



RESTORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

FACT SHEET FOR VICTIMS

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES?

Restorative Opportunities is a Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) program that offers victims of crime a chance to communicate with the offender who harmed them. Through Restorative Opportunities, victims can obtain information, describe the crime's impact to the offender and find ways to address -- where possible -- the damage caused by the offender's actions.

The program is based on the principles of Restorative Justice which seek to address the harm caused by crime by focusing on the needs and issues of the people affected. The program emphasizes the offender taking responsibility for his or her actions, while promoting empathy for victims, reparation and prevention of future harm.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Restorative Opportunities can take many forms and is guided by participants' needs. With the help of an experienced mediator, victims can meet with the offender face to face, correspond in writing or by video message. Alternatively, an appointed mediator can act as a go-between, relaying messages between victims and offenders.

Victims' participation in the program is voluntary at all stages and is guided by an experienced and trained mediator. Mediators represent the victim and the offender, and work with both to find ways to identify and address their needs. At all times, mediators are considerate of the participants' physical and emotional well-being.

If a victim decides to stop participating at any point, their decision will be respected. Victims can revisit their decision at any time.

WHO ARE THE MEDIATORS?

CSC retains and trains mediators, from communities across Canada, who are experienced in working with victims of serious crime. The mediator works with the victim and offender separately to prepare them for participation in the program.

HOW CAN PARTICIPATION IN RESTORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES BE OF BENEFIT TO VICTIMS?

Restorative Opportunities provides victims with an opportunity to:

- find answers to questions left unanswered after sentencing;
- tell their story and be certain the offender understands the impact of the crime;



- become better informed about the crime and the offender's level of accountability and remorse;
- receive support in dealing with emotions or anxiety associated with the crime, the offender or the offender's eventual release into the community; and
- express their needs to the mediator and have a say in how the program progresses.

DO VICTIMS HAVE TO MEET THE OFFENDER?

No. Communication can take place in a number of ways. Victims and offenders can meet face to face or communicate through letters or video messages. Alternatively, the mediator can relay messages back and forth between victim and offender.

ARE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TAKEN?

Yes. Measures, such as on-going assessments, are completed to ensure participants' safety and privacy.

WILL THE OFFENDER'S PARTICIPATION AFFECT HIS OR HER PAROLE ELIGIBILITY?

No. Participation in Restorative Opportunities is not intended to have any direct impact on an offender's sentence or on a parole decision.

HOW CAN VICTIMS PARTICIPATE IN THE RESTORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM?

Registered victims, victim representatives acting on behalf of registered victims and non-registered victims affected by serious crime can participate in Restorative Opportunities by contacting CSC's Restorative Opportunities Coordinator at 613-995-4445 or by e-mail at restorativejustice@csc-scc.gc.ca. Victims can also call CSC's Victim Services Division toll-free at 1-866-806-2275. The call will be directed to the appropriate Victim Services Officer.

CAN AN OFFENDER REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESTORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM?

Offenders who have taken responsibility for their actions and are interested in participating in Restorative Opportunities must be referred to the program by a correctional staff member who supports their participation.

Once a referral has been received, Restorative Opportunities staff and mediators assess its appropriateness and the offender's motivation to participate in the program. Requests made directly by an offender are not accepted.