
Sentencing, Corrections and Public Safety
Guiding Principles for Crime Victims and Survivors in America

Crime victims and survivors have an integral role in America's criminal justice system and efforts to promote individual and public safety. The overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system relies significantly on victims' willingness and ability to participate in justice processes.

Through national criminal justice and public safety reform efforts, victims, survivors and those who serve them have contributed to the following seven "guiding principles" for sentencing, corrections and public safety.

1. An ultimate goal of public safety policy is to reduce crime, resulting in fewer people and communities who are harmed.
2. Crime victims and survivors have a significant role in shaping criminal justice policy as individuals who know first-hand the real costs of crime.
3. Crime victims and survivors deserve to be treated with dignity and validated as persons who have been harmed by crime, with their autonomy and privacy respected at all times.
4. Mandatory supervision of offenders who pose a serious risk to public safety upon their return to the community is essential throughout the offender reentry process in order to promote victim and survivor safety.
5. While it is important for offenders to receive just punishment, the *quantity* of time that convicted offenders serve under any form of correctional supervision must be balanced with the *quality* of evidence-based assessment, treatment, programming and supervision they receive that can change their criminal behavior and thinking and reduce the likelihood that they will commit future crimes. For many offenses and offenders, shorter prison terms are acceptable if the resulting cost savings are reinvested in evidence-based programs that reduce recidivism.
6. Offenders should pay all court-ordered legal and financial obligations, such as victim restitution and child support. Offender compliance with restitution and support orders is a key measure of offender accountability and the performance of offender supervision agencies.
7. Victims' rights to justice must be enforced in accordance with the law and adequately funded. Survivors and victims have a right to safety, representation and participation in the legal process. They deserve information and notification about the status of their case and the alleged or convicted offender, access to victim assistance services, as well as restitution in all cases with pecuniary losses, and victim compensation following violent crimes.

These principles offer a foundation for the fair treatment of crime victims and survivors, and for the use of evidence-based practices that hold offenders accountable for their crimes and reduce recidivism.

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