DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Policy Number:
Title: Intimate Partner Violence Community Reunification
Effective Date: TBD

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

APPLICABILITY: This policy applies to all Supervised Release (SR) and Intensive Supervised Release (ISR) agents, DOC Work Release agents, and DOC facility case managers providing case management or supervision in intimate partner violence and domestic violence cases.

DEFINITIONS:

1. ***Victim - a person who has experienced violence by a current or former sexual or romantic partner.***

2. ***Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) - 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. Reunification - refers to a continuum of contact between a client who is being released from incarceration and a victim with whom there is a documented history of intimate partner violence.

5. 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 considered for appropriateness for reunification.

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. The 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 an ROI, the client is **NOT** eligible for reunification.

C. Determining appropriateness for reunification

1. Determining appropriateness for reunification with a victim:
   a. The agent must determine appropriateness by balancing request and needs of the victim, assessment outcomes, recent behaviors including coercive control, police reports, and the client's criminal history.
   b. The agent may consider gradually increasing contact over time, as appropriate.
   c. The agent 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: battering intervention programming, mental health services, and/or chemical dependency treatment.

D. **Reunification request approval**

1. Reunification request while the client is in facility
   a. If a victim requests reunification prior to the client's release, the case manager will communicate the request to the agent.
   b. If the victim requests reunification prior to agent assignment, the case manager will document the request in the department's offender database.
   c. In addition to the request for reunification, the case manager will also communicate any relevant information regarding the victim and client that may inform the appropriateness of the reunification request.
   d. If the assigned supervising agent determines that reunification is appropriate prior to release, the supervising agent will request the Hearing and Release Unit adjust the standard condition prohibiting contact with the victim to include contact with the victim.
2. Reunification request after the client is released
   a. If the agent determines reunification is appropriate, the agent will request modification and restructuring through the Hearing and Release Unit to include contact with the victim.
   b. The agent may rescind client contact with the victim when there are imminent concerns for victim safety, pending Hearing and Release Unit review of restructuring.

E. Increasing Victims' Safety

1. Staff shall assist victims 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 and the agent moving forward.

2. Staff shall protect confidentiality of victim input to the fullest extent legally possible. Staff must proactively communicate to victims 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 explicitly wishes to disclose this information.
4. 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.

F. Training

1. All Supervised Release and Intensive Supervised Release 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:

1. Intimate Partner Violence Reunification Guiding Principles
2. Sample: Release of Information Document for Supervision Client
3. Sample: Release of Information in Reunification Cases

INTERNAL CONTROLS:

ATTACHMENTS:

1. A. Minnesota Crime Victim Service Program Directory

APPROVAL:

Commissioner of Corrections