

# Foreword

Fifteen years have passed since the chair of the 1982 President's Task Force on Victims of Crime called the neglect of crime victims in the United States a national disgrace. Today, we can be proud that our nation listened and responded to victims and their advocates. Victims' rights laws have been enacted in every state, more than 10,000 victim assistance programs have been developed around the country, and every state has established a crime victim compensation program. The creation of a federal Crime Victims Fund, which was first proposed by the task force, has provided more than \$2.3 billion from fines paid by federal criminal offenders to support many of these lifeline services for victims.

But even today, too many victims and their families are not active participants in the criminal or juvenile justice process. In the words of President Clinton, they are still "on the outside looking in." They are denied meaningful participation in the justice system and services to meet their most basic needs. Victims' rights laws vary significantly from state to state and often remain unenforced. For millions of victimized Americans, the system still hurts more than it helps.

This document—*New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century*—is a comprehensive report and set of recommendations on victims' rights and services from and concerning virtually every community involved with crime victims across the nation. The report is the result of more than three years' work by more than 1,000 individuals in different professions. It examines how victims' rights and services have been realized since the 1982 *Final Report* of the President's Task Force and recommends what we as a society should strive to achieve for victims as we enter the 21st century. While the recommendations may not reflect all of the individual contributors' views, the contributors agree that all of the recommendations are worthy of discussion and consideration.

The work of these individuals and the publication and dissemination of this material has been supported by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) of the United States Department of Justice. The report and recommendations represent views from the field, however, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice. We are grateful to the Department of Justice for providing resources so this important document could be developed and made widely available.

## The Authors and Process

*New Directions* incorporates views from the field—including crime victims, representatives from national victim advocacy and service organizations, criminal justice practitioners, allied professionals, and many others—who provided the background materials and recommendations contained in this action plan. That group includes 32 nationally recognized experts who developed background papers on the areas addressed in this report. The ideas and proposals in the background papers were enhanced by the comments of nearly 100 expert reviewers. Many individuals from the criminal justice and victim service fields provided substantive input into this document through expert summits; public hearings; focus groups of representatives from the judiciary, law enforcement, prosecution, and corrections, the faith community, and the crime victim compensation field; and symposia on hate and bias crimes, workplace violence, and the news media.

Additional input was obtained in 1997 from state administrators of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) assistance programs from all 50 states. Further program information on “promising practices” was derived from OVC grant projects in the areas of law enforcement, prosecution, corrections, probation and parole, victims of juvenile offenders, death notification, rural victims, technology, and victim involvement with community service. In late 1997, meetings of leaders in the crime victims field were held to review and finalize the recommendations. All who participated in those meetings were impressed by the scope and innovation of the collective work of the field that is presented in *New Directions*.

On behalf of all those committed to improvement of services to crime victims, we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Justice for its financial support of this effort. We are especially grateful to Aileen Adams, who served as Director of OVC during the core 3 years of this project’s development. Her extraordinary leadership ensured that this report truly reflects the diverse views from the field. Moreover, her commitment to justice and healing served as a guiding force to listen to the voices of crime victims across America as “new directions” were identified. We also want to acknowledge current Acting Director Reginald Robinson for his support in bringing *New Directions* to publication and in ensuring that this report is widely disseminated throughout the nation.

A project of this magnitude requires the hard work of many individuals. Ashley Oliver Barrett, Special Assistant to the Director, deserves special distinction for her tireless efforts in every aspect of this remarkable endeavor, not the least of which was guiding this document through final publication. We are also grateful for the outstanding work of former OVC staff members Katia Garrett, who provided keen legal analysis and insight into the many complicated issues addressed in this report, as well

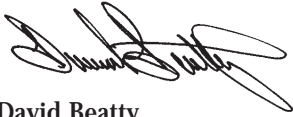
as Sharon English and Melanie Smith, for their efforts in laying the foundation of *New Directions*. Many other OVC staff deserve special thanks for the guidance and insight they provided along the way.

Christine Edmunds, who joins us in signing this foreword, also should be recognized for her exceptional work over the past 3 years in developing this report. As a consultant to OVC for *New Directions*, Ms. Edmunds conducted extensive research to amplify sections of the document, identified additional promising practices, shaped and refined ideas and recommendations, and wove together the information obtained from the field to present in this report.

Finally, the essential contributions of crime victims themselves must be acknowledged. Victims presented their views and priorities during hearings and forums, as members of advisory boards on grants, in focus groups, and as writers and researchers on this project. The concerns and recommendations of hundreds of victims of all ages—children, adults, and the elderly—have been invaluable in developing and shaping this report.

## **The Challenge Ahead**

*New Directions* is intended to foster a dialogue in which various participants listen to differing views, refine the report's recommendations, and develop a strategy for providing justice and comprehensive services for all crime victims in the 21st century. We urge every American who interacts with victims, from police officers to prosecutors, from judges to corrections officials, from members of the clergy to business leaders, to join in this dialogue and implement the programs and reforms that make sense for their own communities. During all the years that we have worked with and on behalf of crime victims, we have seen the doors of justice gradually open for some. It is our great hope that this report and the dialogue it fosters will move our nation closer to the day when the doors of justice open for all victims of crime. With this wish, we sign this foreword on behalf of all those who contributed to *New Directions*.



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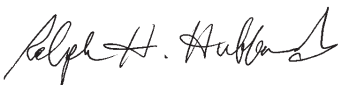
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