

# Ask the Expert: What do Victim-Survivor Service Professionals Need to Know about Corrections - Webinar Transcript

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Thank you for joining us today. We would like to welcome you to the National Criminal Justice Training Center webinar, Ask the Expert-- What Do Victim/Survivor Services Professionals Need to Know About Corrections? My name is Greg Brown, and I will be moderating for you today.

Before we begin the presentation, there's some items I need to go over. This project was supported by a grant awarded by the Office of Violence Against Women, US Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this program are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women.

The learning objectives for today's webinar are as follows. We want to explain the basic goals and objectives of the correctional system, discuss current barriers to creating a more victim/survivor-centered system, and identify best and promising practices in addressing common misperceptions.

I'm pleased to introduce our presenters, Danielle Fagan and Denise Metz. Danielle Fagan is an associate with the National Criminal Justice Training Center. She is a victim assistance coordinator for the Boulder County Probation Department and sits on the Colorado State Restorative Justice Council. Danielle has been serving victims as an advocate for almost 20 years.

Denise Metz is an associate with the National Criminal Justice Training Center. She is the current supervisor of the Sex Offender Unit with the 20th Judicial District Probation Department. Denise is a state-certified trainer in the VASOR/SOTIPS sex offender risk assessment instruments as well as a high-risk victim/offender dialogue facilitator.

My name is Greg Brown, and I will be moderating today's webinar. I'm a program manager with the National Criminal Justice Training Center, and my background includes over 30 years working in the corrections field, primarily in probation. The focus of our training and technical assistance under this OVW award is to enhance and expand the criminal justice system's victim-centered approach to corrections. Every state, territory, and the federal system have victims' right acts in place to ensure victim/survivors have a voice in the criminal justice system.

In this 10-part series, we hope to provide information that will help each of you build upon and enhance services that you are individual-- that are individually tailored to move towards a more victim-centered approach. Through our listening sessions and feedback from the field, we have

identified four areas that are critical to this needed change.

We will start today with a brief system overview then move to talking about demystifying talking to victims, the realities and limitations of the system, and, finally, staying healthy in the field. We welcome your questions and comments throughout the discussion. Danielle and Denise, I would like to welcome you into the conversation. Danielle and Denise will introduce each of the following topics briefly and provide their perspectives. Denise.

Thanks, Greg. And thanks, everyone, for attending this webinar-- really appreciate it. I love talking about these things. In regards to just a brief system overview and why isn't our system more victim-centered, I think, in traditional criminal justice, what-- the questions that traditional criminal justice asks are things like, what law was broken? Who broke the law? And what punishment does the person who broke the law deserve?

And kind of the goals of the traditional justice system then focus on punishing, deterring future crime, and, again, attempts to rehabilitate the offender. So all of those things obviously revolve around the person who has committed the crime. There's no room-- I suppose there is room, but there's no discussion in those very basic principles of our system that include discussion about victims.

And I think we're trying to change that, obviously, and some of the victim rights acts around the country have been an attempt to bring more balance to the system and be more holistic in terms of not just focusing so much on the perpetrators, the people who committed the crimes.

That being said, with probation I can speak very well to the fact that since we are working with the clients, the people who have committed crimes, and that's such a huge part of our jobs, we really do tend to get pretty offender-focused and tunnel-visioned on helping this person navigate through the system, and reduce their risk to re-offend, and reintegrate back into the community.

So we have to be very, I think, cognizant of that, being so focused on working with the offenders and trying to find very specific ways to counteract that by being victim-centered. And I think Danielle can speak more to kind of the history or her role with the Victim Rights Act here in Colorado and how we've tried to, like I said, bring more balance to our practices within the system here.

Thank you, Denise. And thank you, everyone, for having us here today. Yeah, I mean, thankfully, we have this Victims' Rights Amendment that actually came to be after President Reagan was shot back in 1992. And he realized that, wow, as a victim of a crime, I don't have any rights. So he helped enact victims' rights amendments all across the country. And thankfully, we have those in place which

enable victims to have many, many rights, including the right to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect, as well as being present, informed, and heard at critical status changes.

However, victims will say, when they have a complaint under the VRA, that the one that gets violated the most is the one that says to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. So I don't think that victims, all of them, feel like this. The VRA is great, but is it enough? I think that we can be more victim-centered.

As far as being present, heard, and informed, I often have times where victims are asking me, when I'm letting them know they can have input into a victim impact statement, or they can speak at sentencing, or they can have input into whatever it is that I'm reaching out to them about in our cases, they ask me, well, yeah, I'd love to have input, but is it going to make any difference? Is anyone actually listening to what I'm going to share? So I think that we can do better as far as using victim-centered approaches.

And as Denise said, I work in the probation department, and we have officers that are working with clients and offenders, and they're looking at it through that client lens. And thankfully, there's positions, victim coordinator positions, where we are there to help make sure that the victim is representative-- represented in that case, and has that victim lens to put into case supervision, and input into decisions about the case, and really trying to make sure that victims have a voice into that scenario.

I worked as a on-scene advocate when the shootings at Columbine happened. And I think we can learn a lot and be more victim-centered than we were back then. It was very difficult watching people working with survivors who had lost loved ones or had loved ones that were injured be in such extreme pain and not be able to provide them the information as quickly as I think we could have done that. I think that could have been definitely a more victim-centered approach by being able to provide information that could have helped those survivors immensely in that time.

And while there was policies, and procedures, and an investigation going on that we had to follow those procedures, and I understand that, I also think we can learn a lot, and we can do better, and we can be more victim-centered. And I think providing information to victims in a more timely manner can be really helpful and critical in those kinds of situations.

Danielle and Denise, I have a question for you. Clearly, our system was really never designed to be victim-centered. It does a few things really well. It protects individual rights of those accused, obviously one of the paramount focuses of it. It's pretty good at figuring out how to get to the truth

through the legal processes that take place. And it's pretty good about holding people accountable in a lot of different settings. Where and how do you think victim-- our system can be more victim-centered in kind of that basic description that I just gave you?

Gosh, I think taking a more holistic view in general of the criminal justice system would be a good starting point because, again, as I previously said, we just are so almost tunnel-visioned on addressing the crime, who did the crime, and how do we punish them? Whereas if you look at the bigger picture and the broader viewpoint of the criminal justice system, victims are as much if not more part of that system as the person who perpetrated the crime.

So I honestly feel like it takes a bit of a philosophy shift, which can be challenging and difficult but not impossible by any stretch, so I think just having a shift in the viewpoint in terms of broadening our perspective of what happens when a crime is committed. It's not just the person who committed the crime. It's also not just the victim-- the primary victim, secondary victims, and even the community. So I think a step in the right direction is having people who believe in that more holistic view of our system. And slowly but surely, I think changing that perspective and changing the philosophy, I think that's a very good first step.

Yeah, I think that and also really asking victims, like, what do they want? I think the system does hold people accountable to some degree, but are they accountable to that victim? Has a victim or survivor been asked what it is they need, or what would be helpful, or and what relationships have been harmed by what happened? How could they be restored to the extent possible?

I think really getting their voice more into the process about what they want, what they would like to see happen, where they're at, if they want-- if there's anything that can be done to repair harms that have happened, like, what does that look like for them? I think really just incorporating them more in and really keeping them as the-- as more of a focal point of the case, of the situation, of the scenario.

So I think that transitions us nicely to the second area that we're going to cover today, and, Denise, from your perspective, working with probation officers, being a probation officer, and then, Danielle, maybe you could speak to how you work with probation officers on demystifying talking to victims.

Yeah, yeah, this is definitely a real one. And while I understand it, I also don't understand it. Because I have to say, there's no magic. There's no magic in speaking with victims. I've been a probation officer and a probation supervisor for over 20 years now. And there has-- I've never once taken a specific training called "how to talk to victims." They might exist. I'm not saying they don't exist, but I've never taken one.

And it's just-- it's been a learning process. I think I've gotten much better as I've gained experience in this field. But I feel like if you're just using those very good active listening skills and using those empathy skills, which are important even when we're just dealing with clients and offenders, but if you're really exercising those skills, that's, to me, what the most important thing is and taking that scariness out of talking with victims.

I know it does exist because no one wants to say anything to further victimize someone who's already been a victim of someone. And those can be very challenging and difficult situations. I'm certainly not disputing that. But they're human beings. And if you talk to them as if you have that empathy and you're doing that active listening, at least in my pretty lengthy experience, those basic fundamentals go an extremely long way in helping victims and when you're communicating with them.

And I know Danielle has much to add to this. And one other thing I would say is or emphasize is building that experience. We do a lot of things with the Boulder Probation Department on the Sex Offender Unit where officers regularly interact with victims. So I think that's helped my team again take that fear and building that confidence just because it's something that's more normalized in our department.

And actually, the POs that I supervise really look forward to it, really look forward to being able to interact with the victims, giving them that voice. And so I think it's just needing to gain that experience, and it's taking that fear away. Yeah, what do you think, Danielle?

Yeah, I really agree with what you said, Denise, and just echoing it's really educating, really, officers just to listen with compassion, listen with understanding when talking to victims and survivors of crime. I mean, actively listening to someone's story is so powerful. And so often, victims have not had a chance to just share everything that they want to share and really, really be heard-- and so listening.

And if they're asking questions, and if they don't know the answer, that's OK. You can be honest with them and let them know that you may not know the answer, but you're not going to overpromise or overstate something that you can't guarantee. So really listening actively, being a human to human, listening to their story, it can-- it is. It's not like there's some magic to doing this.

It's just being a compassionate human being and giving someone, giving those victims and survivors time to share what it is that's important to them, and involving them in the process if they want to be involved in the process, engaging them, empowering them, giving them-- if there's an opportunity to

involve them in some decisions that you're making about the supervision of the case and getting input from them then to please do that.

Because I think that victims really feel like, oh, well, their voice does matter. They're asking my opinion, and what would help make me feel safe, and what would help meet my needs. So I think that those things are really, just really important to remember.

Danielle, we have a couple of comments, and maybe you could speak to, as a victim services provider, what training, what work do you do with the probation officers maybe over and above what Denise talked about to help them become more comfortable in demystifying this interaction with the-

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So I do, yeah, some educating around the Victims' Rights Act, what our responsibilities are in probation for victims of crime, what other responsibilities are in the system for victims of crime. And then we have-- we offer ongoing brown bags on different topics. And then we have these meetings where I and the probation officers offer victims of crimes of sexual assault to meet with us if they'd like to go over these terms and conditions that that offender has to follow.

And in those meetings and working together with that probation officer, I think they watch and learn how just listening compassionately and giving time to a victim, listening to what their concerns are, offering opportunities for input, really, really hearing from them, those are the kinds that I think that I do on an ongoing basis with officers in our department.

Any examples you all want to talk about with demystifying talking to victims, or kind of best practices, maybe your greatest success, and maybe an interaction that you could have done better?

Yeah, I'll start with that, Greg, in terms of I think this goes to the whole demystifying and the power of simply listening and letting victims share what they want to share. Actually, Greg and I were involved in what's an RJ-- it has its roots in restorative justice. It's called the "high-risk victim/offender dialogue."

And Greg and I were involved in one of these dialogues with a victim, a woman who had been-- she was an adult now, and she had been a victim when she was a teenager of a sexual assault. And we had come into contact with her, Greg and I. And ideally, with these HRVODs, we bring together the victim and then the person responsible for the harm.

In this particular situation, the offender did not come to the table. He was not involved in this dialogue

process. But the woman, Greg and I met with her, gosh, I think it was seven or eight times over almost a year with her and her mother. And we just listened. Honestly, Greg and I did not do anything that spectacular other than have really good listening skills, make sure that she understood what she had to say was very important. Her experience was important. What she went through had meaning.

And honestly, I feel like Greg and I just showed her that we cared. And I know how immensely beneficial that process was to her because she has provided us with some feedback that was just incredible to hear and just humbling to the max. And yeah, it just was so rewarding being able to be part of this process.

Like I said, and all I did-- and all Greg and I did were truly to give her this space to speak her truth and to tell us about her journey and what she's gone through in her life. And it was incredible. It was an incredible experience. So I just think that really speaks to the power of what Danielle and I mentioned earlier just in terms of listening and being the vessel to have someone share their story can be just an incredibly empowering and healing process in and of itself.

Yeah, I was just going to also add that, in talking to victims and survivors-- and we all know that, yeah, they can be very difficult conversations, and none of us want to revictimize someone we're talking to or retraumatize them. And we also recognize that victims aren't always happy to hear what we have to say. It may not be what they want to hear.

And why we're calling, if we're calling about a case that they haven't maybe thought about for years, and we're calling from the probation department, tell-- informing them about something, and they haven't heard from us for a number of years, we may be stirring up emotions for them. And these conversations can be difficult.

I called-- I actually reached out to a victim a few weeks before Christmas to ask for some input into the case that she was involved in as a victim. And I didn't hear back from her until probably mid-January. And she wrote back. It was an email, an email conversation. And she wrote back to me and said-- told me that I had ruined her Christmas by the timing of my reaching out, which is, of course, not what I wanted to do at all, and I felt absolutely horrible.

And that wasn't my intent, but it did give me something to think about, that the timing of me asking about something close to the holidays, like that was really hard for her, obviously. And I apologized profusely. But the point being is that it can be have-- it can be very-- it can be difficult having these conversations. And there's a lot just to really be listening to.

But to add to Denise's-- that positive story, one of the stories that I wanted to share an example is a story where I worked with a victim who, after I told her about an option to have a dialogue with the person that hurt her-- she was on a bicycle, and the woman was-- had been drinking and driving, and ran into her on her bike, and threw her into-- her bike and herself went into a big snow bank, and she was very severely injured. She had months and months of PT.

And once I informed her and let her know that we had these restorative options available, she really wanted to have a dialogue with this woman. And she told me that her need at that time to help herself was to help this woman. Her need was to help this other woman heal and to let this other woman know that she was OK and that she didn't want this other woman to carry this kind of burden the rest of her life.

And although it was not a good-- horrible choice to be drinking and driving, she wanted this woman to know that she was OK, and she didn't want her to carry that. And that was important for her to say during this dialogue. And she had shared with me that her entire family and friends had told her, you need to be angry. You need to be angry at this person.

And she was just like, I'm not, like this is the way I feel. This is what I want to do. And for her, that was her need, and that was healing for her. And I'm really grateful that we were able to provide the space for that dialogue to happen. And both she and the person that hurt her were just really positively benefited from that conversation.

Thanks, Danielle and Denise. Obviously, part of this demystifying talking to victims, we have a lot of questions coming up, and I'll come back to those in a minute. But I wanted to give each of you a chance to kind of weigh in on each of these four areas that we highlighted for this webinar.

The next one is the realities and limitations of the system. Can you each talk from your professional perspectives a little bit about that and how that might hinder or appear to be a barrier in doing the needed work that needs-- the work that needs to happen with victims?

Yeah, sure. In terms of the realities and limitations, I think one of the things Danielle mentioned actually previously that we try to do, at least with victims of sexual assault here in Boulder, is we meet with them. And like Danielle said, we go over our terms and conditions and answer questions that they may have. I think it's important, those meetings, for a variety of reasons, just putting kind of faces to names for the POs and for the victims.

But one of the things we talk about in those meetings are the realities and limitations. I think there



are times when victims have-- aren't 100% clear on the goals of probation or what our limitations are. For example, if a client were to have a positive urine screen for cocaine, at least in Boulder, just one of those urine screens is not going to result in them being incarcerated or going back to court.

We work with-- people are given chances. We work within evidence base and RNR framework here. So when we talk about what supervision is going to look like, there are things that just may not meet the victim's desires or even their hopes in terms of what probation supervision looks like.

For those of you who may work in supervision out there, if we were to arrest and send everyone who had a positive urine screen to prison or jail, I mean, that would be a little incomprehensible. So yeah, there's some education that takes place. Hopefully that helps it down the road when there are things that happen in a case that we notify a victim about, and so they aren't taken totally by surprise in terms of what the response by the system may be.

I also think that, not just in terms of a violation, but there are times I know where in probation we file as just part of our case management, not just particular to sex offender supervision but as part of a case management tool, we often ask the court to terminate a case, terminate a probation case early. And while there have been times in my career where the victims have actually agreed and not opposed those motions, I would say, the majority of the time, victims aren't in favor of those early terminations.

And so that's in conflict. I truly believe that that piece of case management, even if a client has reduced their risk, they-- maybe they weren't that high risk in the first place. They finished the terms of their probation and done very well. They have a great amount of protective factors, et cetera. It's very appropriate in certain situations to ask the court to terminate a person's probation. And like I said, I think those are oftentimes not viewed as being victim-centered by victims when we are-- when we make those notifications that those motions are going to be filed. I'm not sure, Danielle. Do you have something to add to that piece?

No. I think you're right. Those conversations are really hard, and sometimes there's not a lot that we can say that's going to help a victim. It's rather just listening, empathizing, understanding their frustration over the system and what's going on. But as you said, those meetings that we do invite victims to join us in, we've received such positive feedback from those victims and survivors that have decided to come and meet with us, or meet with us on the phone or virtually, whatever.

I think they do really feel like their voice is being valued. They like seeing a face to who's working on the case. They really like their input to-- I think they feel like their input is really being valued, and

they're starting to build a relationship with us. We're usually going to be supervising that person for a good length of time. So it's kind of-- it's starting to build that relationship with them too, which I think is really helpful. And maybe they-- hopefully, they're not feeling maybe as forgotten as they were maybe at a different point in the system.

Another barrier or one of the barriers that I see also to being victim-centered is really, when we ask them what they want, not being able to deliver that to them because we're just not capable. We don't have maybe the resources. We're not ab-- the court isn't able to give that kind of sentence.

There's also a lot of time involved. It takes a lot of time to be able to sit down and really listen to a victim sharing their story. So I think those were just a couple of things that I wanted to mention about, yeah, a couple of the other-- just a couple barriers. I know we have a lot of others to go on to.

Yeah, another really just, I would almost say, fundamental barrier to being victim-centered and not being-- I guess the term is having this "truth in sentencing." And it just-- it's a topic I think worth mentioning because, time and time again, we get-- you know, victims can get-- feel very disillusioned and angry about a lack of truth in sentencing.

And what I'm talking about specifically are the length of jail and/or prison sentences. At least in Colorado, I mean, we have the jail and prison calculations. You almost-- you feel like you need to be a mathematician to figure it all out. But really quickly, on a small-scale math problem, if somebody is going to be getting a jail sentence, a county jail sentence for 90 days, for example, really the maximum time they're going to be in there is 45 days.

I think the more extreme examples or really when people feel that disappointment in the system is when we're talking prison. If someone, if offender has actually gone to prison, receives a prison sentence, we have just experienced, Danielle and I, so many times when they're coming up for parole, or even before that, they're coming up for something called "transition," transitioning out of DOC so early on in their sentences that victims are just kind of overwhelmed, and shocked, and can't believe they're receiving a call already from the Department of Corrections saying, hello, this person is potentially going to be released.

Again, I just-- that's something that's in state statutes and nothing necessarily that I in probation can do. The only thing I feel like Danielle and I can do on this end is to try and educate victims when we're talking to them, if someone has received a probation sentence, and then it's revoked, and they're going to prison, to try and be as honest with them. However, they may not like that honesty-- but being honest with them and giving them-- trying to get them prepared for those kind of systemic

things that just exist in our system right now.

Thanks, both of you. One of the things that we know is so important is how do victims' services people, corrections people, probation and parole case managers, how do you stay healthy in this field? And I think maybe one of the limitations or one of the barriers to having probation or corrections people spend time with victims and survivors is that we know that what's happened to them can be vicarious trauma. I mean, listening to their story can be traumatizing to all of us. So I wondered if you all want to spend a couple of minutes on staying healthy in the field, and then we'll move to our question-and-answer period.

Oh, gosh, this is-- you could spend a whole day talking about this stuff. And I mentioned earlier, I have never attended a training called "how to talk to victims." But I can tell you, I've attended numerous, numerous trainings about compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, vicarious trauma. And so I think that's a good thing. I think there's an awareness out there.

I personally would say there's things to be aware of. I think being self-aware and understanding when you might be experiencing compassion fatigue, or there's-- if you just Google "compassion fatigue" or "secondary trauma," there's lists, how to identify this in yourself. I think having that self-awareness is the first step.

And then, OK, now I'm aware I'm feeling this way. What do I do? And there's so many important things. I think Danielle can talk a lot about these as well. For me, personally, I feel like debriefing, having someone to debrief with, whether that's a coworker, a trusted coworker, whether it's a professional therapist-type person, whether it's-- I wouldn't necessarily suggest it's your significant other that you go home to and debrief with. I think debriefing is important.

We do get this energy from dealing with offenders, from dealing with victims. And then there's a lot of research about somehow being able to discharge that energy, that negative energy that I've heard it called kind of "negative emotional residue" from being exposed to these things over, and over, and over again. And I think I would never suggest that I know how other people should discharge that energy or what their self-care looks like because I think a person's self-care is very personal and individual.

So I don't want to-- for me, again, personally, there's things like I have dogs. I go hiking. I really do my best to turn off my work phone, my computer-- I don't have it on all day-- and having a positive home life.

I've seen it with the probation officers I've supervised for years now that-- and I don't know if whether it's the chicken or the egg, right? But if somebody's personal life is stressful or things aren't going well, then there's going to be spillover into a person's work life. And I think if someone's not dealing with work/life stress and this kind of compassion fatigue or getting rid of these negative emotions, I think that can also have that negative effect on someone's home life.

So I just think in this field, because what we do, working with offenders and working with victims, it's difficult. It's difficult, and it's stressful. And if we're not consciously trying to find ways to be healthy, to do that self-care, I think it eventually gets to most people if they're not just consciously in tune with that and trying to address it. Even early on in your career when you think you're kind of impervious to these things, eventually I think it does catch up with you.

Denise, you did a really great job, a beautiful job of explaining that, I think. I don't have too much to add to that. But, yeah, like Denise said, I think it's really recognizing your self-- like being aware of yourself and how you may be reacting, or if you're experiencing different physical symptoms than you normally don't exhibit, and then reacting to those, like accessing resources to help you through those situations, finding out who those people are in your life that you can debrief with.

Yeah, like Denise said, it may not be your significant other. Not everyone in our life that we love and carry about-- and care about can listen to us talk about these kinds of things. And I think just knowing that that's OK, but just finding the people that can, whether that's counselors, or your supervisors, or friends, or coworkers, through your EAP program.

We have a really wonderful program in Boulder. We have such supportive supervisors in management, and we have a wellness committee that works hard in trying to do fun things when we can in the office and keep morale up.

And also to check in on each other-- like if you're noticing a coworker or a friend who's acting differently, don't be afraid to reach out and check in on that person and offer a listening ear. It's just-- it's so important. And it is. It's very individualized. What works for me may not work for you. So really putting time and effort into finding what will be helpful for yourself and doing this self-care, I think, is super, super critical.

Thanks, both of you. So one of the questions that-- a comment and maybe a little bit more for you to talk about, it says, "Thank you for your comments. Self-care's so important and necessary regardless of the form. The residue, as you put it, has lasting effects."

Danielle, I think you alluded to this, you and/or Denise. Besides just debriefing, I think that you all have access to some services. And I think, Danielle, you mentioned it may be through an EAP program. But do you guys want to talk about that a little bit as well?

Yeah, yeah, we actually have a resource within our office where we have access to a certain number of-- well, we have EAP, but we also have someone closer that we can go and see and debrief cases with, someone who is like a psychologist with-- that does a lot of debriefing with law enforcement-type agencies. And so she just really kind of understands a lot of what we're seeing, which I think is really helpful.

And so making appointments with her when we've had tough cases or tough situations at work arise, really utilizing her in our office has been amazing. And I think we're, a lot of us, are just so grateful that we have that available to us to use-- and yeah, just utilizing your resources, knowing who you can go to, yeah, debriefing.

And if you're not getting enough of what you need out of talking to one person, then go see another person. Make an appointment with another person. Or if you need help finding someone, ask your supervisor, or ask your coworker. Ask your colleague. I think there's a lot of people out there that want to help. Sometimes it just takes a little bit of extra effort in finding who that person is for you.

I would also add to that, and I really don't want to be a total downer here, but I've seen it. You know, I've worked with sex offenders specifically for about 17 years now. And I think because of that particular population, and what we have to read, and what we have to deal with, I've just seen it maybe more often.

I supervised a probation officer, for example, who-- she was a fabulous, fantastic probation officer. And she actually had a great deal of self-awareness and could definitely see some signs of compassion fatigue and not really-- losing that empathy and compassion for working with clients and having just kind of an indifference towards them.

And then so we were having those conversations. We were aware. And I had asked her if she wanted to move out of the sex offender field, go to a different caseload. That's not-- that's OK. That should be OK for anyone to try and switch things up.

At that time, this probation officer wanted to continue working with sex offenders. She started having nightmares. She started having nightmares, not good ones, about a few of her clients. We ended up changing her caseload after that.

But I think it was unfortunate. I think it should have happened earlier. And that person ended up leaving probation altogether. And I think-- I don't want that to be a-- that's not a negative story. This person, I still talk with her. She's doing-- she's very happy. She's in a totally different field, and it was the right move for her.

I'm not suggesting that people just lo-- leave this field. That's a little bit-- hopefully, that's not overly like the majority of situations. But I think it goes to how important that self-awareness piece is. And it's not a failure if you might need a change.

Work with a different clientele. Do something different for a while to try and kind of regain that vitality, I guess, is the best way for me to see it. But it was tough for this probation officer going through that. And but like I said, I'm glad that she's doing-- she's doing very well. She's just no longer a probation officer.

I think it's really important just to remember that in working with victims, survivors, clients, I think we're constantly trying to help them in so many ways, and suggest this, and offer that, and find out what their needs are so that they can feel better, succeed, do better, accomplish things. And yet, when we look at ourselves, sometimes we're like the last people to actually take our own advice of seeking out help, or resources, or taking care of ourselves so that we'll be OK.

So I think I just wanted to just add that little piece, like it's-- I think we're probably all really good at giving advice to the people that we're working with. But I think it's a lot harder taking it ourselves. So just remember to. At work, you've got to take care of yourself to be able to stay healthy in general in any field.

Thanks, Danielle and Denise. So I think we're going to move on to our question-and-answer portion. I will say that there's a comment in here. Someone says, "There's a great book called *Burnout* that talks about completing the stress cycle in our bodies. It's a very helpful tool in managing how stress impacts the body." So thanks for that resource from one of our attendees. So the first question for you all is, what can we do to support parents of children that have been victimized?

Yeah, I think to help parents it's, what do they need? What is the scenario? What would be helpful for them? Where are they at? Have they been listened to? What are their questions?

I think it's really just taking a victim-centered approach in what they need in the situation and then hooking them up with appropriate resources, involving them, engaging them, empowering them, providing information. It's really trying to find out what is going to be most helpful to them. And where

are they at? What do they need?

It really depends on-- it depends on those things. But I think finding those answers out is going to help us determine how we can best support them and where we can put our efforts into supporting them. Denise, you want to add anything?

I don't know that I have too much to add to that. I don't think-- gosh, I think, again, putting that-- hooking up those faces, the faces to names for the probation officer and the parents in this particular scenario, I just think that face-to-face interaction goes a long way in terms of building that relationship, building a trust.

And the feedback we've gotten really supports that, that they were just-- that the victims or victims' families that partic-- have participated in those meetings have really appreciated, again, feeling heard, being-- feeling confident in that probation officer, having that face-to-face, feeling confident that they're not going to be allowed to have contact with other children or whatever the case may be. And again, it's what Danielle said in terms of providing resources, potential resources.

There's also, of course, Danielle talks to them and tries to advocate for them in terms of just getting victim services funding that can potentially go to help them with treatment funding. So that can be whether it's restitution, or whether it's just victim services funding, or money that we collect from those fees, they can be very restorative and help victims immensely if they didn't have money for counseling beforehand.

Yeah, and, Denise, great points, and also just op-- informing them that there's other, like you said, restorative options. Would a clarification letter be helpful? Is that part of the case? A letter of apology in there, meaningful community service for the person that caused the harm, or what other things that could we come up with that might be helpful to those parents to repair harms to the extent possible, exploring those options, yeah, and exploring victims' compensation and helping them access those resources so they can get counseling. Their children can get counseling as well.

Thanks to both of you. Next question, in your experience, what are victims looking for in the criminal justice system or from the criminal justice system?

I honestly-- I mean, every victim's experience is different. And I would say victims, individual victims, could be looking for different things, and justice can look different for different people. But I think many are looking for accountability. They're looking for healing, and they're looking for understanding.

And how is it-- how can we best provide those types of things to victims and survivors? And I think they are going to be unique to that victim experience. But I do think we have a lot of different possibilities that we can offer victims and survivors to hopefully meet those needs if we do approach it from a-- with using victim-centered practices.

Thanks. We have a question here, advice for a young adult just starting off in this work.

Well, I'll speak to the young probation-- I supervise a couple very young probation officers currently. And, oh, gosh, I would say it's never too early-- and I'm feeling like a little bit of a broken record. It's never too early to be aware of that self-care. I think when you start off, you just feel, oh, my gosh, I love this, like this is so exciting, and this is awesome. I'm never going to get sick of this.

At least that's how I was, like I was very oblivious. And I actually, around my 10-year mark, I was very burnt out. I was feeling-- I was definitely feeling that, and I was very close to approaching my supervisor asking to be switched away from the sex offender team. That didn't end up happening. I had other life circumstances, and I was able to regain, get over that burnout bridge in a way that I necessarily didn't expect.

But I didn't take care of that burnout. I didn't have good boundaries in terms of taking work home with me. I think that impacted some of my personal relationships. And of course, I'm older and wiser now. So I just would encourage people not to wait, to be aware of those things, even if you may not be feeling those red flags or seeing those red flags in yourself early on in your career, to heed my words and focus on that stuff early on.

Yeah, I would just say, don't take things personally-- easier said than done. I do it still. But really try not to-- you get-- sometimes making these calls, these difficult conversations, people can target you with their frustrations. But it's really the system that they're upset about.

So try not to internalize it. And just know that you're making a difference, just you're making a difference. By every victim/survivor you talk to, you are helping in some way, and try to remember that.

Thanks. So for the final question for both of you, in your professional opinions, how should/could restorative practices be more effectively integrated into the criminal justice system to help heal the harm caused and also hold offenders accountable?

I'll touch on that real quick and hand it over to Danielle. And I'm kind of going to answer it how I



answered earlier on. I feel like in order to have restorative justice principles more integrated into your department, your specific area, you-- that has to come from leadership. In Boulder, we were lucky with having Greg for so long. It was a priority for him, so it was a priority for the department.

And we were just able to utilize and integrate much more victim-centeredness and restorative justice principles into the fabric of our department because we had such supportive leadership that brought in specific trainings or even hired specific people. It was just a priority. So I feel like it has to come, it has to start with the people who are, quote unquote, "in charge" or have that kind of authority to make it important in your department.

In addition, yeah, educating your bench about what RJ is, educating your DA's office, collaborating with both of them, collaborating with your community agencies, having trainings on restorative practices, restorative conversations with community partnerships, I think, is huge. And I think that having all of those different entities understanding what restorative options are and what's available, I think, will just open up lots of possibilities.

I wanted to add a couple things. There's a bunch of comments on taking care of yourself doing this difficult work. I would let people know that our final webinar in this series is going to be on vicarious trauma. And so we will have, hopefully, a pretty comprehensive approach to that and what you can do in the work that you do, in the difficult work that you do.

So I want to thank everyone. Before we end today, I'd like to note our upcoming webinars shown here on the screen. We have several webinars and Ask the Experts sessions that are scheduled through August of 2021. So watch your inbox. If you've registered with [ncjtc.org](https://ncjtc.org), then you'll receive notifications of these webinars and Ask the Expert sessions. So watch your inbox for that. And for more details, again, visit [ncjtc.org](https://ncjtc.org) for additional information.

And as you can see on the slide, the remaining topics for this series, attending to risk/needs in treatment, the neurobiological applications for community supervision professionals in interpersonal violence. We have a session on trauma-informed care, managing sex offender caseloads, a victim-centered approach, so really looking at that high-harm crime and trying to look at it from a victim-centered perspective. We have a webinar on working with sexual abusers and then, as I mentioned, the final one on preventing vicarious trauma.

So this concludes our webinar for today. I want to thank you again. Thanks again to our panelists Danielle Fagan, and Denise Metz, and to our attendees for an excellent discussion today. We hope you can join us again for future webinars, and have a wonderful day.