Parallel Justice Guiding Principles

There are endless ways to help victims rebuild their lives. Parallel Justice is not a blueprint for a specific set of responses; rather it is a framework that suggests that more can be done. Provided below are the basic guiding principles for implementing Parallel Justice.

1. **Create a planning and implementation infrastructure that will foster multidisciplinary participation and systemic change.**
   
   Part of the challenge in implementing this new vision of justice for crime victims is creating the public will to take action. Bringing together people representing a broad cross-section of private and government agencies can help create that public will and result in the development of a more comprehensive local plan of action that takes account of all available resources.

2. **Develop data-driven responses that build on local assets and meet local needs.**
   
   Design and implementation of a Parallel Justice Project should be informed by data on local crime and victimization trends, victim needs, and service capacity. One way of gathering this information is to conduct a random household victimization survey to measure the nature and prevalence of victimization. The survey could be supplemented with focus groups with victims and service providers to learn more about victims’ needs and local service capacity.

3. **Make safety of victims a high priority.**
   
   Victim safety should always be a high priority for police and other criminal justice agencies. The Parallel Justice team can work with these agencies to think creatively about how to re-deploy existing resources with a greater emphasis on victim safety through many phases of the criminal justice process from investigation and prosecution through sentencing and release.

4. **Offer victims appropriate support and assistance.**
   
   Every crime victim should be offered immediate support, compensation for their losses, and practical assistance. This response could be triggered by filing a police report, except where safety concerns preclude police involvement. Communities should develop a menu of services and responses that best meet the needs of local victims.

5. **Provide victims an opportunity to be heard.**
   
   Victims should have an opportunity to explain what happened to them, the impact on their lives, and what resources they need to get their lives on track. The process should be comfortable and non-adversarial and convey a sense of an official government response, validating each victim’s experience.

6. **Coordinate services and resources.**
   
   Victim services and long-term assistance should be coordinated by case managers who have authority to marshal government and community-based resources. Providing an opportunity for victims to tell their story should be linked to the case management function so that the needs identified by crime victims receive a response.

7. **Government plays a key role.**
   
   A system of Parallel Justice sets out a distinct and active role for government in helping to repair the harm caused by crime. Only the government can marshal the many resources needed to address victims’ long-term complicated problems, such as day care, employment counseling and training, substance abuse treatment, or housing needs. A governmental role in responding to all crime victims also conveys an important message. The government can speak on behalf of society at large when it acknowledges that what happened to the victim is wrong.

8. **Services and support should also extend beyond a government response.**
   
   Parallel Justice should also extend beyond a government response. There should be many opportunities for offenders, beyond providing restitution, to help victims rebuild their lives through community service. Consider the roles of block associations, civic groups, faith-based institutions, schools, and businesses. Once there is a commitment to help, there are endless ways to help victims of crime rebuild their lives.