



Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

VORP of the Central Valley, Inc. News
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1988 REVIEW

SERVICES OFFERED: Crime is more than law breaking. Crime creates obligations and establishes fear and negative relationships. Justice is more than following right rules, establishing blame, and punishing. Justice meets needs and works at making things as right as possible. Not all offenders are willing to become accountable or to work at making things right. For those who are not willing, there needs to be other processes. Not all victims are open to working directly with the offender, and many are never given the opportunity, and for them there needs to be other support and assistance as needed. VORP volunteers are advocates for both victims and offenders. Constructive solutions and resolutions, to a conflict we have defined as a "crime," are found when willing victims and offenders are valued and encouraged to work on the problem together. The volunteer mediator helps them to recognize the injustice (discuss the offense and violation, both facts and feelings), to restore the equity between them (to agree on what payment can be made or work done or other symbolic gesture completed to indicate a sincere attempt to make up for the disruption and loss), and to agree on the future (assurance the victim does not need to worry about it happening again). VORP trains volunteers in conflict management and mediation skills and the VORP process. First the volunteer meets with the offender (parents of juveniles are included) to invite them to accept responsibility for what happened and to "make it right" with the victim. If the offender is willing, the volunteer meets with the victim to invite them to participate. If both agree to meet, the volunteer arranges and leads a meeting. Our goal is that this constructive process will facilitate restoration for both the victim and the offender and movement in their relationship from hostility toward caring.

SERVICES OFFERED TO: Fresno County case referrals have come from Police Probation Teams as part of an informal sentence for first and second time offenders. More frequent offenders or more serious offenses have come from the Court and Probation (acting for the court) where it has been determined that restitution is part of their sentence. Some cases have come through a recommendation by the Alternative Sentencing Program. A few came directly from victims or offenders who had heard of the process and wanted to participate. In cases referred by the Criminal Justice System we ask that the VORP process be an alternative to some part or all of the sentence and not something simply added.

Service Statistics: Number of case referrals:

1983	- 89
1984	- 206
1985	- 315
1986	- 309
1987	- 404
1988	- 476

The most frequent offenses included: vandalism, burglary, petty theft, auto theft and battery. Both parties were contacted and cases were completed in 76% of the referrals; 53% had joint meetings and signed a restitution contract, 20% did not meet but signed a contract for restitution and 3% had a joint meeting but did not sign a restitution contract. Of those that were terminated, 21% were terminated because either the victim or offender were unwilling, 1% were terminated because they were determined to be to volatile, and 1% were terminated for other no-fault reasons.

The contracts amounted to \$24,561 in monetary restitution and 115 work hours for victims. Of the contracts, 62% are completed, 18% are not yet due, 13% are over due (but active), and 7% were considered bad debts. Since our beginning our collection rate has run between 90% and 94%.

SERVICES DELIVERED BY: Only those volunteers who have completed an intensive VORP training program lead the case mediation process. This last year 70 people participated in 11 training programs. The trained mediators who worked with cases in

1988 were: Dalton Reimer, Allen Guenther, Jim Van Wagenen, John Bergey, Galen Quenzer, Sharon Martin, Susan Vasquez, Jerry Linscheid, Simone Ostrander, Gretchen Schmidt, Todd Hofer, Ron Claassen, Steve Hendsch, Jack Swartzendruber, Barbara Scopec, Virginia Daily, Lee Heinrichs, Hugo Reimer, Ray Castro, Hubert Alvarez, Luis Medel, Marjorie and Ed Williams, Mark Siemens, Rachel Weith, John Unger, Dianna Fain, Annette Tamamian, Sue Ewert, Russell Templeton, James Wenger, Rudy Neufeld, Abe Ediger, Jeff Carroll, Mary Ann Hendricks, Joe Lamberth, Thomas Dorsch, Shannon Jost, Mark Allen, Al Agnew, Dick Andris, Donna Zayas, Cathy Oberg, Jerry Reimer, Richard Antenucci, Duane Ruth Heffelbower, Loren Wiens, Mark Gudgel, Mabel Reese, Ty Buxman, Shari Horton, Mark Hill, Dina Gonzales, Willie Vogt, Michael Pierce, Gary Barber, Don Hiebert, Stan Fast, Roxanne Claassen, Pauline Kliewer, Lois Magnuson, Lois Ratzlaff, Phonzie Golston, Dan Falsetto, Rod Willems, Ken Janzen, Tom Distad, and James Diaz.

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS. VOLUNTEERS MAKE VORP POSSIBLE.

Our staff is primarily made up of persons who are serving through voluntary service programs related to their church. They each bring a special vitality and dedication that is very beneficial to VORP. They make it possible for VORP to have a high quality staff while not having the financial resources to hire such qualified people. By volunteering to work on a small cost of living stipend they are each making a significant financial contribution. Currently our staff includes Gretchen Schmidt, Shannon Jost, and Mark Allen (1/2 time) all of whom volunteered through the Mennonite Brethren Christian Service Program. Todd Hofer, through the Mennonite Voluntary Service Program worked last year through August. I am employed two days per week for the Fresno County Program and one day per week with our efforts to help other programs begin in other counties.

SERVICES GUIDED BY: VORP of the Central Valley, Inc. is a non-profit, public benefit corporation. Our Board of Directors represent many different churches and occupations. Our Board of Directors assume both policy and financial responsibility. Each member assumes responsibility to raise a portion of the budget. This is a major commitment and each member deserves a great deal of credit for their dedication and voluntary involvement in making VORP a possibility in Fresno County. Our Board of Directors in 1987 was Richard Unruh, President; Deborah Ohanesian, Secretary/Treasurer; Steve Nilmeier, Russell Templeton; Margaret Hudson; Mark Hill; DH Mapson; and Ross Becker, representing Tulare County VORP. Our advisory committee includes Dave Purvis, Ken Quenzer, Buck Levis, Rev. Lopez and Rev. Lanier. In addition to these people there are many in both the church community and the criminal justice system who opened their doors and storehouse of experience and information to me to seek advice throughout the year. Judge Caeton, Presiding Juvenile Judge; Don Hogner, Chief Probation Officer (He has moved to Alameda County. We will miss him.); and Joe Walden, Juvenile Probation Division Chief are just a few who have been very open and helpful.

SERVICES PAID FOR BY: The service has been offered to victims and offenders as a "free gift" from the "church". The training of volunteers, staff support for volunteers, liaison work with the criminal justice system officials, and administration are paid for by board members, other individuals, churches, businesses, service clubs, and church agencies that share the VORP vision. The number of contributors increased again in 1988. Also, many have continued contributing an amount each month or one or more times this last year as they have for several years in the past. We receive no public funding.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS. INDIVIDUAL AND CHURCH CONTRIBUTIONS MAKE VORP POSSIBLE.

Cash income in 1988 for Fresno County VORP was all from private individuals and churches and amounted to \$32,349. The College Community Mennonite Brethren Church donates space for our office. Pacific Printing has donated our printing for our brochure, bulletin insert, letter head, envelopes, and business cards. Perhaps the most crucial issue in the life of VORP at this point is funding. I sincerely thank all of you who have joined in this effort to work at justice and reconciliation in our community.

SERVICE APPRECIATION: Below is a letter from Joe Walden, Juvenile Division Director for Fresno County Probation, which was an encouragement to me and I hope will be to all of you who joined in making VORP possible. I hope his letter will also be an encouragement to nudge some of you who have been interested but have not yet become involved to either become a trained mediator or a financial contributor or both. As you can see from his letter, both the need and opportunity to expand our service is there. The question is only if there will be enough people willing to get involved.