

## For More Information

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For more information on this innovative program, or if you are interested in volunteering as a victim-presenter or if you would like to be trained to serve as a volunteer program facilitator, please contact:

**The Center for Dispute Resolution**  
Missouri State University  
(417) 836-8831  
CDR@MissouriState.edu  
www.MissouriState.edu/CDR

## What is the Center for Dispute Resolution?

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The Center for Dispute Resolution is housed in the Department of Communication at Missouri State University. It is an independent organization that supports a variety of programs related to conflict management, such as a Juvenile Victim-Offender Mediation program. It also provides trainings, offers workshops, and supports research in the field of dispute resolution.



**State of Missouri  
Family Court,  
31st Judicial Circuit  
Juvenile Division**

# The VIP Program

## Victim-Impact Panels for Youth

**Helping young people  
understand the impact  
of their actions.**

**A Service Provided By**



**The Center for  
Dispute Resolution**  
at Missouri State University

**(417) 836-8831 \* CDR@MissouriState.edu  
901 South National, Springfield MO 65897**

## How the VIP Program Works

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Prior to attending a Victim-Impact Panel, a youth and his or her parent meet with a volunteer facilitator. This facilitator will talk with them about the young person's experience in the justice system, explain how the VIP program works, and help the youth begin to develop questions to ask the victim-presenters at the VIP sessions.

The Victim-Impact Panels themselves consist of 2-3 people who have been impacted by crime and a small group of 2-5 young offenders.

A trained volunteer facilitator accompanies the youth as they meet with each victim-presenter to hear that person's story of how the crime impacted their life. Then the youth have an opportunity to ask questions about the victim-presenter's experience, facilitated by the program facilitator. These dialogues typically last 20-30 minutes per victim-presenter.

Following these meetings, the youth are asked to think about what they have learned and to write an essay describing their experience talking with the victim-presenters. They then submit these essays to their probation officers.

## What Are the Benefits of the VIP Program?

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The purpose of this program is to provide a safe, appropriate environment where people who have been impacted by crime and young people who have committed offenses can talk about the impact of crime.

### ***Benefits for Young Offenders***

- Gain valuable insight into the impact that crime has, not only on a victim but on the victim's friends, family, and community.
- Begin to empathize with and consider the effects of their own criminal actions on those they have offended.

### ***Benefits for Victims***

- Have an opportunity to share your experience and "tell your story" of how crime impacted your life
- Be in a position to help young, impressionable offenders understand the implications of their actions and hopefully choose a different path in the future.
- Participants in similar program report that participation like this is empowering, validating, and affirming.

## Common Questions About the VIP Program

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### ***Where are the VIP sessions held?***

The VIP sessions are held at a private neutral location, such as at the offices of the Center for Dispute Resolution in Springfield.

### ***Do parents attend the VIP sessions?***

Parents are encouraged to come to the VIP sessions, and they have their own waiting area where they can relax while the youth meet with the victim-presenters and program facilitators.

### ***How often are VIP sessions held?***

VIP sessions are planned as they are needed; they are typically held every 2-3 months.

### ***Do young offenders ever meet with the victims of their own crimes?***

In the VIP program, young people always meet with victim-presenters who they do not know. However, through another program, called Victim-Offender Mediation, a young offender may have the opportunity to sit down with his or her victim to talk about what happened and work out a plan for repairing the harm that was caused.

### ***What types of crimes does the VIP program address?***

The VIP program typically addresses non-violent property offenses and simple assaults.