated community response to domestic violence.

**Cause of action**: the legal basis for a civil lawsuit.

**Civil actions**: lawsuits to enforce, redress or protect rights of private litigants – not a criminal proceeding. For example, a civil suit may be filed by victims seeking monetary damages against the perpetrator.

**Coercive control**: a deliberate and systematic pattern of behavior designed to limit a person’s freedom and ability to act on their own needs, values and desires and to create a threat of harm to compel compliance.

**Collectability**: a general term meaning the extent to which defendants/perpetrators have the financial means to pay judgments from assets on hand, assets reasonably to be expected in the future, or financial assistance from such sources as insurance coverage.
Compensatory damages: provide the victim (plaintiff) with the monetary amount necessary to replace what was lost and nothing more.

Community Corrections: refers to supervision of criminal offenders in the resident population as opposed to confinement. The two main types of community corrections supervision are probation and parole but may also include pretrial defendants.

Crime victim compensation program: a government program to assist victims with expenses and financial losses resulting from their victimization. Every state has a crime victim compensation program.

Criminal actions: cases in which the state prosecutes perpetrators of criminal acts, committed in violation of the state's laws.

Criminal justice support/advocacy: support, assistance, and advocacy provided to victims at any stage of the criminal justice process, including post-sentencing services and support.

Crisis counseling: in-person crisis intervention, emotional support, and guidance and counseling provided by advocates, counselors, mental health professionals, or peers. Such counseling may occur at the scene of a crime or immediately after a crime or be provided on an ongoing basis.

Crisis hotline counseling: operation of a 24-hour telephone service, 7 days a week, which provides counseling, guidance, emotional support, and information and referral.

Crisis intervention: emotional support, guidance, counseling, and/or information and referral provided by advocates, counselors, mental health professionals, or peers. Such counseling may occur at the scene of a crime, immediately after a crime, or be provided on an ongoing basis.

Damages: amounts of money awarded to winning parties in civil suits expressed in a judgment.

Defense-Initiated Victim Outreach (DIVO): a strategy employed by defense attorneys to engage the victim or surviving family members in dialogue regarding a case prior to adjudication and during the trial and/or appeal process. This is not considered to be a victim-centered approach but may afford the victim/survivor with some level of input into the decision-making process.

Depositions: pretrial proceedings in which attorneys for parties in a civil case have the opportunity to examine, under oath, the opposing parties and potential witnesses in the case. Depositions are sworn and reduced to writing. The transcripts may be admissible in evidence at trials if the witnesses are no longer available, or for purposes of impeachment.

Detainee: a person held in custody or confinement; generally a non-adjudicated defendant awaiting some type of release decision by the court.
Domestic violence: the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. This is a traditional term that has become synonymous with intimate partner violence. (See also Intimate Partner Violence)

Domestic violence wrap around services: a coordinated process in which a team of individuals (e.g., law enforcement, probation and parole agents, service providers, and agency representatives) collaboratively develop an individualized safety plan and implement this plan for the benefit of a high-risk victim during the offender release process.

Emergency legal advocacy: filing of temporary restraining orders, injunctions, and other protective orders, elder abuse petitions, and child abuse petitions. This does not include criminal prosecution or the employment of attorneys for such non-emergency purposes as custody disputes and civil suits.

Evidence Based Practices: refers to the use of research and scientific studies as the base for determining the best practices in the field. Evidence based practices seek to eliminate subjective judgment when developing appropriate plans of action.

First Party Action: lawsuits brought by victims directly against their perpetrators.

Inmate: a person confined to an institution such as a prison. Usually distinguished from a detainee due to their adjudicated status.

Intake: the process of receiving a person into an institution. May also refer to the actual physical location where this procedure is performed.

Interstate Commission for Adult Offender Supervision (ICAOS): the Commission oversees the day-to-day operations of the compact between the states, promulgates rules to achieve the goals of the compact, and ensures opportunities for input and timely notice to victims and to jurisdictions where defined offenders are authorized to travel or relocate. The Commission also has several monitoring and administrative functions in supporting the compact.

Interstate Compact for the Supervision of Parolees and Probationers: formed in 1937 the compact is an agreement between all 50 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands that regulates the transfer of adult parole and probation supervisees across state boundaries. http://www.interstatecompact.org/

Interstate Compact Offender Tracking System (ICOTS): a web-based system that assists in the transfer of supervision for probationers and parolees from one state to another.
Intimate partner violence (IPV): a more recent and specific term for domestic violence which accounts for a wider interpretation of what dynamics constitute abusive behavior in a domestic or former domestic relationship.

Judgments: the formal recitations of the outcomes of civil cases. They are almost always reduced to writing, and recorded as a part of the file.

No contact orders: an order from the court forbidding a party in a legal action (criminal or civil) from having direct or indirect contact with another party. Violations are usually enforced as contempt of court, and could result in revocation of probation or parole. May also be referred to as stay away orders, restraining orders or protective orders.

Notification: the statutory right afforded to victims of crime to be informed about changes in the offender’s status in matters affecting their case. The victim’s right to notification is supported by each state, the U.S. Department of Justice through the Victim Notification System (VNS), and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Victim Notification Program (VNP). The system by which victim notification is performed in each state may vary.

Offender: a generic term that refers to a person that is or is perceived to be the perpetrator of a crime.

Parole: the conditional release of a person convicted of a crime prior to the expiration of their term of imprisonment subject to supervision in the community. Generally refers to a release that occurs from long-term incarceration and is most often determined by a parole board.

Parole hearing: a hearing to determine whether an inmate should be afforded the privilege of a conditional release prior to the expiration of their term of imprisonment.

Parole revocation: an administrative act of recommitting a parolee back to prison for their failure to comply with the conditions of release.

Post-release supervision: a generic term for a variety of community supervision models.

Pretrial release hearing: a hearing to determine whether the defendant will be released from custody prior to the trial (i.e., bail or bond hearing).

Probation: a court ordered period of supervision placing the offender in the community instead of them serving time in prison. Most often the individual on probation must adhere to certain conditions of release.

Probation revocation: a withdrawal of the court ordered term of probation based upon the offender’s failure to comply with their conditions of release. This may result in the imposition of
a term of imprisonment or other restrictions or conditions if the offender is re-released on probation.

**Protective order:** a court order which instructs a person to cease and desist from abusing or harassing the person who sought the order.

**Punitive damages:** damages that may be awarded to victims (plaintiffs) in civil lawsuits. They are a method of punishing the perpetrator (defendant), over and above compensatory damages.

**Release hearing (other):** a hearing to determine whether to grant, and on what basis to grant, an incarcerated or accused defendant limited, temporary, or permanent release (e.g., work release, temporary release for a family emergency, medical treatment, vocational training, to attend legal proceedings, etc.).

**Reentry:** a broad term used to refer to issues related to the transition of offenders from incarceration to community supervision or unsupervised release.

**Restitution:** a court ordered condition requiring a convicted offender to repay the victim money or services to compensate for the monetary losses that resulted from the commission of the crime. This may be a condition of probation or impact leniency in sentencing.

**Restorative justice:** a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior. The foundational principles of restorative justice are: 1) Crime causes harm and justice should focus on repairing that harm; (2) The people most affected by the crime should be able to participate in its resolution (i.e. victims, community and offender); and (3) The responsibility of the government is to maintain order and of the community to build peace.

**Restraining order:** in general, this is a temporary court order issued to prohibit a person from being in physical or verbal contact with another person. (See protective order and harassment order)

**Safety plan:** a personalized, practical plan that can help an individual avoid situations that create risk and prepare them to react appropriately when they are in a dangerous situation.

**SANE:** a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner is a registered nurse who has received specialized training so that they can provide comprehensive care to sexual assault victims. SANE’s can conduct forensic examinations and provide expert testimony in court.

**Statewide Automated Victim Information & Notification (SAVIN):** a commonly used, computerized system that provides electronic, automated notification regarding the custody status of inmates.
Shelter/safe house: short- and long-term housing and related support services for victims and families following victimization.

Supervised visitation: contact between a noncustodial party and one or more children in the presence of a third person, either paid or unpaid, who is responsible for observing and, to the greatest extent possible, providing a safe environment for those involved.

Survivor: a person who carries on despite hardships or trauma. This is a strength-based term that is intended to empower a victim and may be used interchangeably with the word victim in some cases.

VAWA: the Violence Against Women Act, passed in 1994 and reauthorized in 2000, 2005, and 2013, targets sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence. VAWA grant funds provide for services across the U.S. such as court, tribal and medical advocacy programs, rape crisis centers, hotlines, and safe haven housing. [https://www.justice.gov/ovw/about-office](https://www.justice.gov/ovw/about-office)

Victim: a person harmed, injured or killed as a result of a crime. The legal definition and identification of the victim of a crime varies from state to state and may impact the level and type of services that individual is eligible for.

Victim centered: an approach that seeks to minimize re-traumatization associated with the criminal justice process by providing the support of victim advocates and service providers and empowering survivors as engaged participants. In a victim-centered approach, the victim's wishes, safety, and well-being take priority in all matters and procedures.

Victim impact statement (VIS): a written or verbal statement of a victim’s views concerning the physical, financial, emotional, and spiritual impact the crime has had on them, their lives, and the lives of their families and loved ones, that is offered to the court or other decision-making body (mostly during sentencing or release consideration hearings). Victim impact statements may include the victim’s opinion as to the risk the accused or convicted defendant may pose to them if released, and/or the victim’s recommendation of an appropriate sentence.

Victim-offender conferencing (VOC): see victim-offender mediation.

Victim-offender dialogue (VOD): a voluntary, confidential, post-conviction, facilitated process initiated by crime victims/survivors, sometimes many years after the conviction of the offender(s). This process provides victims an opportunity to meet the offender, in a safe and structured setting and engage in a facilitated discussion of the crime. With the assistance of a trained facilitator, the victim is able to tell the offender about the crime’s physical, emotional, and financial impact; and to potentially receive answers to lingering questions about the crime and the offender. VOD is usually facilitated while the offender is still incarcerated. Practitioners make the distinction that VOD is the process used in crimes of severe violence.
**Victim-offender mediation (VOM):** a voluntary process that provides victims (primarily those of property crimes and minor assaults) the opportunity to meet their offenders in a safe and structured setting. With the assistance of trained mediators, the victims are able to tell the offender how the crime affected them, receive answers to their questions, and be directly involved in developing a restitution plan that holds the offender(s) financially accountable for the losses they caused.

**Victim rights:** legal rights afforded to victims of crime. These include the right to restitution, the right not to be excluded from criminal justice proceedings, and the right to speak at criminal justice proceedings.

**Victim services:** services offered to victims throughout their contact with the criminal justice system. Services may include, but are not limited to, crisis intervention, compensation assistance, SANE services, advocacy, notifications, referrals and assistance at hearings and court proceedings.

**Victim services provider, community based:** providers whose base of operation and services occur within the context of a private, non-governmental organization (e.g., a nonprofit domestic violence shelter or rape crisis center, a nonprofit court accompaniment program, a psychologist specializing in child abuse, etc.).

**Victim services provider, system-based:** providers whose base of operation and services occur within the context of a criminal or juvenile justice agency (e.g., a law enforcement-based crisis responder, prosecutor-based victim/witness coordinator, a victim assistance specialist working within a community or institutional corrections agency, etc.).

**Vinelink.com (VINE):** VINE is an acronym for “victim information and notification every day” and is a commonly used, computerized system that provides electronic, automated notification regarding the custody status of inmates.

**VOCA:** the Victims of Crime Act, passed in 1984 established the Crime Victims Fund which serves as a major funding source for victim services throughout the country. Each year, millions of dollars are deposited into this Fund from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalty fees, and special assessments collected by U.S. Attorney's Offices, U.S. Courts, and the Bureau of Prisons. These dollars come from offenders convicted of Federal crimes not from taxpayers.