

# Conclusion

As a society we have made great progress in meeting victims' needs since the 1982 *Final Report* of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime. *New Directions* chronicles the advances on the legislative front and highlights scores of "promising practices" that have flourished in communities to improve services to victims. The growth and change of the field of victim assistance and victims' rights is far from over. As this report goes to press, there are more programs being developed, and more innovative approaches being taken to help victims find justice and healing. It has been abundantly clear throughout all the work in compiling *New Directions* that the field of victim assistance and victims' rights is dynamic. It is this very dynamism that ensures responsiveness to the evolving understanding of the needs of crime victims.

*New Directions* is thus not the final word on victims' issues and programs. It is, however, a sound compass that will help hold the course true in the years of work to come. The recommendations offer to all a starting point for discussion about how best to apply them within individual communities to meet local needs. The five global challenges from the field set forth in the executive summary—enacting and enforcing consistent, fundamental rights; providing equal access to comprehensive services; increasing public awareness and comprehensive training; replicating promising practices; and listening to crime victims—are a touchstone for these discussions.

While *New Directions* was three years in the making, in many ways the real work begins now—after you have read the recommendations, after you have examined the numerous promising practices presented in each section. For the work of *New Directions* is in its implementation. Each community should explore the recommendations and involve all those who work with crime victims in determining how best to achieve their goals. Each criminal justice agency, victim service organization, and allied professional organization should explore how it can change and improve the way in which it meets the needs of crime victims. And each individual who comes into contact with crime victims should study the recommendations and promising practices in this report to enhance the work each does. *New Directions* is a starting point for all.