



## Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

VORP News - March 1985 - Fresno County

Does it really work? When we tell people about the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program we usually are asked, "Does it really work?" I'd like to share a story with you.

In December we received a referral that was a little out of the ordinary. Perhaps they all are. In this case two teenage girls were both charged as offenders, and both listed as victims. They were having an ongoing conflict which was affecting them at school, at home, and in places where they met in their community. When they met it usually meant that there was an exchange of angry words which often included derogatory obscenities. It affected the girls homes since that was a major topic of discussion and the parents, brother, and boyfriend were now emotionally involved. One girl was going home crying most days from school and was generally depressed over the situation. The other had had increasing medical problems as the time went on and they thought this was directly related to the ongoing conflict. It was referred to VORP after both girls had been charged with juvenile harrasment and had met in court. One of the attorneys knew about VORP and suggested this alternative to the court. I met with each family separately. Each shared the pain this problem had been causing for both the girl and the larger family. Each expressed skepticism that the other would be willing to meet and that if they would meet, the other would not be co-operative. However, each agreed that they would meet and that they would be co-operative.

We met in a local church. There were ten of us present. The two girls, their parents, a brother, a boyfriend, Gail and I. Both girls had indicated that they were involved in churches so we all agreed to open our session with a prayer that God would help us to think clearly and to be able to listen to each other. Each girl then shared the injustices they had experienced and what would be helpful in preventing that type of incident from happening in the future. As each item was dealt with and resolved the intentions for the future were written down and formed the final agreement. We also agreed that for the next four months, each girl would write a note to Gail telling her how things were going. If either would report that they were still having problems then we all agreed to come back together again. All members of the families and the boyfriend agreed that they would encourage the girls in their efforts to not start the problem again. All present signed the agreement.

At the end of the first month we anxiously awaited the notes. One came in on time and was a good report. When I called to remind the other, I was told that things were so relieved that they had forgotten. We just received the third reports from each on time. One said, "I am doing just fine. Everything is going just fine with \_\_\_\_\_." She is leaving me alone and I am leaving her alone, it is really a relief off me that she is. I feel much better now and I hope it stays like this. Thank you, Gail, for helping us."

It works! When victims and offenders are invited to co-operatively resolve the brokenness that has been caused by the offenses, less than 15% are unwilling to enter into that process, and of those who meet, more than 90% come to a contract agreement.

It feels good to participate in this peacemaking process. We need more volunteer mediators. We are having a training session in April and want to invite you to consider being trained yourself or to consider talking with others you know who might be interested. As our

case load increases, we need more volunteers.

Volunteer Mediator Job Description

Time Involved: Maximum of one case referral/month, or about 3-6 hours.

Skills Necessary: Ability to express oneself orally - Flexibility - Ability to listen and to put people at ease - Patience, toleration of delay and frustration - Willingness to explore feelings - Concern for peace and problem-solving in the community - Access to telephone and transportation

Duties: Make separate contacts w/victims and offenders to explain VORP and solicit participation - Assist VORP staff in the screening process - Refer any questions of victim or offender that you can't answer to the VORP office - Arrange and chair a meeting between victim and offender - Give a brief progress report to the VORP staff which in turn is sent to the probation officer. (Example: Contact has been made with victim and we are scheduled to meet on Wednesday.) - Supply a summary of the meeting and complete a brief evaluation form - Return all material regarding the referral to the VORP office

Accountability: The VORP Volunteer works directly with the Volunteer Coordinator and Case Manager

If this looks interesting, we invite you to use your gifts, abilities, and skills in the ministry of reconciliation with victims and offenders. There is no charge for the training. Please complete the form below or call the VORP office at 291-1120.

VORP Training Registration Form

Yes, I am planning to attend the two part training session to be held at the College Community Mennonite Brethren Church Fireside Room on April 18 and April 25, 1985 from 6:00 - 10:00 P. M.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

We also invite you to participate in this reconciliation ministry through your financial support. As the case load increases, volunteers need staff support and contracts need follow-up.

Yes, I/we would like to become a helper in reconciliation by investing monthly in the way indicated:

\_\_\_\$100 \_\_\_\$50 \_\_\_\$25 \_\_\_\$15 \_\_\_\$10 \_\_\_other

Yes, I/we would like to become a helper in reconciliation by investing quarterly in the way indicated:

\_\_\_\$250 \_\_\_\$200 \_\_\_\$100 \_\_\_\$50 \_\_\_\$24 \_\_\_other

Yes, I/we would like to become a helper in reconciliation by investing yearly in the way indicated:

\_\_\_\$500 \_\_\_\$250 \_\_\_\$100 \_\_\_\$50 \_\_\_\$25 \_\_\_other

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

With your help more invitations can be extended to invite consideration for communication, restitution, restoration, and reconciliation.

Shalom,  
Ron Claassen