

Victim Offender Dialogue

Victim offender dialogue (VOD) is a voluntary victim-centered option in which the victims/survivors (and a supporter) may meet, face to face with the offender, along with a neutral third-party facilitator. The process provides an opportunity for healing and for helping offenders understand the depth and breadth of the harm they have caused.

Some victims wish to do this so they can ask questions that only the offender can answer. Other victims would like a chance to tell the offender how the crime has impacted their life. Sometimes victims wish to discuss forgiveness.

It is important to note that the VOD process in Maryland can only be initiated at the request of a victim/survivor. If an offender wishes to request a dialogue, s/he cannot do so, but might instead be encouraged to write a letter of apology.

If a victim or survivor requests a VOD, the request is referred to a neutral, third party facilitator to coordinate from the beginning, through the preparation, the actual dialogue, and then debriefing. Part of the preparation for a VOD involves screening of the offender. Certain offenders are not appropriate for a dialogue, based on their offense, uncompleted treatment, and/or potential to re-victimize the victim.

The VOD process is completely voluntary on the part of the victim and the offender, and anyone may withdraw from the process at any time. Given the voluntary nature of these dialogues, not all requests result in a VOD.

For further information about Victim Offender Dialogues, contact Patricia Stevens at 410-585-3348.