

VIDEO



**14TH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS
ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**
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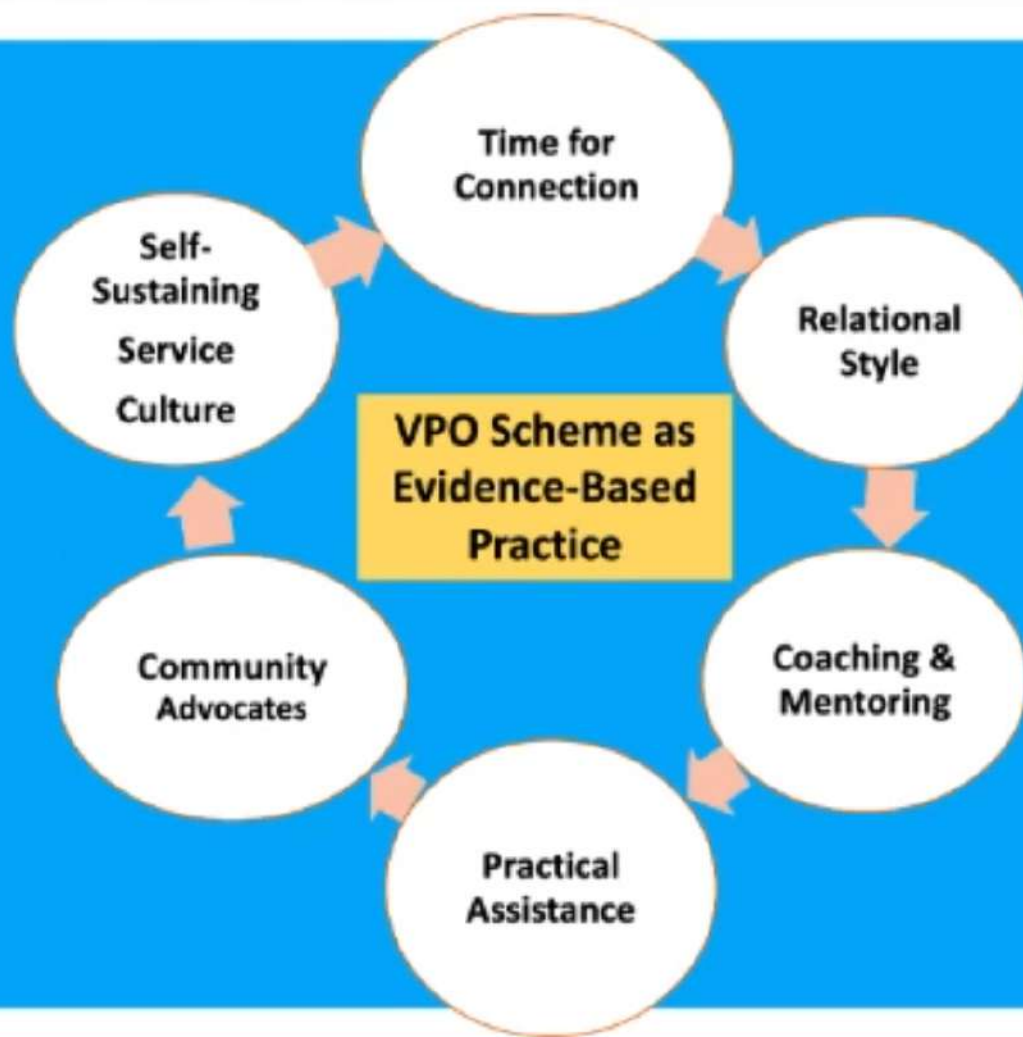
Keynote Presentation

**World Congress for Community Volunteers
Supporting Offender Reintegration**

Kyoto, 7 March 2021

**A Future for
Volunteers in
Probation Practice**

VIDEO



Time for Connection

Not forced engagement but a naturally evoked relationship between two people, with different sets of experiences and backgrounds, where each can learn from the other

Time allows trust to develop and trust becomes the fuel that powers pro-social influence

Offenders may experience a genuine and caring other, perhaps for the first time in their lives

VPOs in turn receive an uplifting sense of having had a positive influence on another ... a zest for living that may also infect the offenders they work with!

Relational Style

Blending of a particular relational style emerges as key in most ethnographic studies of probation practice

Five dimensions (Lewis, 2016) ... Acceptance, Respect, Support, Empathy and Belief

Offenders need to be heard with respectful and genuine interest

The VPOs I met in Japan, perhaps in part because of their maturity and range of life experience, seemed to me to exude a calm and responsive relational style, effortlessly and naturally

Genuinely credible 'message givers'

Able to create safety and encourage self-disclosure of meaningful and sensitive information

Coaching and Mentoring

Coach = task or performance focused and present-oriented; helps you cope with the challenges you are facing in the moment

Mentor = person focused and future oriented ; cares about you and your long-term development

Mentor is able to 'listen and understood me'; 'build my confidence' while providing advice, sharing knowledge and experiences, and gently nudging to encourage self-discovery

Coach can be more directive in pointing someone to some desired end result

Coaching and Mentoring

Offenders need coaching to deal with issues in the short-term that can create 'clear and present danger' ...

But they also require mentoring over the longer haul since desistance is reinforced by the positive qualities of sustaining hope, maintaining a strong sense of self-efficacy, and re-defining one's identity

The offender has to achieve at least some of their personal aspirations, both for new meaning and for gaining pro-social legitimacy

VPOs I met were clearly attuned to this dual role of Coach and Mentor ... able to easily oscillate from one role to the other

Providing Practical Assistance

Good probation practice requires attention to timely, concrete and meaningful practical assistance

VPO's are well positioned to offer this ...

Desistance is fueled by a sense of 'agency' ... personally surmounting ones obstacles or concerns ... which then fuels further resolve

Probation Practice tends to 'lead' with standard solutions ... rather than offering contextualised and individualized options

VPO's are able to use their contacts, connections, and influence in the community to give the right support, at the right time in the right way

VPO's as 'practical helpers' perhaps one of their most important roles

Community Engagers & Advocates

Community involvement is essential for full reintegration ... yet communities often reject and stigmatize offenders ... wishing to keep them apart rather than to see them become a part of the community

More correctional services advocate ... more communities tend to push back

As respected community citizens & leaders ... with status and connectedness in their communities ... VPO's can counter these sentiments and promote 'joint responsibility'

VPO's have entrenched themselves as local ambassadors, reaching out to the community in a myriad of ways ...

Momentum as ambassadors for a community-responsive reintegration philosophy ... locally and nationally

Self-Sustaining Service Culture

Probation services often struggle in establishing and then sustaining a culture of committed service to clients; staff recruitment is an ongoing challenge

Significant informal function of VPO's in Japan is to recruit other VPOs ...

VPO system effectively becomes self-sustaining ...

VPO's remain recognized, both locally and nationally, as members of a dynamic National Association of VPO's

With the full support of the much fewer Professional Probation staff, the continued networking of VPOs themselves becomes the glue keeping the VPO scheme sustainable into the future

CONCLUSION

Can Volunteers Do What Probation Practice Strives To Do?

- In the last few years, the offender-focused approach that developed so naturally with the tradition of the VPO scheme has been challenged as perhaps 'too soft'
- Difficulties in recruitment of new VPOs owing to the urbanization of Japanese society, the fracturing of community relations, and growing financial hardship among the elderly
- Japanese society is changing and the VPO scheme will have to adapt and adjust to those changes