

**Policy Number:**

**Title:** Intimate Partner Violence Community Reunification

**Effective Date:** TBD

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**PURPOSE:** To promote safety and establish consistent, victim-centered reunification procedures when working with victims; in addition to promoting safety for at-risk persons and clients with a history of intimate partner/domestic violence.

**APPLICABILITY:** This policy applies to all community supervision agents, DOC Work Release agents, and DOC facility case managers providing case management or supervision in intimate partner violence and domestic violence cases.

This policy applies to all staff working with clients who are being released from DOC incarceration and/or are currently on work release or under community supervision.

**DEFINITIONS:**

1. *Victim - a person who has experienced violence by a current or former sexual or romantic partner.*
2. *Intimate Partner Violence - a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in a current or former sexual or romantic relationship. Behaviors may include physical violence, sexual assault, economic abuse, psychological abuse, reproductive coercion, stalking, and other forms of coercive control.*
3. *Victim-Centered Approach - a method of service delivery and decision-making that prioritizes the safety, dignity, needs, and choices of the victim. It recognizes the impact of trauma and seeks to empower victims by giving them a voice in the process.*
4. *At-risk person - a new sexual or romantic partner of a client with a documented history of intimate partner violence.*
5. *Reunification - refers to a continuum of contact between a client—who is being released from incarceration and/or under community supervision—and their victim.*
6. *Safety - the absence of violence and coercive control alongside the presence of having basic needs met and access to resources, support, and services.*

**PROCEDURES:**

**A. General**

1. All victim requests for reunification must be investigated for appropriateness for reunification.
2. Reunification includes:

- a. Reunification between a client and a victim with whom there is a documented history of intimate partner violence (IPV); and/or
- b. Contact or engagement involving a high-threat client entering a new intimate relationship where the new partner may be considered an at-risk person.

## **B. Eligibility**

1. Eligibility for reunification with victim:
  - a. The reunification process must be victim-driven. Reunification may only be initiated after the victim has clearly communicated their interest in reunification to the case manager, corrections agent, and/or DOC Victim Services.
  - b. If there is an active protective order in place that stipulates no contact, the client is **NOT** eligible for reunification.
    - i. Agent must confirm there are no active criminal, civil, or tribal court-ordered protective orders in which the client is listed as the Respondent/Defendant and the victim is listed as the Petitioner/Victim. Court-ordered protective orders may include:
      1. Domestic Abuse No Contact Order (DANCO), No Contact Order (NCO), Harassment Restraining Order (HRO), DOC no contact, and Order for Protection (OFP).
      2. Open Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) cases and/or a social service agency has prevented the person from having contact with children and/or residing in the proposed residence.
  - c. The client must sign a Release of Information (ROI) allowing the agent to communicate information to the victim that may impact their safety. If the client chooses not to sign a ROI, the client is **NOT** eligible for reunification.
2. Considerations regarding contact with an at-risk person:
  - a. A case manager, corrections agent, and/or DOC Victim Services must inform an at-risk person of any public information regarding the client's supervision status. The at-risk person must then clearly communicate their interest.
  - b. ROIs for disclosure to at-risk persons are strongly encouraged but are not required.

## **C. Determining appropriateness for reunification**

1. Determining appropriateness for reunification with victim:
  - a. Agents must determine appropriateness by balancing request and needs of victim assessment outcomes, recent behaviors including coercive control, police reports, and the client's criminal history.
  - b. Agents may consider gradually increasing contact over time, as appropriate.
  - c. Agents must require engagement in relevant programming and/or treatment consistent with the client's risk, needs, and responsivity factors prior to reunification, including but not limited to: batterer intervention programming, mental health services, and chemical dependency treatment.
2. Considerations regarding appropriateness for contact with an at-risk person:
  - a. Agents should consider appropriateness by balancing request and needs of at-risk person assessment outcomes, recent behaviors including coercive control, police reports, and the client's criminal history. Agents must communicate with the at-risk person their recommendations.

- b. Agents may consider and suggest gradually increasing contact over time, as appropriate.
- c. Agents must require engagement in relevant programming and/or treatment consistent with the client's risk, needs, and responsivity factors prior to reunification, including but not limited to batterer intervention programming, mental health services, and chemical dependency treatment.

**D. Increasing victims'/at-risk person's safety**

- 1. Staff shall assist victims and at-risk persons in connecting with local community-based advocacy services and stress the importance of working with an advocate and creating a safety plan. Agents shall discuss a plan for ongoing, safe, and confidential contact between the victim or at-risk person and the agent moving forward.
- 2. Staff shall protect confidentiality of victim and at-risk person input to the fullest extent legally possible. Staff must proactively communicate to victims and at-risk persons how information they provide may or may not be shared with the client.
- 3. If at any time the victim withdraws interest in reunification, the process will immediately cease. For the victim's safety, the client will not be informed that the victim's decision prevented reunification unless the victim/at-risk person explicitly wishes to disclose this information.
- 4. If at any time an at-risk person withdraws interest in contact with the client, the process will immediately cease. For the at-risk person's safety, the client will not be informed that the at-risk person's decisions prevented contact unless the at-risk person explicitly wishes to disclose this information.
- 5. For clients being released from prison, DOC Victim Services and Restorative Justice Unit may provide a wrap-around safety meeting for victims who have serious safety concerns.

**E. Training**

- 1. All agents and caseworkers working with domestic violence or intimate partner violence cases shall complete approved IPV-specific training within one year of assignment to IPV cases. All agents working with victims could benefit from this training.
- 2. The Evidence Based Practices Advisory Committee will identify approved training.

**REFERENCES:**

- A. Intimate Partner Violence Reunification Guiding Principles
- B. Sample: Release of Information Document for Supervision Client
- C. Sample: Release of Information in Reunification Cases

**INTERNAL CONTROLS:**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Minnesota Crime Victim Service Program Directory

**APPROVAL:**

Commissioner of Corrections