

# THE BRIDGES TO LIFE VOLUNTEER

## CRIME VICTIM SPEAKER

### **BASIC DESCRIPTION:**

The Bridges To Life (BTL) program is conducted inside prisons and treatment center facilities, meeting for one 2-hour session each week over the course of 14 weeks. On four occasions during each 14-week project, a Crime Victim Speaker comes to the prison or facility to tell their story before the group of program participants. A Crime Victim Speaker may tell their story at multiple prisons/facilities if desired and as needed by their Regional Coordinator.

### **Qualifications:**

- Age 18 or older.
- Have been adversely affected by crime, whether directly as the victim of a crime, or indirectly as the loved one of a crime victim.
- Willing to tell the story of your crime victim experience and its aftereffects before a group of inmates or treatment center residents, following BTL guidelines regarding time limitations and content.
- Able to set aside personal religious or political beliefs and avoid preaching or proselytizing.
- Willing to adhere to BTL and TDCJ (or other state's) policies and procedures while inside the prison or treatment center facility.

### **Requirements:**

- If entering Texas prisons to tell your story more than four times in one year, you must apply to be an approved volunteer with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), *including background check*. (If outside Texas, consult that state's Department of Corrections.)
- If becoming a TDCJ-approved volunteer, you must attend TDCJ's (or other state's) Volunteer Training and complete re-certification requirement every two years (or as required in other states).
- Meet with your BTL Regional Coordinator to review your story and guidelines regarding time and content.
- Refrain from imposing personal religious beliefs, ethics, or morals on participants as part of your story or in the post-presentation Q&A's.
- Your crime victim story is a critical element of the BTL process and is presented at the beginning of the session for which you are scheduled to speak. Please arrive on time at the prison or treatment facility. (NOTE: Cell phones are not allowed inside prisons, so you will not be able to call or text your Regional Coordinator if you are running late.)
- Notify Project/Regional Coordinator immediately if you must cancel, and reschedule for a different date if your story is still needed for that project.

### **Time Commitment:**

- Approximately one hour at the location, plus commuting time, for each presentation.