

# Being Victim/Survivor-Centered: Working with Sexual Abusers

Presenters: Denise Metz, Danielle Fagan, and Marcie Howell

Webinar Resources

## Q&A Responses

**Q:** Do the presenters have any tips for preventing vicarious/secondary trauma in the workplace? Such as events, special/fun days, presentations?

**A:** *Specific trainings in those areas are offered to staff regularly as well and we do bring in speakers from time to time who can speak to this subject as well as we have created a Wellness Committee that offers fun things monthly such as on National Ice Cream Day, there were ice cream sandwiches for everyone and there was a special "wing" day and people brought their favorite wing sauce and people voted on their favorite one and everyone enjoyed wings. This committee meets monthly and focuses on ideas that can bring employees together in different ways. We also have all staff BBQ's a few times over the year. Each team has a fun day yearly and supervisors have monthly check ins with staff to debrief and talk. Taking time off and covering each other is supported. Colleagues are really there for each other to listen.*

*Yes, I agree with Danielle. It's important, I think, to offer/provide a variety of different trainings to staff on these topics (secondary/vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue). In my 20-year career with Boulder Probation, I've probably attended around 10-15 different trainings on this topic at different points in time. While there might have been overlap in these trainings, I was always at a different point in my career, had a different mindset, and took something from each and every one of them. I think if management is talking about these issues and encouraging folks to attend to their self-care, attend trainings etc., that is important in setting the tone for the whole department. I also have greatly appreciated the speakers that have been brought in over the years for presentations for the entire department; again, this has been a priority for our department. I also really value the debriefs I have with colleagues. One speaker I remember in particular was Kevin Gilmartin. Another was a victim/trauma expert from a local sex assault victim nonprofit agency.*

**Q:** Who would assist an offender with writing the Clarification Letter?

**A:** *The sex offender therapist working with that client would help them and the PO and Victim Assistant Coordinator would add feedback. As I noted in the presentation, here in CO, it is a required part of treatment for clients to finish a victim clarification letter. So, the process is usually initiated as part of treatment and then our victim advocate helps drive the process and the PO can give input as well.*

**Q:** How does a victim advocate go about getting the HRVOD facilitator certification? I'm here in Las Vegas, NV.

**A:** *I would encourage you to google HRVOD facilitators in your area and or reach out to HRVOD facilitator Lynn Lee in CO or John Wilson in PA. They might know other facilitators in your area.*

**Q:** What is your process in reaching victims who avoid contact with officers?

**A:** *Since I'm not an officer, I reach out in all the ways I can; email, phone, and letter, and let them know I am here to help if they would like. I let them know my specific role, and that sometimes can help.*

**Q:** How do you handle this with minor victims and families who are not necessarily supportive of the victim?

**A:** *I do my best to reach out to the victim and provide them with support and resources if they are in an unsupportive environment. Of course, we can't MAKE a parent of a minor victim do anything, but we can offer education/resources to the parent(s). All of the practices we talked about in the presentation are voluntary.*

**Q:** Is HRVOD considered evidence based?

**A:** *The feedback that has been provided from both survivors and perpetrators who have completed an HRVOD is very positive, and there are studies that are continuing to track the outcomes. HRVODs fall under the broader category of Restorative Justice practices. There have been many meta-analyses done on these practices, and they generally have produced promising findings. A lot of the RJ studies have largely used victim-offender mediation and RJ conferencing as the objects of study, so more research is needed for applications outside of these practices. There is also more research on RJ programs for juveniles, and there is enough evidence from those findings to call it evidence-based.*