

New Directions from the Field:

Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century

Recommendations for the Education Community

The recommendations below, which appear in the May 1998 *New Directions* Report, have been reformatted for replication and distribution.

Schools and universities today face serious problems resulting from crime and victimization. For too many students, teachers, and administrators, school is no longer a safe haven. Daily threats to the safety of students and staff, including violent assaults, are commonplace in many communities. Academic institutions also must play an important role in providing educational programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels on victims' rights and services. Therefore, the following recommendations for the education community are set forth by the field:

1. Schools should establish comprehensive programs to assist students, faculty, and staff who are victimized by crime or who witness violence. These programs should be coordinated closely with local crime victim assistance programs and law enforcement agencies.
2. Schools should incorporate into their core curricula age-appropriate education about the impact of victimization, the availability of victim services, and victim rights information, including basic information about the criminal and juvenile justice systems.
3. Crime prevention strategies should be taught to students in every grade, beginning in preschool, and schools should involve youth as peer educators about victimization and crime prevention.
4. Schools should implement procedures to help identify missing and exploited children who may be enrolled in their educational systems.
5. Age-appropriate sexual assault and dating violence awareness and prevention programs should be a required component of school curricula. Schools should work with law enforcement agencies and rape crisis centers to develop strategies for preventing sexual violence and for assisting victims of such crimes.
6. Colleges and universities should establish comprehensive programs to assist students, faculty members, and staff who are victimized by crime. These programs should be coordinated closely with local crime victim assistance programs.
7. Colleges and universities should offer interdisciplinary credit courses on victim issues and rights in departments that train professionals who interact with crime victims. Victim issues also should be incorporated into professional licensing exams.
8. All college and university campuses should adopt sexual assault and dating violence protocol that include clear definitions of proscribed conduct. These policies should be disseminated to all students, campus staff, and faculty. Campus staff and faculty should be trained in procedures for responding to students who have been sexually assaulted.
9. All school districts, colleges, and universities should design and implement a standardized system for documenting, analyzing, and reporting crimes to law enforcement.
10. Schools, colleges, and universities should develop specialized education and training programs for faculty, administrators, and staff on crime victim issues.
11. Victims should have certain rights in disciplinary hearings involving crimes in schools and on college campuses. These rights should include the right to notice of the hearing, the right to be accompanied to the hearing by a person of their choice, the right to give a victim impact statement before a penalty is assessed, and the right to be informed of the outcome of the hearing. In addition, victims should be protected from irrelevant questions about their past sexual history.
12. School and college campuses should develop crisis response protocols so that they are prepared to respond to major incidents of violence.
13. School and university libraries should incorporate resources on victim rights, victim services, and violence prevention into their collections and information displays.