

Questions and Answers:

Q. Who may request to initiate a VOMD case?

A. Crime victims as defined by Code of Criminal Procedure art. 56.01 have the right to request victim-offender mediation coordinated by the TDCJ VSD. The definition includes: a close relative of a deceased victim; a guardian of a victim; and a person who is the victim of sexual assault, kidnapping, aggravated robbery, trafficking of persons, or injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual or a person who has suffered personal injury or death as a result of the criminal conduct of another.

Q. How long do I have to wait before my case is assigned to a mediator?

A. The VOMD supervisor actively manages case assignments to ensure crime victims' requests to initiate a VOMD case are processed in a timely manner. The waiting period varies.

Q. What happens after the case is assigned to the mediator?

A. The assigned mediator will meet with the victim and offender separately during an extensive preparation phase. The

preparation process is crucial in clarifying personal issues, processing emotions and lessening the chance of revictimization.

Q. Is the offender required to participate in the VOMD program?

A. The VOMD is completely voluntary for both the victim and offender. If the offender agrees, he/she must take responsibility for the crime of record. Either party can withdraw from the process at any time.

Q. May I bring someone to the mediation session?

A. This is something that will be discussed with the mediator. It is permissible to have a relative or friend as a support person on the day of the mediation. However, that person will not be in the room during the mediation.

Q. Can I write to or visit the offender outside of the VOMD program?

A. We discourage any direct contact between the victim and offender outside of the VOMD program. The risk of revictimization is significantly increased without preparation and assistance from the trained VOMD mediator.

Texas Department
of Criminal Justice

Victim Services Division

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The mission of Victim Services Division is to provide a central mechanism for crime victims to participate in the Criminal Justice System.

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Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division

VICTIM OFFENDER MEDIATION DIALOGUE PROGRAM



The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue (VOMD) program, in accordance with Code of Criminal Procedure art. 56.13, provides an opportunity for victims or surviving family members of violent crime to initiate an in-person meeting with the TDCJ offender responsible for their victimization.

The VOMD program facilitates mediation dialogues between crime victims and offenders who are in TDCJ custody or on parole/mandatory supervision.

Mediations are typically conducted at the facility where the offender is incarcerated or at the offender's parole office. Creative alternatives to mediation are also an option, and typically include a letter written by the victim.

The VOMD can be a very sensitive and highly emotional process. The mediator assigned to the case will work closely with crime victims to identify individual support systems and support services.

Crime victims have expressed a sense of taking back control once they meet directly with the offender to describe the impact of their victimization and to receive answers to questions regarding the offense.

The VOMD program's purpose and available services:

- VOMD is initiated by the TDCJ VSD at the request of the victim.
- VOMD provides victims of violent crime the chance to have a structured meeting with their offender in a safe and secure environment.
- VOMD provides victims the opportunity for personal insight and empowerment.
- VOMD provides victims an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers which only offenders can provide.
- VOMD provides victims an opportunity to express to the offender the full impact of the offense on their lives.
- VOMD provides victims an opportunity to hold offenders directly accountable for the harm they have caused.

Important things to consider regarding the VOMD program:

- VOMD is *not* a retrial of the criminal case.
- VOMD is *not* a means by which an offender can be granted special consideration for parole review, change in custody level, classification status, or clemency.
- VOMD is *not* an adversarial method for victims to seek revenge upon the offender.
- VOMD is *not* a means for the mediator to impose solutions or expectations on the victims or offenders.
- VOMD is *not* a civil law process or settlement-driven procedure.

For more information and to request to initiate a VOMD case, contact the VOMD program at

**512-406-5929, 1-800-848-4284
or vsd.vomd@tdcj.texas.gov**

Common reasons that victims request VOMD include:

- The victim wants the offender to hear the full impact of their victimization.
- The victim wants to regain control over their victimization.
- The victim was not able to fully participate in the court process.
- The victim wants to ask questions that only the offender can answer.
- The victim wants to determine if the offender is remorseful.
- The victim wants to offer forgiveness.

Confidentiality:

In order to ensure safety for participants and their sensitive information, all VOMD case information is confidential. Both the victim and offender must sign an agreement not to release information about their case. The VOMD program does not allow media access in VOMD cases. Any requests for media involvement will be referred to the TDCJ Public Information Office.