



Office for Victims of Crime

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# OVC Bulletin

New Directions  
Executive Summary

Advocating for the Fair  
Treatment of Crime Victims

## Message from The Director

**N**ew 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 represents a significant maturation in the field of victims' rights and services since the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime released its Final Report in 1982. New Directions chronicles the extraordinary accomplishments of a still young field, but also recommends what we as a society should strive to achieve for victims as we enter the 21st century.

New Directions is the culmination of more than 3 years' work by over 1,000 individuals in the victims field including crime victims, representatives from national victim advocacy and service organizations, criminal justice practitioners, allied professionals, and many others. In addition, literally hundreds of reference documents were utilized and listed in the endnotes of each of the 18 chapters. The work of these individuals and the publication and dissemination of this material has been supported by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). The report and recommendations represent views from the field, however, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice. Moreover, 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.

This Executive Summary provides a brief overview of New Directions, but we hope you take the time to examine the promising practices and recommendations contained in the full report. As we move into the 21st century, New Directions should serve as a vitally useful guide for developing policies, programs, and practices on behalf of crime victims well into the next century. As comprehensive as this report is, however, the real challenge begins now. After you read the recommendations, after you have examined the numerous promising practices presented in each section, then I encourage you to move forward to see how you can implement improvements in a manner that meets the needs of crime victims.

**Kathryn M. Turman**  
Acting Director  
Office for Victims of Crime

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

### Executive Summary

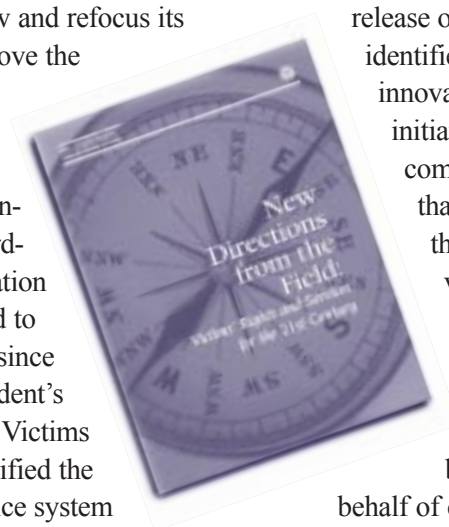
*"New Directions" is an important road map for comprehensive and consistent rights and services for all victims of crime in the 21st century.*

*Aileen Adams, former Director  
Office for Victims of Crime*

*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. It is the first comprehensive plan regarding how the nation should respond to crime victims since the 1982 President's Task Force on Victims of Crime identified the American justice system as "appalling out of balance," and made 68 recommendations for how rights and services for crime victims in this nation could be substantially improved. *New Directions* highlights the progress and the momentous

changes that have taken place across our nation's justice systems and in the private sector since the release of the 1982 report. It identifies hundreds of innovative public policy initiatives and community partnerships that are revolutionizing the treatment of crime victims in America today, and it recommends improvements that still need to be implemented on behalf of crime victims.

Today only a fraction of the nation's estimated 38 million crime victims receive much-needed services such as emergency financial assistance, crisis and mental health counseling, shelter,



and information and advocacy within the criminal and juvenile justice systems. This report presents more than 250 recommendations targeted to nearly every profession that comes in contact with crime victims—from justice practitioners, to victim service, health care, mental health, legal, educational, faith, news media, and business communities—and encourages them to redouble their efforts to enhance victims' rights and services.

*New Directions* reflects views from a broad cross-section of the criminal and juvenile justice, allied professional, and victim service fields. Contributors to this report include crime victims themselves and representatives of the agencies and organizations that serve them. Hundreds of individuals across the country proposed recommendations for this report by participating in public hearings; submitting background papers on diverse victims' issues; serving on working groups with representatives from law enforcement, prosecution, and corrections agencies as well as the judiciary; and participating in focus groups with allied professionals. All who contributed to this report hope that it will serve as a catalyst to a dynamic and far-reaching discussion about how our nation can improve its response to victims of crime, and that it will precipitate practical steps toward making the ideas presented in this report a reality.

*New Directions* was developed by the field, and its recommendations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Justice Department or the Office for Victims of Crime. In addition, all of the recommendations may not represent the views of every contributor, as over

## **Summary of Recommendations**

### *Five Global Challenges from the Field*

In the course of compiling the hundreds of recommendations from the field and in listening to the voices of victims, their advocates, and allied professionals who work with crime victims throughout the nation, certain key recommendations emerged. The following five global challenges for responding to victims of crime in the 21st century form the core of the hundreds of ideas and recommendations presented in this report.

- To enact and enforce consistent, fundamental rights for crime victims in federal, state, juvenile, military, and tribal justice systems, and administrative proceedings.
- 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.

1,000 individuals provided input into this document.

## **Organization of New Directions**

As an update to the 1982 *Final Report* of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, *New Directions* follows the format established in the original report in setting forth its

- 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.
- To support, improve, and replicate promising practices in victims' rights and services built upon sound research, advanced technology, and multidisciplinary partnerships.
- 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 recommendations that point specifically to the implementation of these five global challenges. Each section and chapter is based upon papers submitted by leading experts in the field as well as the input of victim advocates, justice system and allied professionals, crime victims, and others who participated in public hearings, working group meetings, and those who provided individual comments and review as the document progressed towards completion.

recommendations. It begins with a discussion of important public policy issues affecting crime victims, and each section that follows discusses how individual justice agencies and allied professionals can implement these, as well as other, important initiatives.

Additional topics and issues have been added as a result of the tremendous growth in the field and in response to

new problems that have emerged during the past 15 years. As in the original report, each section of *New Directions* contains individual chapters designed to serve as stand-alone documents that present recommendations for specific issue areas or professions.

## **Section I** ***New Directions in*** ***Victims' Rights***

For many years, victims of crime were virtually invisible in the laws and policies that govern our justice systems. To the extent victims of crime had a role in the justice system, it was narrow; to the extent victims had rights, they were few.

Section I, *New Directions in Victims' Rights* reviews the nation's progress over the past two decades toward establishing state and federal rights for victims of crime, including a proposed federal constitutional amendment to guarantee those rights. It also presents recommendations from the field for ensuring that victims' rights, including fundamental rights for victims of juvenile offenders, are expanded and enforced within the American justice system.

Tremendous strides have been made to enact victims' rights laws and deliver services to victims in the United States. Few movements in the history of this nation have achieved such success in igniting the kind of legislative response that victim rights activists have fostered over the past two decades. In the early 1980s, state laws addressing victims rights, services, and financial reparations numbered in the hundreds. Today, there are more than 27,000 crime victim-related state statutes, 29

state victims' rights constitutional amendments, and basic rights and services for victims of federal crimes.

Nevertheless, serious deficiencies remain in the nation's victims' rights laws as well as their implementation. The rights of crime victims vary significantly among states and at the federal level. Frequently, victims' rights are ignored. Even in states that have enacted constitutional rights for victims, implementation is often arbitrary and based on the individual practices and preferences of criminal justice officials. Moreover, many states do not provide comprehensive rights for victims of juvenile offenders. In tribal, military, and administrative proceedings, the rights extended to victims differ dramatically or do not exist at all. Many victims, including victims from diverse cultures and those with disabilities, are not informed of their rights nor given the opportunity to participate in criminal and juvenile justice proceedings.

In *New Directions in Victims' Rights*, the field strongly recommends that the enactment and vigorous enforcement of consistent, fundamental victims' rights should be a priority for the 21st century. The first recommendation from the field is for the passage of a Federal Victims' Rights Constitutional Amendment to establish a basic level of rights for crime victims in every state. These include the following fundamental rights:

- To notice of public court proceedings and to attend them.
- To make a statement to the court about bail, sentencing, and accepting a plea.

- To notice of parole hearings and to attend them and speak.
- To notice of a defendant or convict's escape or release.
- To an order of restitution from the convicted offender.
- To a final disposition of the proceedings relating to the crime free from unreasonable delay.
- To consideration for the safety of the victim in determining a defendant's release from custody.
- To notice of these rights.
- To standing to enforce these rights.

The report strongly recommends that these fundamental rights should be established and enforced not only in the criminal justice system, but also for victims in *all* juvenile justice, military, tribal, and administrative proceedings. As a first step toward this goal, *New Directions* recommends that the federal government, states and tribes review their victims' rights laws to determine if these fundamental rights are extended to all crime victims.

This report also reflects the view of the field that states and the federal government should address the lack of implementation of many victims' rights laws by establishing effective enforcement mechanisms for victims, including victims' rights compliance programs. It recommends that audits of local, state and federal compliance with victims' rights laws be conducted frequently by justice agencies and independent auditors to determine the reasons for noncompliance and how enforcement of victims' rights can be improved.



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

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Finally, a system of comprehensive services requires dedicated resources. A major step toward that goal was the enactment of the 1984 Victims of Crime Act, which established a creative federal funding mechanism that relies on the collection of fines and penalties from convicted federal offenders rather than federal tax-based appropriations. That amount varies, however, and may not be enough to ensure consistent and comprehensive implementation of victims' rights laws and needed services. Many criminal justice officials and victim advocates continue to assert that there is a lack of comprehensive services in *every community* for victims of crime resulting in part from inadequate funding. New and creative sources of funding must be identified to ensure the implementation of rights and quality services for *all* crime victims.

### **Section II** ***New Directions for Criminal and Juvenile Justice System Agencies***

When a person is harmed by a criminal act, the agencies that make up our criminal and juvenile justice systems have a moral and legal obligation to respond. It is their responsibility not only to seek swift justice for victims, but to ease their suffering in a time of great need. Section II, *New Directions for Criminal and Juvenile Justice System Agencies*, discusses the critical role that each agency within the justice system—law enforcement, prosecution, judiciary, and corrections—must play in implementing and enforcing victims' rights and in improving the

overall treatment of crime victims within our nation's justice systems.

Chapter Two, *New Directions for Law Enforcement*, addresses law enforcement's role as the frontline of victim assistance. As the first responders to reported crimes, law enforcement agencies must ensure that victims are treated with sensitivity and provided with essential information and emergency assistance. This chapter addresses innovations including law enforcement-based victim assistance units; on-scene crisis units where specially trained counselors and law enforcement officers respond together to victims; and multidisciplinary programs that have been launched in hundreds of law enforcement agencies across the nation to respond to the needs of child, elderly, domestic violence and sexual assault victims. A number of recommendations for the law enforcement community are advanced by the field. For example, law enforcement agencies should adopt community policing philosophies that are both victim and crime prevention oriented. The field also recommends that law enforcement agencies establish policies and procedures for the provision of legally mandated victims' rights and services such as notifying victims of the status of an investigation, arrests, and pretrial release of suspects in their custody. In addition, compliance with victims' rights policies and procedures should be included as a standard in officers' performance appraisals.

Chapter Three, *New Directions for Prosecution*, addresses our nation's prosecutors. Today, prosecutors are recognizing that to most effectively

prosecute a case, the victim must be part of the process. The chapter highlights programs such as special prosecution units for child abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence; victim/witness assistance programs that provide comprehensive information, notification, advocacy, and support to crime victims; and community prosecution initiatives. This chapter also contains several recommendations that specifically address the prosecutor's role in informing, consulting with, and notifying crime victims. For example, because the overwhelming majority of felony cases are resolved through plea agreements, the field recommends that prosecutors consult with victims on the terms of any negotiated plea. The field also recommends that prosecutors confer with victims of violent crimes before declining to file charges. Other recommendations for prosecutors include the need to notify victims in a timely manner of public court proceedings and to advocate for their rights to be heard regarding bail decisions, continuances, sentencing, and restitution. The field also recommends that prosecutors and leaders of victims' organizations develop protocols for ensuring appropriate notification and consultation in cases involving large numbers of crime victims.

Chapter Four, *New Directions for the Judiciary*, addresses the pivotal role that judges play in the justice process. The judiciary has initiated many victim-sensitive problem-solving efforts such as specialized drug courts; domestic violence courts; community courts that handle

“quality of life” misdemeanor crimes; unified family courts that handle all problems relating to the family including criminal, civil, and juvenile matters; and courts designed specifically for child victims. The report recommends that as leaders within the justice system, judges should ensure that victims’ rights laws are fully implemented. *New Directions* recommends that judges should advise victims of their rights as routinely as they advise defendants of their rights and should facilitate the input of crime victims regarding proposed plea agreements. In addition, judges should permit the victim to present a victim impact statement before imposing a sentence, and courts should utilize communications technology (audio/video) to facilitate victim communication. The field also recommends that judges manage their cases and calendars to make victim involvement as feasible as possible, and that they order full restitution from offenders to help compensate victims for the harm they have suffered.

The last chapter in this section, *New Directions for Corrections*, encompasses the adult and juvenile justice agencies responsible for the incarceration, detention, supervision, and surveillance of those accused or convicted of committing crimes. Over the past decade, the basic philosophy of correctional agencies has undergone radical change. Traditionally, correctional agencies viewed their role as limited to punishing and rehabilitating offenders. Today, serving crime victims is also widely accepted as an important part of the mission of many correctional

agencies. This new role is reflected in their governing laws and internal policies and procedures, as well as in the attitudes of correctional personnel. More work is needed in this area, however. The field recommends that adult and juvenile correctional agencies open channels of communication with the community and with crime victims; that correctional agencies designate staff to provide information, assistance, and referrals to victims of crime; that they place a high priority on ensuring the protection of victims from inmate intimidation, threats, physical or other harm from offenders under their supervision; and that they inform victims of any change in the status of offenders that would give them access to victims or the community. To increase offender awareness of the consequences of their actions, correctional agencies for both adult and juvenile offenders should use victim impact panels and conduct courses on the effects of crime on victims.

*New Directions for Criminal Justice System Agencies* emphasizes the need for all criminal and juvenile justice personnel to ensure that the voices of victims are heard throughout the criminal justice process so that justice agencies are able to develop effective, victim-sensitive policies and programs. Education for these professionals should include presentations by victims about their justice system experiences. Crime victims are the “customers” of that system, and the agencies that interact with victims have an obligation to ask them to evaluate whether their needs are being met.

### ***Section III*** ***New Directions for*** ***Victim Assistance and*** ***Allied Professionals***

Members of many different professions work directly with crime victims or come into contact with them on a daily basis. In addition to victim service providers, primary among these are professionals in the health care, mental health, legal, education, faith, business, and the news media communities. *New Directions for Victim Assistance and Allied Professionals* describes the important roles that these professions can play in assisting victims. It identifies areas where services for victims of crime can be enhanced and highlights the innovative promising practices that each profession has developed to improve victim services.

Chapter Six, *New Directions for the Victim Assistance Community*, addresses the very broad and diverse victim assistance field, including local, state and national programs. The chapter traces the roots of the victim assistance movement from the first state victim compensation program in the United States established in 1965 and the early victim assistance programs of the 1970s, to the full-fledged advocacy and service field that today is dedicated to meeting the physical, financial, and psychological needs of victims and their families. More than 10,000 victim assistance programs exist across the country, including over 2,000 that assist battered women, over 2,000 rape crisis centers, as well as countless other community-based and justice system-

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based programs that serve child victims, survivors of homicide victims, drunk driving crash victims, and others. These are extraordinary accomplishments for a movement that started less than three decades ago.

Yet for many victims in America, adequate services are still not available. Crime victims with disabilities, who are victimized at an unusually high rate, have great difficulty accessing services to meet their needs. Many victim assistance programs lack the ability to communicate effectively with deaf or blind victims, and most service providers are not trained to communicate with victims with cognitive or developmental disabilities. Criminal justice and other victim service providers are often not equipped to meet the needs of victims from diverse cultures or victims who speak languages other than English. As a result, these victims are not informed adequately of the services available to them or of their rights in the criminal justice system.

In this chapter, the victims' movement seeks to define a comprehensive system of victim services for all crime victims that includes immediate trauma and emergency response, short- and long-term psychological counseling, shelter, and advocacy throughout the criminal, tribal, military, and juvenile justice systems. It addresses the issues facing specific types of victims—including victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, gang violence, white collar crime, bank robbery, hate and bias crimes, survivors of homicide victims, elderly victims, and drunk driving crash victims—and makes recommendations for meeting their needs. Other

recommendations in this section include conducting needs assessments; developing standards for victim assistance; providing basic training and continuing education for all victim assistance providers; and developing a national commission to establish certification and accreditation standards for victim advocacy and assistance.

The next chapter in this section, Chapter Seven, focuses on *New Directions for the Health Care Community*. In 1985, the Surgeon General declared violence in America to be a public health emergency. Today, this emergency has reached epidemic proportions. U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 1.4 million individuals injured by interpersonal violence in 1994. Each year, gunshot violence costs \$4.5 billion in medical expenses alone. This chapter discusses creative initiatives that have been taken by the health community to reduce violence and to provide assistance to crime victims. Hospitals are reaching out to rural victims through telemedicine, to victims of gang violence through violence prevention programs, and to victims of sexual assault through sexual assault nurse examiners programs. However, many challenges still remain. Recommendations in this chapter include encouraging all medical professionals to adopt protocols for responding to domestic violence, child, elderly, and sexual assault victims developed by their professional associations and to provide professional education programs on crime victims issues.

Intense feelings of anger, fear, isolation, low self-esteem, helplessness, and depression are common

reactions to victimization. Chapter Eight, *New Directions for the Mental Health Community*, addresses the many short- and long-term mental health problems that can result from experiencing trauma including acute and post-traumatic stress disorder. Major advances have been made in furthering our understanding of crime-related psychological trauma and the best ways to provide treatment to crime victims. This chapter outlines a number of multidisciplinary programs which have been developed to address the mental health needs of crime victims. Recommendations encourage the mental health community to develop linkages with crime victim compensation, victim assistance programs, and criminal and juvenile justice agencies to ensure that victims have access to adequate crisis and mental health treatment at each stage of the justice process. They also address the continuing need for research on the mental health consequences of victimization and treatment of crime-related psychological disorders, as well as the importance of education and training for mental health professionals in providing appropriate mental health treatment to crime victims and their families.

Chapter Nine, *New Directions for the Legal Community*, addresses the role of lawyers serving in positions outside the justice system in private law firms, corporations, law schools, and government, who frequently come in contact with crime victims through their work. Attorneys and the organized bar associations to which they belong have worked to improve access to the justice system for crime victims by providing pro bono legal assistance to



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crime victims through community outreach and legal advocacy programs. The field encourages state and local bar associations to follow the lead of the American Bar Association, and many state and local bar associations, in establishing victim committees and to strongly support continuing legal education on crime victims' issues.

Chapter Ten, *New Directions for the Educational Community*, examines the pervasive problem of crime on school and college campuses, as well as how the educational community can assist crime victims. Our nation's schools provide the richest opportunity to teach children about victims' rights and services and crime prevention strategies. Education on these issues should begin in grade school and continue through college and graduate school. On many college campuses, where sexual assault and other crimes affect large numbers of students, information about these crimes and prevention strategies is rarely incorporated into classes or student activities beyond student orientation. Many victims turn first to their friends for assistance, and it is critical to educate those most likely to be called upon for advice. Since the release of the 1982 report, attention to school violence has greatly increased, and scores of programs have been developed to protect the safety of students, teachers, and administrators. The recommendations in this chapter focus on the continuing need for schools and universities to establish comprehensive programs to assist students, faculty, and staff who are victimized by crime or who witness violence. In addition, the report calls upon all school districts, colleges, and

universities to design and implement a standardized system for documenting, analyzing, and reporting crimes to law enforcement. Equally important, *New Directions* encourages colleges and universities to establish undergraduate and graduate programs with a concentration in victims' rights and services, as well as to develop specialized education and training programs for faculty, administrators, and staff on crime victim issues.

In times of crisis, many individuals turn to clergy and leaders in the faith community for spiritual guidance, support, and information. Chapter Eleven, *New Directions for the Faith Community*, encourages faith community leaders to recognize that the victim, no less than the victimizer, is in need of aid, comfort, and spiritual ministry. It reviews the range of faith-based victim assistance programs that have been developed over the past decade, including providing shelter for battered women and camps for abused children. Training on victims' issues for those in the faith community is recommended as a priority so that they are better able to recognize signs of violence, understand critical issues of confidentiality, and make appropriate referrals for services.

Chapter Twelve, *New Directions for the Business Community*, addresses the importance of this community's response to crime victims. Employers have begun to recognize that it is good business to offer employees a full spectrum of assistance programs to help them deal with problems, including criminal victimization, that affect job performance and the safety of the workplace. Employee

assistance programs are now routinely offered in many workplaces. Many employers and unions are implementing policies to prevent violence in the workplace and to assist employees who become victims. This chapter highlights innovative private sector approaches to improve the response to victims of workplace violence, including monetary and in-kind donations to individual victims and community victim services, and memorable programs that the television industry has produced to increase public awareness about crime victims' issues, particularly in the area of child abuse, sexual assault, gun violence, stalking, and domestic violence. The field recommends that all workplaces educate their employees about victimization and its impact.

The final chapter in this section, *New Directions for the News Media Community*, addresses the longstanding tension between the public's right to know versus the victim's right to privacy. The media's coverage of many high-profile cases and emerging crimes has contributed to positive changes in public policy, such as recognition of the need for community notification of sex offenders and anti-stalking statutes. News coverage has also helped to change public attitudes about the seriousness of violent crimes such as drunk driving and rape. But the media can have a negative impact on individual lives when victims are thrust, often unwillingly, into the media limelight in the aftermath of crime. This chapter encourages the media to adopt guidelines for sensitively covering victims' issues, such as protecting the privacy of sexual assault and child victims.

## **Section IV** ***New Directions in Financial Recovery***

The costs to crime victims for medical expenses, mental health counseling, and lost wages alone are estimated at \$105 billion annually. The fourth section of this report, *New Directions in Financial Recovery*, addresses the three major avenues that victims can pursue to recover their financial losses due to crime: compensation, restitution, and civil remedies.

The first chapter of this section, Chapter Fourteen, *New Directions for Crime Victim Compensation*, addresses the great progress that has been made to establish victim compensation programs in every state and to expand program benefits. Crime victim compensation programs pay for expenses such as medical care, mental health counseling, lost wages, funeral expenses, and crime scene cleanup. In 1996, state compensation programs paid approximately \$240 million to more than 110,000 crime victims nationwide. The recommendations from the field in this chapter suggest that the circle of victims who qualify for compensation should be widened, and barriers that may prevent victims from applying for compensation, such as mandated time limits for reporting to law enforcement or submitting a claim, should be removed. Additional recommendations for compensation programs address issues such as improving claims management, expanding benefits for crime victims, and utilizing technology to facilitate program initiatives.

Chapter Fifteen, *New Directions for Restitution*, addresses restitution, which can be ordered in juvenile and criminal courts to hold offenders financially accountable for their crimes against victims. This chapter calls for mandatory, full, and consistent restitution orders nationwide. In addition, the field suggests all justice systems should establish more effective restitution programs that require coordinated efforts among officials across the entire justice system to increase restitution collections.

The final chapter of this section, *New Directions for Civil Remedies*, addresses the potential financial remedies that crime victims can seek through the civil justice system. Recommendations focus on informing victims and victim service providers of the legal rights of crime victims to pursue reparations through the civil justice system. Victims should be provided with information regarding their options within the civil justice system as another means of holding offenders accountable.

Each chapter in this section also addresses the importance of education and training for all who serve victims, as well as victims themselves, about these potential avenues of financial recovery. In addition, the section explores the use of technology, which offers exciting possibilities for improving claims processing and restitution collections so that crime victims no longer will be forced to wait several months or even years to receive critical financial support.

## **Section V** ***New Directions for Child Victims***

Each year in America, millions of children directly experience or witness violence in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools. The impact of such crime and violence on our nation's youth is undeniably profound. Section V, *New Directions for Child Victims*, addresses the unique needs of young victims and outlines the legal rights and protections that have emerged at the federal and state levels for child victims of physical and sexual abuse, exploitation, abduction, and other types of crimes. It reviews the long-term impact of crime on child victims and presents examples of programs and services that have been developed across the nation to address their health and mental health needs, and to help them through the criminal justice process in sensitive and comprehensive ways. Much needed services include children's advocacy centers, court-appointed special advocates, and other multidisciplinary approaches.

This section also contains a number of recommendations to improve services for child victims, to develop training programs for all professionals who come into contact with child victims, and to enhance data collection and research initiatives in the area of child victimization.



## **Section VI**

### ***New Directions in International Victim Assistance***

Individuals throughout the world—in large urban cities and in small villages—face problems with crime and violence, and much can be gained from examining the unique approaches to addressing the rights and needs of crime victims that have been undertaken by diverse communities and nations. Increasing numbers of people travel and live abroad, and are victimized in countries where they may be unfamiliar with the language as well as the legal and social service systems. Crimes such as international terrorism and commercial sexual exploitation of children are well documented, highlighting the need for countries to look beyond their national boundaries to share information and assist victims.

The final chapter of this report, Chapter Eighteen, discusses global issues facing the field of victim services today and briefly highlights approaches that have been taken in other countries to address crime victims' needs. In addition to serving their own victims domestically, many countries are participating in international collaborative efforts to improve the rights and treatment of crime victims worldwide. Recommendations in this section include improving services to American citizens who are victimized abroad and foreign citizens who are victimized in the United States, as well as continued collaboration and reciprocity in the provision of victim services worldwide.

*I discovered long ago that among the most effective advocates I have seen are the survivors, those who have channeled their pain and anger into activism to achieve lasting reforms.*

*Attorney General Janet Reno,  
August 15, 1996*

### **Conclusion**

The victims' movement owes its beginning and many of its accomplishments to the activism of crime victims and their families and supporters. Many crime victims have struggled not only to survive and heal after their own victimization, but also to bring much-needed legal reforms, financial relief, and services to other victims. In charting *New Directions*, the field emphasizes the importance of recognizing the needs, desires, and potential contributions of crime victims themselves. Victims' voices must remain a powerful guiding force in developing new directions.

Since 1982, a substantial number of the 68 recommendations in the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime *Final Report* have been enacted and implemented due in a large part to the efforts of crime victims. These accomplishments include the Victims of Crime Act in 1984, the landmark Crime Act of 1994, the countless state statutes that strengthen victims' rights and hold offenders accountable to their

victims, and the 29 state victims' rights constitutional amendments.

Throughout this report, the field urges representatives of justice agencies, including law enforcement officials, prosecutors, judges, and corrections administrators, to recognize the important role that crime victims play in helping to guide public policy. Justice and allied professionals must also realize that crime victims are an essential resource in developing and participating in victim assistance, training, and crime prevention programs. Community activism and service are often part of the healing process for many crime victims. Their contributions to groups that provide support for other crime victims and to programs that provide education about the impact of crime and how to prevent victimization in the future have been invaluable.

The many contributors to this report hope that communities around the country will benefit from the many "promising practices" and recommendations highlighted throughout *New Directions*, and that the dialogue on improving the response to victims continues in a spirited and visionary fashion. The Office for Victims of Crime is committed to facilitating this dialogue and to assisting communities everywhere with implementing innovative, comprehensive programs that provide victims with even greater opportunities for justice and healing.

## ***Sampling of Promising Practices That Are Transforming Victim Services***

In the last two decades, many promising practices in victim services have been developed across the nation. These innovative programs use a multidisciplinary or team approach to respond to the needs of diverse crime victims, maximize technology to deliver high-quality services to victims more quickly and effectively, and utilize community police, prosecutor, court, and corrections programs.

An important objective for the victims' movement in the 21st century should be to support and replicate these innovative ideas, with the goal of improving the quality of programs nationwide. In the new millennium, it is hoped that every community can adopt these promising practices in victims services to ensure that victims are provided services in specialized settings by agencies that work together and utilize technology to bring services to victims with greater efficiency.

Over 100 promising practices are highlighted throughout *New Directions*. These are just a few examples of the range of excellent services and multidisciplinary partnerships that have been established to assist crime victims.

### ***Children's Advocacy Centers***

The first children's advocacy center was initiated in Huntsville, Alabama in 1984 by a dynamic district attorney who wanted to change the traditional system in which sexually

abused children were revictimized by having to retell their stories to numerous agency officials in frightening settings. Children's advocacy centers are designed especially for kids, allowing law enforcement officers, social workers, medical and mental health personnel, and prosecutors to work together to reduce the number of interviews and coordinate cases. Today, there are more than 350 children's advocacy centers in 48 states.

### ***Community Criminal Justice Partnerships***

In 1989, the sheriff of St. Martin Parish, Louisiana began a program to help his department respond to the needs of elderly crime victims. Called Triad, this collaborative program between law enforcement and senior citizens has been duplicated in communities across the country. Today, there are more than 500 programs in 46 states, Canada, and England. In Bridgeport, Connecticut, for example, the chief of police provides a bus and officers to help seniors living in a high-crime area go to the market and conduct their banking safely. Services offered by Triad programs include transportation to medical services and criminal justice proceedings, courtroom escorts, and repairs to damaged residences. The program is cosponsored by the American Association of Retired Persons, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and the National Sheriffs Association.

### ***Crisis Response Teams***

The nation's first crisis response teams for victims were organized by the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) following the 1986 Edmond, Oklahoma post office

shooting in which more than a dozen employees were killed. Since that galvanizing event, with NOVA's leadership and training and a growing interest among some states, response teams comprising professionals from a variety of disciplines, including psychologists, law enforcement officers, doctors, social workers, victim advocates, and religious leaders, have been assembled around the country. These teams provide assistance to communities in the aftermath of major crimes and acts of terrorism such as mass murders and bombings. In the wake of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, NOVA organized three crisis response teams to debrief and train more than 1,000 emergency responders, teachers, and school children.

### ***Technologies to Benefit Crime Victims***

Emerging technologies hold great promise for improving services to crime victims. In Kentucky, following the murder of a woman who was notified of the release of her accused assailant, the state developed a computerized system to inform victims when their accused or convicted offenders are released. Similar systems are being adopted around the country. Technology can be used to help victims participate in proceedings, to view trials moved to other communities using closed-circuit television, or to participate by satellite hookups during parole proceedings. In addition, telemedicine can be used to provide assistance from physicians in other locations to nurse examiners in rural areas during sexual assault or child abuse forensic examinations. Technology can also provide increased protection for victims of crimes such as domestic

violence and stalking by utilizing cellular phones, house perimeter alarms, and electronic bracelets.

### ***Community Police, Prosecutors, and Court Programs***

Community policing, prosecution, and court programs are excellent vehicles for ensuring victim assistance. Law enforcement officers based in neighborhoods are uniquely situated to identify underserved crime victims and help them obtain needed assistance. In San Diego, California for example, community police officers are informed through a computerized database 24 hours a day of shelters that have available space and other information that helps them respond more effectively to victims of crime. Community prosecution programs such as the community drug impact program in the Eastern District of Wisconsin permit prosecutors to advise citizens of drug arrests in their neighborhood and request their participation in submitting community impact statements. A community court, like the Midtown Community Court in Manhattan, can address misdemeanor, quality-of-life crimes such as graffiti, prostitution, minor drug offenses, and shoplifting, and become an important victim service institution by enforcing immediate and meaningful restitution to victims and the community.

### ***Initiatives of Allied Professionals***

The efforts of allied professionals have greatly improved services to crime victims in many areas. Working with law enforcement and others in the criminal justice system, hospitals in some communities have created

programs that provide a safe and secure atmosphere in which to conduct sexual assault examinations. Schools are presenting special violence awareness courses on topics ranging from child abuse and dating violence to gang awareness and prevention. Bar associations are establishing special trainings for attorneys who want to donate their services to crime victims and to represent them in civil litigation. The religious and spiritual community has established camps for abused children and broad-based educational programs and has provided locations for many victim assistance programs. The business community has not only provided millions of dollars to support victim assistance programs, but also over the past decade has increased public awareness of victimization among employees through new training programs and advertising campaigns about victims' issues. The mental health community is playing a pivotal role by establishing multidisciplinary teams to respond to victims of crime in a more coordinated way. In addition, many allied professionals contribute their services to crisis response team efforts around the country.

### ***Comprehensive Victim Service Centers***

This concept originated in Jacksonville, Florida where a comprehensive victim center, provides a wide range of services in one location for all crime victims. Center staff operate an emergency fund for victims, and counselors provide immediate crisis counseling and accompany law enforcement to all homicides. A staff member representing the state compensation program processes compensation claims onsite, and chapters of self-help

groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Parents of Murdered Children operate in the center to provide emotional support to victims and survivors of victims of violent crime.

### ***Specialized Programs for Diverse Crime Victims***

Many of the innovative programs described in *New Directions* provide comprehensive services to underserved crime victims and encourage victims to participate in the criminal and juvenile justice systems. The Seattle Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services, established by a deaf victim for whom there were no services when she was sexually assaulted as a child, provides comprehensive assistance to deaf and deaf-blind victims who began reporting crimes in record numbers after this organization was founded. Victims of gang violence in Orange County, California, receive extensive services from the Gang Victim Services Program, in which multicultural, bilingual staff provide assistance with crime scene cleanup, funeral arrangements, victim-witness protection issues, interaction with the media, referrals to counseling, court advocacy, and victim compensation applications.



The report and recommendations represent views from the field, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice.

The Office for Victims of Crime is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

To obtain a copy of the full report, *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century*, contact the OVC Resource Center at 800-627-6872, or query askncjrs@ncjrs.org, or send in the order form below.

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