



PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

The criminal justice system needs to recognize and enforce victim rights, with an emphasis on safety, victim choice, and empowerment.

The criminal justice system needs to reflect the fact that many defendants and convicted offenders have a history of victimization and may need services to address their trauma.

The State of Vermont needs to provide for high-quality, trauma-informed, accessible services for all victims and survivors, specialized where necessary to address complex needs. Only where victims and survivors can meet their basic resource needs (housing, financial, transportation, childcare, treatment) can healing begin.

The State of Vermont needs to provide for high-quality, trauma-informed, accessible services for all defendants and convicted offenders, specialized where necessary to address complex needs. Reducing recidivism and ensuring accountability requires that defendants and convicted offenders are able to meet their basic resource needs (housing, financial, transportation, childcare, treatment).

Criminal justice system decision-makers across the continuum need to make release and community supervision decisions informed by evidence-based risk assessment coupled with relevant, individualized consideration of defendant needs and public safety concerns.

Where the criminal justice system releases defendants or convicted offenders into the community on conditions of release or under supervision, defendants and convicted offenders need to be held accountable for violations. Victims and survivors need to be adequately and timely notified, where requested, of any violations. Victims and survivors cannot be responsible for “policing” community supervision and should not bear the consequences of failed accountability.

The criminal justice system needs to give special attention to cases involving close relationships, violence, and coercion.

Reform efforts should be evidence-based, guided by measures known to reduce recidivism, improve public safety, and heal trauma in communities while sustaining positive results for the long term.

Adapted from The MacArthur Foundation’s Safety and Justice Challenge and the National Center for Victims of Crime