
Policy Number:

Title: Intimate Partner Violence Reunification

Effective Date: TBD

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

APPLICABILITY: Minnesota community supervision agencies.

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

This policy applies to cases involving:

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

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 or at-risk person.*
- 6. *Safety - safety means the absence of violence and coercive control alongside the presence of having basic needs met and access to resources, support, and services.*

PROCEDURES:

A. All victim requests for reunification must be investigated for appropriateness for reunification.

B. Eligibility for reunification

- 1. The reunification process must be victim driven. Reunification can only be initiated after the victim has clearly communicated their interest in reunification to the case manager, corrections agent, and/or DOC Victim Services.

2. If there is an active protective order in place that stipulates no contact the client is **NOT** eligible for reunification.
3. Check eligibility for reunification:
 - a. Agent must confirm that there are no active criminal or civil court-ordered protective orders where 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 CHIPS cases or a social service agency has prevented the person from having contact with children and/or residing in the proposed residence
4. There is an active Release of Information signed by the client on file that allows the agent to communicate information to the victim/at risk person that may impact their safety.

C. Determining appropriateness for reunification

1. Agents shall determine case appropriateness by balancing victim requests and needs against outcomes of approved IPV risk and lethality tools, recent behaviors (coercive control), police reports, and client's criminal history.
2. Agents may consider gradually increasing contact over time as appropriate.
3. Agents shall 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: battering intervention programming, mental health services, and chemical dependency treatment.

D. Increasing victim's or at-risk person's safety in reunification

1. Agents shall assist victims/at-risk persons in connecting with local community-based advocacy and encourage them to consult and/or meet with said agency.
2. Agents shall discuss the importance of creating a safety plan with the victim or at-risk person and shall collaborate on a plan for ongoing, safe, and confidential contact between victim/at-risk person and agent going forward.
3. Agent shall protect confidentiality of victim input to the extent that it is legally possible to do so. Agents must communicate to victims proactively how information given by the victim to the agent will be shared or not with the client.
4. 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 explicitly wishes to disclose this information.
5. For clients being released from prison, MNDoc Victim Services and Restorative Justice Unit may provide a wrap-around safety meeting for victims who have serious safety concerns.

E. Training

1. Within their first year of employment in a specified position, supervising agents and DOC facility case managers must complete standardized training on the IPV Reunification Principles and a victim-centered approach to corrections.

2. *IPV Reunification Principles: a victim-centered approach to corrections training* must be approved by the Domestic Violence Steering Committee, which includes Violence Free Minnesota and corrections agencies.

INTERNAL CONTROLS:

A. [Sample internal control]

B.

REFERENCES:

ATTACHMENTS:

A. Intimate Partner Violence Reunification Guiding Principles

B. Minnesota Crime Victim Service Program Directory

APPROVAL:

Commissioner of Corrections