



RESTORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

FACT SHEET FOR OFFENDERS

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES?

Restorative Opportunities is a Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) program that helps federal offenders, who accept responsibility for their actions, communicate with the victims they have harmed.

As an offender, you can acknowledge the harm you have caused to victims participating in the program by telling your story and hearing first-hand how your crime has affected them.

The program is based on the principles of Restorative Justice which focus on offenders taking responsibility for their actions, understanding the victim's experience, addressing -- where possible - the harm caused and preventing future harm.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Restorative Opportunities can take a variety of forms and is adaptable to the participants' needs. With the help of a mediator, or go-between, victims and offenders can meet face to face, correspond by letter, or exchange video messages. Alternatively, the appointed mediator can relay messages between victims and offenders.

Participation in the program is voluntary at all stages and is guided by a mediator trained and experienced in dealing with serious crime.

Mediators work with both the victim and offender throughout the process to identify and address both participants' needs.

At all times, mediators are considerate of the victims' and the offenders' physical and emotional well-being. Measures, such as on-going assessments, are completed to ensure participants' safety and privacy.

If, at any time, you, or the victim, decide to stop participating, the decision will be respected. You can reconsider your decision in the future.

WHO ARE THE MEDIATORS?

CSC hires and trains professional mediators from across Canada who are experienced in working with serious crime. The mediators work with victims and offenders separately to prepare each for participation in the program.



WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE IN RESTORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES?

Restorative Opportunities gives you, the offender, a chance to:

- accept responsibility for your actions and acknowledge the harm caused;
- tell your story and hear first-hand how the crime you committed has impacted the victim; and
- help determine what steps can be taken to repair the harm caused in a meaningful way.

These steps can contribute to your successful reintegration into the community as a law-abiding citizen.

DO I HAVE TO MEET THE VICTIM?

No. Communication can take place in a number of ways. Victims and offenders can meet face to face or communicate through letters or video messages. Alternatively, the mediator can relay messages back and forth between you and the victim.

WILL MY PARTICIPATION AFFECT MY PAROLE ELIGIBILITY?

No. Participation in Restorative Opportunities is not intended to have any direct impact on an offender's sentence or a parole decision.

HOW DO I BECOME A PARTICIPANT?

If you have taken responsibility for your actions, you can express your interest to participate in Restorative Opportunities to your parole officer, chaplain, psychologist or other CSC staff member. CSC staff must be supportive of your participation. The request is then referred to the institution's designated Manager, Assessment and Intervention or the parole office's Section Supervisor (or equivalent position).

Your request will be assessed by the Restorative Opportunities administration for suitability. Requests made directly by an offender to the Restorative Opportunities administration will not be accepted.

CAN A VICTIM REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESTORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM?

Restorative Opportunities accepts requests for participation from registered victims, victim representatives acting on behalf of registered victims and non-registered victims affected by serious crime.