

# Working with Victims prior to the Conditional Release of Prisoners

Czech Republic

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## Who cares about the needs of victim before conditional release decision?

Prisoner ??

The staff of the prison ??

Judge and state prosecutor ??

The staff of the Probation/Mediation Service ??

The staff of the victim services ??

Someone else ???



## **Probation and Mediation activities are provided by one organization in CR**

**Our organization operates during all stages of criminal procedures and supports probation officers in cooperation with victims as often as possible – also at post sentence level**



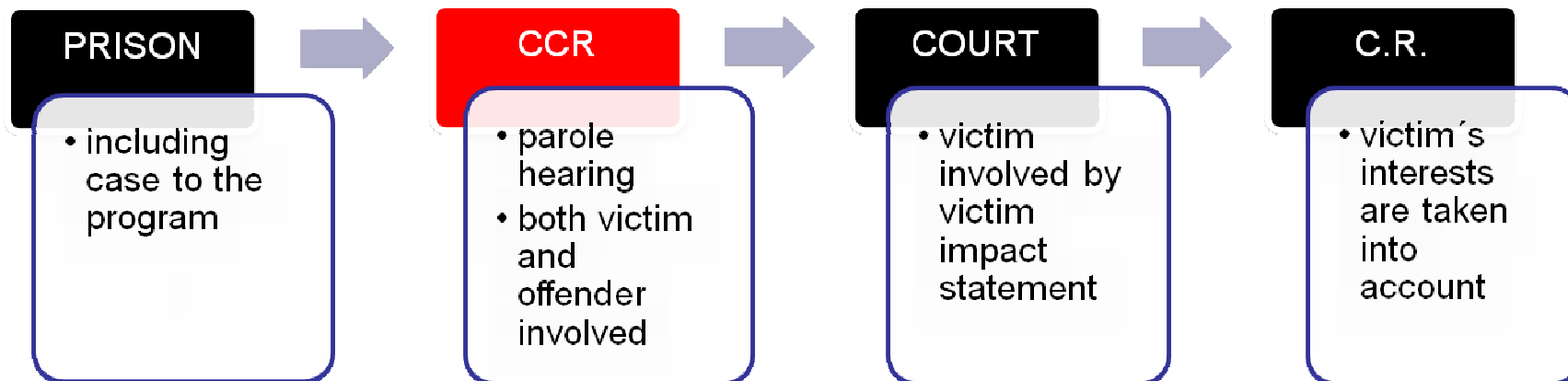
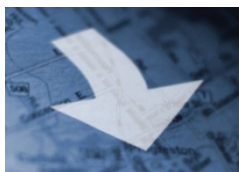
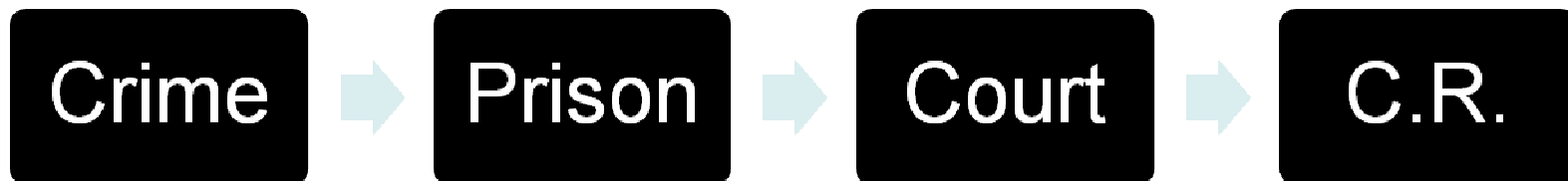
**The focus of the organization is on harm reparation and restoration in V/O relationship**

In our case work we apply the principles of RJ

**The preconditions are:**

- to have contact with victim and offender
- to focus on the victim's needs and harm
- to support offenders in taking their responsibility for criminal behaviour

## BEFORE AND NOW:



# Committee for Conditional Release (CCR)

2009 - 2012 in 3 prisons  
2012 - 2015 in 9 prisons





## Target group of CCR project

During the preparation for conditional released decision we work with

- **offenders** convicted for a more serious crimes, esp. violent crimes or crimes causing physical or mental harm to the victim
- **victims, inc. surviving dependants and their families**

## How assistants work with victims



### During the preparation for conditional release decision

They

- study information from the court file
- decide whom to contact – the victim/family member
- choose the best form of the initial contact - phone, letter
- visit the victim/family member personally
- explain to the victim/family member possibilities of the cooperation with CCR
- listen to the victim/family member
- support the victim in preparing „Victim Impact Statement“



## How assistants work with victim



During the parole hearing and court decision on conditional release

They

- assist the victim during parole hearing
- support the victim before court makes decision
- assist the victim during court hearing or inform the victim about the court's decision
- help the victim to contact probation officer who will provide parole supervision under the offender
- help the victim to contact other services if it's needed

***My comment to the impact of the crime that happened to me is, that I realize that I could have influenced the conflict by not letting the offender provoke me. I wouldn't have been stabbed then. On the other hand I must say that I didn't use any weapons during our "fight" and I defended myself according to fair habits that I gained during years of martial arts training. I consider it cowardice that offender attacked me in the last moment of the conflict with a knife. I didn't want to fight and I told him so several times. But let me talk about the impact of the crime on my life. I don't feel any hatred against the offender, I don't suffer any post traumatic stress disorder but after I was wounded I spent 22 days in hospital because the wound didn't heal according to the expectations and I was very worried about the progress of recovery. Well known doctors were discussing my case in my hospital room and didn't know what to do with it. This was the most traumatic feeling of all the impacts that I have been experiencing since the conflict with offender. My spleen has been surgically removed. I was using medication and I was on a strict diet. I can't speak about any further problems connected with the loose of the spleen at the moment. I'm not against conditional release of offender and if the committee and the court come to conclusion that he deserves to be conditionally released, I wouldn't like to be the one to complicates it.***

**Victim Impact Statement**

## Questions of the victim to the offender during the parole hearing

- **Why did you use the weapon?**
- **Didn't you understand when I repeatedly asked you to go home?**
- **What can prevent you from acting the same way you acted against me?**

# Topics of the workshop

You are welcome !



## Do we have preconceptions in work with the victims ?



1. Only „competent worker" (psychologist) should cooperate with the victim.
2. If offender doesn't cooperate with probation officer or if he/she doesn't have money for harm compensation, victim's worker doesn't have nothing to offer to the victim.
3. Victim's worker has to protect the victim primarily and he/she has to prevent the victim from contact with offender.
4. Every victim has suffered the trauma and because of her/his traumatic experience victim isn't able to make decisions.
5. It is no good to „open the old wounds" especially if work with the victim begins after a long period since the crime occurred.
6. Victim's worker questions are the same that the victim has heard many times before.