

## New Directions from the Field: *Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century*

### Recommendations for the Legal Community

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

**Over the past 15 years, attorneys and bar associations have recognized they are important conduits to victim services. They have worked to improve access to the justice system for victims, developed programs that assist them, and explored legal options to provide victims with greater relief, particularly throughout the civil justice process. However, most members of the legal profession serve in positions outside the justice system, but frequently come into contact with crime victims in their work. These attorneys often lack an understanding of the dynamics of victimization or appropriate victim-related referral services. To initiate efforts to address these critical voids in victim support and service within the legal profession, the following recommendations are set forth by the field:**

1. The legal community should expand its commitment of resources to victims to ensure that the barriers to meeting crime victims' needs are removed.
2. Bar associations and members of the legal community should produce and distribute informational materials, including videotapes, to help crime victims understand court proceedings and how to pursue their rights in the justice system.
3. Bar associations and members of the legal community should develop multidisciplinary alliances and networks between attorneys and other service providers within the community to identify and meet the needs of crime victims.
4. Bar associations and members of the legal community should develop information about victims' rights and programs and disseminate it widely in the community.
5. Legal professionals who serve in the criminal, juvenile, and civil justice systems should work with one another and with victim service providers to adequately inform crime victims of all of their legal options, including civil litigation.
6. Attorneys in the private sector who, due to the nature of their practice, have frequent contact with crime victims (for example, personal injury attorneys, insurance attorneys, and premises liability attorneys) should be encouraged to develop or join coalitions of attorneys who serve crime victims in the civil justice process.
7. Bar associations should establish victims issues committees to address issues in the criminal and civil justice systems, and they should ensure that the members of the committees represent victims interests.
8. Bar associations and law schools should offer courses on victims' rights and issues, incorporating multidisciplinary curricula.
9. Bar associations and members of the legal community should ensure adequate representation and involvement of minority, multicultural, and multilingual attorneys in order to respond more effectively to diverse populations victimized by crime.
10. Publishers of case reporters, legal compilations, and treatises should expand their issue coding and indices to include crime victim-related categories.