

Getting the Word Out About *New Directions*

***Getting the Word Out About New Directions* contains a variety of tools and resources for publicizing both the availability of *New Directions* and suggested public awareness events. This section contains the following:**

- Sample Press Release
- Sample Newsletter Article
- Sample Opinion/Editorial Column
- Sample Letter to Criminal Justice Associations
- Sample Letter to Allied Professional Associations
- Sample Letter to Public Officials

Sample Press Release

To generate media coverage and to increase public awareness of victims' rights and services, a sample press release is included in this section. The press release announces the formation of a *New Directions* task force. It can also be used to highlight similar initiatives on the State, Tribal, or local levels. Once a task force has been created, the press release should be sent to local print and broadcast media via mail or fax transmission. Usually, local libraries have reference books listing print and broadcast media that can help create a current media mailing list.

Sample Newsletter Article

To increase awareness about *New Directions*, a sample newsletter article is included for submission to professional associations for reprinting in newsletters or other publications. The sample article can be used for newsletter and journal publications in the victim services, justice, and allied professional communities. The sample newsletter article can be tailored to meet specific professional or community issues and concerns.

Sample Opinion/Editorial Column

A sample opinion/editorial column is included for submission to newspapers to enhance public awareness about *New Directions*. The column can be tailored to reflect information pertinent to the community in which it is published, such as adding local crime statistics. To increase the likelihood of its publication, consider: submitting it on behalf of a community action group, victim services planning committee, or coalition; scheduling a meeting with members of a newspaper's editorial board to stress the importance of victims' rights and services; and timing the submission of the column to coincide with national commemorative victim-related events, such as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. (See *Suggested Events* for a list of national events throughout the year.)

Sample Letters

Three sample letters to criminal justice associations, allied professionals, and public officials are included in this section. The letters serve as an introduction to *New Directions* and encourage professional organizations or public officials to take action on ideas and recommendations contained in *New Directions*.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date:

Contact: (Name/Title/Agency)

(Telephone/Fax/E-mail)

(STATE/COMMUNITY) RESPONDS TO NATIONAL CALL TO ACTION TO AID CRIME VICTIMS

(City Origin of Press Release)—The (State/City/Tribe/Agency/Coalition) announced its commitment to respond to a *national call to action* to improve our Nation's treatment of crime victims. (Agency/Organization) will (establish task force, hold a community forum, conduct training program, etc.) to begin the process of implementing the many ideas and recommendations contained in a landmark national report entitled *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century* published by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime.

New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century is a comprehensive report on victims' rights and services that chronicles the extraordinary accomplishments of the victims' rights discipline and outlines what we, as a society, should strive to achieve for crime victims in the 21st century. More than 1,000 individuals from across the Nation—including crime victims and those who serve them in the justice system and allied professions—contributed to the creation of this blueprint for improving our Nation's response to crime victims. The *Report* contains 250 recommendations targeted to almost every profession that comes in contact with crime victims from criminal and juvenile justice practitioners to the victim assistance, crime victim compensation, health care, mental health, legal, education, faith, news media, and business communities. It also contains scores of "promising practices" that currently exist to help crime victims in America today. This important report is the first comprehensive plan regarding how the Nation should respond to crime victims since the *Final Report* of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime was published in 1982.

According to (spokesperson), tremendous progress has been made in promoting victims' rights and providing quality victim services since the inception of the victims' rights discipline nearly 30 years ago.

"We have emerged from trying times when crime victims were kept out of our courthouses and remote from any sense of justice, to a remarkable period where crime victims are now becoming central to our justice processes," (spokesperson) noted. "*New Directions* offers (State/city/Tribe/coalition) a road map that reflects on all that is good and possible in providing comprehensive, quality services to crime victims in our (jurisdiction)."

"Now, it's up to us to use this landmark document to guide our efforts to improve victims' rights and services here in (jurisdiction), and to create a true sense of victim justice in (jurisdiction) by (list action items here)," (spokesperson) concluded.

For further information about *New Directions* and local efforts to implement its recommendations, please contact (name/title/agency/telephone/e-mail/Web site address).

###

Sample Article Highlighting *New Directions* for Newsletters and Professional Publications

New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century challenges the Nation to renew and refocus its efforts to improve the treatment of victims of crime. Published by the Office for Victims of Crime within the U.S. Department of Justice, the 250 recommendations set forth in *New Directions* were developed to help the crime victims' field, criminal and juvenile justice agencies, allied professionals, and policymakers meet the needs of crime victims in the new millennium.

This is the first comprehensive plan for the Nation's response to crime victims since the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime was published in 1982. It is a national action plan that represents the vision of the victims' rights discipline and allied professionals. Crime victims and representatives from national victim advocacy and service organizations—as well as criminal and juvenile justice, health and mental health professionals, researchers, and many others—provided the input that resulted in the recommendations contained in *New Directions*. In total, this significant document incorporates the collective wisdom, experience, and research contributed by more than 1,000 individuals across the Nation.

***New Directions* Presents Five Global Challenges to the Field**

In the course of listening to the voices of crime victims, their advocates, and allied professionals who work with crime victims, key recommendations emerged as vital to the provision of comprehensive, quality victim services. The following five global challenges for responding to victims of crime form the foundation for the hundreds of ideas and recommendations contained in *New Directions*:

1. To enact and enforce consistent, fundamental rights for crime victims in Federal, State, juvenile, military, and Tribal justice systems, and administrative proceedings.
2. To provide crime victims with access to comprehensive, quality services regardless of the nature of their victimization, age, race, religion, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, capability, or geographic location.
3. To integrate crime victims' issues into all levels of the Nation's educational system to ensure that justice and allied professionals and other service providers receive comprehensive training on victims' issues as part of their academic education and continuing training in the field.
4. To support, improve, and replicate promising practices in victims' rights and services built upon sound research, advanced technology, and multidisciplinary partnerships.
5. To ensure that the voices of crime victims play a central role in the Nation's response to violence and those victimized by crime.

New Directions provides 250 recommendations that point specifically to the implementation of these five global challenges. For example, to ensure that crime victims' rights are comprehensive and consistent across all justice systems, *New Directions* provides several recommendations for enhancing victims' rights in not only the criminal justice system, but also in the Federal, juvenile, Tribal, and military justice systems.

New Directions emphasizes that just as in the past, crime victims in the future must play an important role in helping to guide public policy. The first recommendation in *New Directions* calls for the passage of a Federal constitutional amendment for crime victims. Leadership and activism from national organizations, State coalitions, and local victim assistance practitioners are vital in passing these much needed national reforms for victims' rights.

New Directions also emphasizes that crime victims are a valuable resource in developing and participating in victim assistance and violence reduction programs. For example, survivors of drunk driving crashes serve on victim impact panels to increase drunk drivers' awareness of the pain and agony victims suffer at the hands of drunk drivers. In addition, crime victims are an important component in educational programs for victim service providers and allied professionals. Many recommendations in *New Directions* suggest that basic training for law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, corrections personnel, and allied professionals should include education about the impact of crime on victims and victims' rights. The participation of crime victims and victim service providers in all training initia-

tives, as well as public policy planning, helps sensitize professionals and volunteers to the plight of victims, as well as their important role in providing supportive services to victims.

New Directions includes more than 200 innovative promising practices for assisting crime victims that have been developed throughout the Nation in the justice system, victim assistance, crime victim compensation, health care, mental health, legal, education, faith, business, and news media communities.

The Challenge Ahead

New Directions was published to foster a dialogue across the Nation to develop strategies for providing justice and healing for crime victims in the new millennium. As such, *New Directions* urges every American who interacts with crime victims—from police officers to prosecutors, judges to corrections officials, members of the clergy to business leaders—to join this dialogue and implement the programs and reforms that make sense for their own communities. As a Nation, we have seen the doors of justice gradually open for some; *New Directions* offers recommendations and ideas to provide victims' rights and services for all.

To obtain *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century* resources contact:

Call: Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center,
(800) 627-6872

Write: National Criminal Justice Reference Service
(NCJRS) User Services, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD
20849-6000. Request Document (NCJ 170600)

Web site: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/

Sample Opinion/Editorial Column

New Directions for Victim Justice

A young child who has been the victim of a sexual assault suffers additional trauma as delays in bringing the case to trial turn into months and sometimes years of waiting for justice. A mother with three kids has been hospitalized from the injuries she received as the result of yet another brutal beating from her husband. She now faces the choice of life in a home where she and her children risk further violence, or even death on a daily basis, or life on the street where their safety and well-being may be no more certain. A rape victim becomes aware that her rapist has been released from prison when she sees him in the grocery store because no one notified her of his release.

You have probably heard of stories just like these. You may have even read about them in this very newspaper. If you are like most citizens, hearing of such injustices may well have sparked your sense of moral outrage at an almost visceral level. You may have even felt the urge to do something about it—but what? What can *one person do*? Indeed, what can an entire community do to address problems that seem as intractable as they do pervasive? In short, how do we address the many injustices that crime victims endure in America?

It may surprise you to learn that these difficult questions may actually have answers that can be found in the pages of a single book—a book published by our Federal Government, no less. It is entitled *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century*, and is available to you free. This is no ordinary government publication. It wasn't authored by faceless bureaucrats who may lack the real world experience necessary to understand and solve the real problems facing crime victims. Rather, as its title implies, it was authored by crime victims along with hundreds of victim service and criminal and juvenile justice professionals.

The Office for Victims of Crime within the U.S. Department of Justice, which supported the development of the publication, actively sought input through expert summits, public hearings, focus groups, national training academies, and symposia that included representatives from the judiciary, law enforcement, prosecution, corrections, and allied professions, in addition to victims, advocates, and service providers from every victim constituency. The end result is a definitive description of the "state of victim justice" in America today, as well as recommendations for the future. The cumulative knowledge of the contributors not only allows an unparalleled precision in the delineation of the problems crime victims face, but more

importantly, offers the most promising solutions to those problems. *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century* incorporates 250 recommendations, and hundreds of promising practices and practical strategies for individuals, organizations, and agencies in both the public and private sectors.

For example, *New Directions* contains an entire chapter on children as victims, which includes a host of policies, programs, and procedures that have helped minimize the trauma and emotional distress child sexual assault victims must endure when they become involved with the criminal justice process. It includes the fundamental conceptual framework for collaborative community responses to domestic violence, so victims can avail themselves of the resources that will allow them to escape a life of torment for one of hope, safety, and security. *New Directions* also cites strategies, such as automated victim notification technologies, that would greatly enhance the ability to provide notice of release to victims before their perpetrators hit the street.

A just society is best measured by how its citizens are treated by the justice system. By that standard, we still have a long road ahead of us. *New Directions* is by far the best book ever written to guide our Nation's journey toward justice. Considering that just over 30 million crimes will be committed this year, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, virtually all of us will be the direct or indirect victims of crime. It is in everyone's interest to join this journey toward justice, as long and difficult as it may be. Yet even the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, and that first step is to get a copy of *New Directions*. It will give you ideas of what you and your community can do to improve the quality of justice for our Nation, and our Nation's crime victims. I invite you to share its strategies and recommendations, in part or in whole, with friends, colleagues, community leaders, and elected officials—everyone who cares, or should care, about justice for all, even victims of crime, because injustice to one of us, is an injustice to all of us.

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

Call: Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center, (800) 627-6872

Write: National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) User Services, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000. Request Document (NCJ 170600)

Web site: www.ojv.usdoj.gov/ovc/

Sample Letter

to Criminal Justice Associations

To the (President/Executive Director)

Dear (),

I am writing to encourage your (association/agency) to appoint a *New Directions* advisory committee to review and act upon recommendations set forth in a landmark document that has recently been released by the U.S. Department of Justice, *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century*. This important document provides 250 recommendations to improve the treatment of crime victims across the Nation, to increase rights for crime victims within our Nation's justice systems, and to expand greatly needed services and support for crime victims in the aftermath of being injured by crime. More than 1,000 individuals from every State in the Nation provided input into the development of this historic document.

New Directions should serve as an essential resource in helping (association/agency) improve your response to crime victims. While many members of your (organization/agency) have taken great strides over the past decade in assisting victims of crime, much work remains to be done. Too many crime victims still do not receive the rights they are entitled to by law. *New Directions* provides specific recommendations for each justice agency—law enforcement, prosecution, judiciary, and corrections to implement victims' rights laws and to initiate or enhance victim services. It also identifies the important allied professionals that need to be fully prepared to assist victims, such as those working in the mental health, health care, education, faith, and legal arenas.

The establishment of a *New Directions* advisory committee can be a highly effective first step to bring professionals within your constituency together with victim advocates and crime victims to begin planning for a comprehensive and coordinated response to help victims in the future. *New Directions* provides a detailed description of the fundamental laws, policies, programs, and protocol that can be implemented to provide consistent rights and services for crime victims across the Nation. The focus of the advisory committee's work should be to review these recommendations and to establish priorities for action relevant to your constituency.

I am enclosing copies of pertinent sections of *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century* for your review. I am available to meet with you or your designated representatives to discuss plans for taking action on recommendations contained in this landmark report. I encourage you to take decisive action in appointing an advisory committee to oversee the adoption and implementation of these important recommendations for the future, and I am prepared to offer my full support and technical assistance.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Sample Letter

to Allied Professional Associations

To the (President/Executive Director)

Dear (),

This year alone, violence occurring within once safe boundaries—schools, places of worship, hospitals, and the workplace—reaffirms that no one individual, institution, or community is immune from the devastating impact of crime and victimization. No longer can society rely solely on the criminal justice system to respond to violence in the community and criminal victimization. Participation by all professions and institutions is required to effectively confront violence and to assist its victims.

The U.S. Department of Justice has recently released an important document that provides 250 recommendations for improving the treatment of crime victims across the Nation. This historic report, entitled *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century*, provides specific recommendations for professionals working in the (mental health/health care/education/faith/legal/business/media) disciplines. More than 1,000 individuals from every profession that comes into contact with crime victims provided input into the development of this historic document.

I am writing to encourage your (association/agency) to appoint a *New Directions* advisory committee to review and act upon recommendations set forth in a landmark document. *New Directions* can serve as an essential resource in helping (mental health/health care/education/faith/legal/business/media) professionals improve their response to crime victims. While many members of your (association/organization) have taken great strides over the past decade to develop programs that assist victims of crime, much work remains to be done. Too many crime victims still do not receive the services they need and to which they are entitled by law. *New Directions* has identified your membership as one of the critically important allied professions that has a vital role and responsibility to assist victims.

The establishment of a *New Directions* advisory committee can be a highly effective first step to bring professionals within your constituency together with victim advocates and crime victims to begin planning for a comprehensive and coordinated response to help victims in the future. *New Directions* provides a detailed description of the fundamental laws, policies, programs, and protocol that can be implemented to provide consistent rights and services for crime victims across the Nation. The focus of the advisory committee's work should be to review these recommendations and to establish priorities for action relevant to your constituency.

I am enclosing a copy of *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century* for your review. I am available to meet with you or your designated representatives to discuss plans for taking action on recommendations contained in this landmark report. I encourage you to take decisive action in appointing an advisory committee to oversee the adoption and implementation of these important recommendations for the future, and I am prepared to offer my full support and technical assistance.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Sample Letter to Public Officials

To the Honorable (Governor, Attorney General, State Senator/Representative)

Dear (),

I am writing to encourage you to appoint a *New Directions* Task Force to review and act upon recommendations set forth in a landmark document that has recently been released by the U.S. Department of Justice, *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century*. This important document provides 250 recommendations to improve the treatment of crime victims across the Nation. It emphasizes increasing rights for crime victims within our Nation's justice systems and expanding greatly needed services and support for crime victims in the aftermath of a crime. More than 1,000 individuals from every State in the Nation provided input into the development of this historic document.

New Directions can serve as an essential resource in helping our (State/community) improve its response to crime victims. Our (State/community) has made great progress over the past decade in assisting victims of crime. However, too many crime victims still do not receive the rights they are entitled to under State and Federal laws. *New Directions* provides specific recommendations for each justice agency—law enforcement, prosecution, judiciary, and corrections—to implement victims' rights laws and to initiate or enhance services for crime victims. It also identifies the important allied professionals that need to be fully prepared to assist victims, such as those working in the mental health, health care, education, faith, and legal disciplines.

While the establishment of a (State/community) Task Force is not a simple undertaking, it is a necessary first step in bringing together professionals and volunteers from criminal and juvenile justice, allied professionals, victim services, and crime victims to begin planning for a comprehensive and coordinated response to assisting victims in our (State/community). *New Directions* provides a detailed description of the fundamental laws that must be enacted in every State to provide consistent rights for crime victims across the Nation. A major focus of the Task Force's work should be to review these recommendations and to take action to amend or enact State laws.

I am enclosing a copy of *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century* for your review. I am available to meet with you or your designated representatives to discuss plans for taking action on recommendations contained in this landmark report. I encourage you to take decisive action in appointing a task force to oversee the adoption and implementation of these important recommendations for the future, and I am prepared to offer my full support and technical assistance.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,