

New Directions from the Field:

Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century

Recommendations for Civil Remedies

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

Traditional sources to compensate crime victims often fall considerably short of covering victims' total financial losses related to criminal victimization. Increasingly, more victims are looking to the civil justice system for reparations for the physical, psychological, and financial losses they incur as a result of criminal acts. In the last decade, civil litigation has emerged as a meaningful option for crime victims seeking financial and emotional redress. However, the ability of victims to seek civil remedies has been hampered by a lack of information about their civil justice options. The following recommendations are set forth by the field:

1. Crime victims should be fully informed of their legal rights to pursue civil remedies.
2. State and local networks of civil attorneys who have experience representing crime victims should be expanded. Education and training on civil remedies for victims should be offered to attorneys to increase the pool of qualified lawyers in these networks and to maintain the level of expertise between member attorneys. Nonattorney experts and professionals should participate in this training and network to educate attorneys on victim issues and make their representation more effective.
3. Increased efforts should be made to identify consultants with the expertise to testify on issues relevant to victimization in civil and criminal cases.
4. Civil attorneys should work with victim service providers, law enforcement officials, and prosecutors in their communities to develop an easy-to-understand pamphlet about civil remedies for crime victims.
5. Civil attorneys should provide training to victim service providers on civil remedies for crime victims.
6. Statutes of limitations for civil actions involving child abuse cases should be extended, as has been done in a number of States. States also should examine statutes of limitations for civil actions relating to other criminal acts to determine whether they should be extended to provide a meaningful opportunity for crime victims to obtain needed relief.