VICTIM OFFENDER DIALOGUE or VOD is a practice which allows victims/survivors of crime to request a face-to-face meeting with the offender in their case in order to get direct accountability and have their questions answered. VOD is provided by the Colorado Department of Corrections, the Division of Youth Services, and many local probation departments and community-based organizations.

Victim Offender Dialogue is a non-legal confidential process between the victim, the offender, and a team of facilitators trained in the VOD model and compliant with Colorado’s Standards of Practice\(^1\). The purpose of Victim Offender Dialogue is to answer victim/survivor questions about the offense, to encourage direct accountability, and to help victim/survivors heal from the harms caused by the offense in question. While VOD benefits offenders in many ways, it is not designed to reduce the legal culpability of defendants/offenders and it is not dispute resolution, mediation or a negotiation.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO VICTIM OFFENDER DIALOGUE
You have a responsibility to inform crime victims and survivors of their right to request a Victim Offender Dialogue, and to have their case assessed by a facilitator.

(1) Victim Advocates and Victim Witness Coordinators: Judges have statutory requirements [§ 19-2-706(1)(a), § 19-2-708(2)] to advise defendants of the availability of restorative justice practices. Victims should be prepared to hear about restorative justice or VOD in court. Victims should be informed of their role as the empowered party to request a VOD or not.

(2) District Attorneys: According to the Victim Rights Act, DAs have statutory requirements [§24-4.1-303(11)(g)] to advise victims of the availability of restorative justice practices in their area, including Victim Offender Dialogues. Victim Offender Dialogue is available in every judicial district in Colorado.

(3) Defense Attorneys: Defense Attorneys should never speak to victim/survivors or their families about Victim Offender Dialogue, or the defendant/offender’s interest in a dialogue. Defense Attorneys should only discuss VOD with victim counsel.

---

\(^1\) The Restorative Justice Facilitator Code of Conduct and Standards of Training and Practice are found at rjcolorado.org.
**IS VICTIM OFFENDER DIALOGUE RIGHT FOR YOUR CASE?**

**SIGNS THAT A REFERRAL IS IN ORDER**

Referrals for Victim Offender Dialogues should always be initiated at the request of the victim/survivor. The most frequent indicators that a dialogue might help a victim/survivor are statements from the victim/survivor which suggest they would benefit from talking with the defendant/offender directly. For example, "I wish I knew..." "I just want to tell them..." or "It really bothers me that they never apologized/looked me in the eye."

Here are some other indicators:

- ✓ The victim has important questions that only the offender can answer.
- ✓ The victim regrets never getting a meaningful admission of guilt from the offender during the court process.
- ✓ The victim wants the offender to know how their life has been impacted.
- ✓ The victim can’t stop wondering “why” this happened to them or their loved one.
- ✓ The victim wants reassurance the offender will not harm others in the future.

**WHAT IF I’M NOT SURE?**

You do not have to worry about making a final decision about whether dialogue is appropriate for your case, whether the defendant/offender ready, or whether a meeting will be safe. If the victim/survivor is interested in learning more, refer the case for assessment by a trained Victim Offender Dialogue facilitator. Facilitators will work individually with the victim/survivor and the defendant/offender (and their supervising agency, if applicable) to ensure that the case is appropriate and safe before beginning preparations for a dialogue.

**HOW TO REFER A CASE FOR ASSESSMENT**

The Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance (COVA) fields referrals for Victim Offender Dialogue in the state of Colorado. In order to refer a case for assessment for a Victim Offender Dialogue, first ask the victim/survivor if they would like to be contacted by a dialogue facilitator to learn more. If yes, contact COVA to request a follow-up.