

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office for Victims of Crime

A large, stylized graphic of a classical column with a spiral capital, rendered in shades of blue and purple, serving as a background for the text.

National
Victim Assistance
Academy

VIDEOTAPE SERIES:

Listen to My Story:
Communicating
With Victims
of Crime

Office for Victims of Crime

OVC
"Putting Victims First"

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh Street NW.
Washington, DC 20531

Alberto R. Gonzales
Attorney General

Regina B. Schofield
Assistant Attorney General

John W. Gillis
Director, Office for Victims of Crime

Office of Justice Programs
Partnerships for Safer Communities
www.ojp.usdoj.gov

Office for Victims of Crime
www.ovc.gov

For grant and funding information, contact
U.S. Department of Justice Response Center
1-800-421-6770

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Listen to My Story: Communicating With Victims of Crime Video Discussion Guide

Video produced by
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Office for Victims of Crime
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Written by

Morna Murray
Victims' Assistance Legal Organization
McLean, VA

Melissa Hook
Victims' Assistance Legal Organization
McLean, VA

Anne Seymour
Justice Solutions
Washington, DC

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Introduction

The *Listen to My Story: Communicating With Victims of Crime* video and discussion guide were developed to offer insights into the basics of communicating with victims of crime. It can be extremely helpful and instructive for victim service providers to revisit the basics of communication. While a sense of compassion and empathy are key, effective interaction with victims requires *more* than excellent communication skills. Many other considerations should be kept in mind, such as subtle unintentional messages that can be conveyed that are actually harmful. Cultural considerations also are important. What is viewed as respectful and inviting in one culture may mean the opposite in another.

The video and discussion guide explore the “ABCs” of communication with crime victims who have been *traumatized*. Thus, the potential effects of crime on the emotional and psychological well-being of victims are explored. All crimes are potentially traumatic, and victim service providers should be aware of various responses to them.

It is also important that victim service providers are knowledgeable about the mental health implications and considerations involved in communicating with trauma victims.

The 13½-minute video focuses on five areas:

- ◆ Helping victims regain control after a crime.
- ◆ Listening with compassion.

- ◆ Understanding the impact of trauma on victims.
- ◆ Needing to build trust when communicating with victims.
- ◆ Understanding the various barriers to communication.

Facilitator Tips for Using the Listen to My Story: Communicating With Victims of Crime Video and Discussion Guide

The video and discussion guide are valuable training tools for victim service providers, criminal and juvenile justice professionals, mental health providers, allied professionals, and other audiences who seek to better understand the basics of communicating with crime victims who have suffered the trauma of victimization. The *Listen to My Story: Communicating With Victims of Crime* video can be viewed in its entirety or in segments.

To facilitate discussion of each of the video's segments, turn to the corresponding section in the discussion guide. Each section offers a framework for moderating a discussion; it provides facilitators with questions and “probes” — possible answers or responses to each question that are based on research on victim trauma and needs—to use during a discussion.

The discussion guide questions are designed to spark dialog among participants about issues raised in the video. Moderators may choose any of several ways to use the questions, depending on the size and composition of the group. Moderators may

want to create viewer worksheets on which participants can write their thoughts. They may want to divide participants into smaller groups to discuss the questions, then report back to the larger group. When deciding how to structure a discussion, facilitators should consider how to reinforce the issues raised by the video and give participants opportunities to apply these ideas to their work.

The recommendations in the discussion guide and video are by no means all inclusive; rather, they are intended to promote further dialog among viewers about how service providers can best serve the needs of victims through their communications with them.

The video can serve as a primer about victims' communication needs, from the time the crime occurs through the criminal or juvenile justice process. It can be a useful audiovisual aid for

- ◆ Introductory training for new staff.
- ◆ Continuing education for existing staff.
- ◆ Professional training and education programs for victim service providers, criminal and juvenile justice professionals, and allied professionals.
- ◆ Public awareness efforts to increase understanding of victimization and victims' rights and needs.

Depending on the audience and venue, discussion facilitators can

- ◆ Develop viewer worksheets—using the discussion questions—to encourage individual reflection on the issues addressed in the video.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for viewers to apply the issues raised by the video to their own experiences, either as crime victims or as professionals who work with crime victims.
- ◆ Divide viewers into small groups to discuss their ideas and opinions, with the opportunity to share insights with the whole group.
- ◆ Document key points of group discussions on tear sheets to offer a visual summary of the proceedings.

Below are suggested resources to augment effective facilitation:

- ◆ VCR and monitor.
- ◆ Viewer worksheets.
- ◆ Tear sheet pads and easel.
- ◆ Markers.
- ◆ Masking tape.

Segment One: Helping Victims Regain Control

The experience of being victimized has the potential to turn every aspect of a crime victim's life into chaos and disarray. One of the most common feelings reported by victims in the aftermath of a crime is feeling a loss of control. Because victims had no control over a victimization, this sense of helplessness can persist into other areas of their lives. It is so important for victims to begin to regain the sense that they are, indeed, in control of their lives. This segment will help viewers understand

- ❖ Feelings of helplessness and loss of control that individuals experience after a victimization.
 - ❖ How to support crime victims in regaining a sense of control over their lives.
 - ❖ Behavior on the part of service providers that can inhibit crime victims' efforts to regain a sense of control.
1. **What are some of the fundamental values and beliefs that can be thrown into question or destroyed by the experience of a violent victimization that may make victims feel helpless?**

Facilitator Probes

- ❖ Bad things do not happen to good people.
- ❖ Personal safety is a “given” in a just society.
- ❖ Life is predictable and fair.

2. What interventions by victim service providers and criminal justice professionals can help victims restore a sense of control over their lives?

Facilitator Probes

- ❖ Letting victims decide when and where they want to talk.
- ❖ Listening to victims' stories with patience and respect.
- ❖ Listening actively and being aware of victims' state of mind and the message behind the words they use to describe their situations.
- ❖ Expressing confidence in victims' abilities to tell their stories.
- ❖ Having a list of mental health and trauma referrals readily accessible. It would be helpful to have brochures with this information. On request, help victims make contact with the referrals.
- ❖ Being prepared for the fact that victims may have little sense of the workings of the criminal justice system and may be intimidated and/or confused by it.
- ❖ Providing as much information as possible to victims about how an investigation will proceed.
- ❖ Trying to give victims the appropriate information to help them make their own decisions if making decisions is an important part of reclaiming their lives.

3. What kinds of behaviors by service providers toward victims of violent crime might inhibit effective communications with them and their ability to regain a sense of control over their lives?

Facilitator Probes

- ◆ Rendering judgments or implying that victims were in some way to blame for a crime.
- ◆ Second-guessing victims' feelings or responses to a crime.
- ◆ Comparing victims' experiences of crime with that of other victims of similar crimes.
- ◆ Arguing with victims or becoming flustered by victims' anxieties.
- ◆ Treating victims as evidence.
- ◆ Dismissing victims' fears and anxieties as unrealistic or obsessive.
- ◆ Treating victims as if they are helpless.

Segment Two: Listening With Compassion

Listening to crime victims is perhaps the most important thing that service providers and allied professionals do, and it is crucial that they listen to victims with *compassion*. Compassionate listening conveys a genuine sense of caring and encourages victims to speak openly and freely. Voice tone, words, facial expressions, body language, and quality of attention all affect whether victims sense they

are being heard. Service providers need to be conscious of the kinds of messages—both verbal and nonverbal—they are conveying and whether in person or over the telephone. This segment will help viewers understand

- ◆ The importance of body language and the messages it conveys.
- ◆ Positive and negative conversational skills.
- ◆ Conveying interest and compassion in telephone conversations.

1. What kinds of body language convey openness and compassion?

Facilitator Probes (positive body language)

- ◆ Maintaining eye contact to show interest, unless it is culturally inappropriate. When culturally appropriate behavior is in question, ask in a gentle and respectful way what is comfortable for that victim.
- ◆ Using appropriate posture that conveys a relaxed but alert attitude.
- ◆ Leaning slightly forward to show interest.
- ◆ Practicing an awareness of other nonverbal messages conveyed by use of arms, hands, and facial expressions.

Facilitator Probes (negative body language)

- ◆ Using facial expressions or body language that show impatience when victims are repetitive.
- ◆ Slouching.

- ❖ Looking around the room when they are talking.
 - ❖ Yawning, sighing, and other expressions of boredom or disinterest.
 - ❖ Multitasking while they are speaking.
- 2. What conversational skills convey a willingness to understand and show compassion?**

Facilitator Probes (positive skills)

- ❖ Speaking in a measured, kind voice.
- ❖ Paraphrasing to convey compassionate interest in victims' stories and assurance that they are being heard.
- ❖ Paraphrasing victims' stories to confirm that they have been accurately understood.
- ❖ Paraphrasing victims' stories as a way to validate feelings.
- ❖ Asking open-ended questions that do not require a "yes" or "no" answer (e.g., instead of asking "Has this been going on for a long time?" ask "How long has this been going on?").
- ❖ Using active listening skills that acknowledge victims' emotional and psychological states of mind (e.g., "That must have made you feel . . .," "It sounds like you are really feeling . . .").
- ❖ Responding to content, paraphrasing when appropriate (e.g., "So, it is really important to you that . . .," "You are really concerned about . . .," "In other words . . .").

- ◆ Remaining engaged in the exchange until victims have finished telling their stories.

Facilitator Probes (negative skills)

- ◆ Directing victims rather than letting them tell their stories.
- ◆ Interrupting victims.
- ◆ Telling victims how they should feel.
- ◆ Disagreeing with victims.
- ◆ Displaying a tendency to evaluate what they are saying.
- ◆ Jumping to conclusions or filling in details.
- ◆ Using vocabulary that is poorly understood or alienating.
- ◆ Talking too much.
- ◆ Knowing all the answers.
- ◆ Being closeminded.
- ◆ Asking “Why did you?” or “Why didn’t you?” questions that convey blame.

3. In telephone conversations, what are ways to convey to crime victims compassion and a willingness to help?

Facilitator Probes

- ◆ Use first names.
- ◆ Speak with warmth and interest.
- ◆ Make victims aware of your willingness to listen to all of their story.

- ❖ Listen carefully to assess victims' state of mind and let them know if they sound depressed, upset, or angry to help them clarify their feelings.
- ❖ Let victims know that expressions of grief or anger are okay.
- ❖ Explore with victims the problem or crime that provoked the call.

Segment Three: Understanding the Impact of Trauma

Victims can experience a number of traumatic reactions to a victimization. When they report or exhibit signs of ongoing mental health trauma, victim service providers are often the first to provide referrals to mental health experts. Even though most victim service providers are not mental health experts, they should understand the most common short- and long-term effects of crime on victims' mental health and have on hand referrals to experts who understand trauma in the context of victimization. This segment will help viewers understand

- ❖ Immediate short- and long-term trauma reactions after a victimization.
- ❖ The kind of support necessary for victims who are coping with trauma.

1. What are some of the immediate effects of the trauma of victimization?

Facilitator Probes

- ◆ Shock, surprise, and terror.
 - ◆ Feelings of unreality, such as “This can’t be happening to me.”
 - ◆ Extremely high rates of physiological anxiety (e.g., rapid heart rate, hyperventilation, stomach distress).
 - ◆ Helplessness.
- 2. What are some of the short-term effects of the trauma of victimization?**

Facilitator Probes

- ◆ Preoccupation with crime (e.g., “I can’t get it out of my mind”).
- ◆ Flashbacks and bad dreams.
- ◆ Heightened concern for their personal safety.
- ◆ Heightened concern for the safety of their loved ones.
- ◆ Fear that they are at fault.
- ◆ Fear that they will not be believed.
- ◆ Fear that they will be blamed.
- ◆ Fear of law enforcement if they belong to a culture that in general has a difficult relationship with law enforcement.

- ❖ Inability to trust anyone or any situation.
- ❖ Fear of the next attack among victims of repeat abuse.

3. What are some of the long-term effects of the trauma of victimization?

Facilitator Probes

- ❖ Posttraumatic stress disorder.
- ❖ Depression.
- ❖ Alcoholism and substance abuse.
- ❖ Mental illness.
- ❖ Suicide or contemplation of suicide.
- ❖ Panic disorders.
- ❖ Obsessive-compulsive disorder.
- ❖ Poor health as a result of a victimization (e.g., physical disabilities, sexually transmitted diseases resulting from rape, immune system problems, developmental disabilities from a head injury).
- ❖ Chronic pain.
- ❖ Sexual dysfunction.

4. What can victim service providers do or say to help victims cope with the trauma they experience as a result of a violent crime? (Recognize that eliminating trauma-related psychological injuries may not be a realistic goal.)

Facilitator Probes

- ◆ Be calm and focused.
- ◆ Express sorrow for what has happened to them.
- ◆ Conduct a basic needs assessment to determine the degree of trauma victims may be experiencing. Remember that not all victims are alike. For each assessment, include previctimization characteristics and prior mental health condition and postvictimization factors, especially the degree of exposure to the criminal justice system and the quality of social support.
- ◆ Be understanding when victims do not wish to repeat the details of the crime.
- ◆ Be understanding of the fact that victims may not wish to look at defendants in court and arrange for someone to be at trials to lend moral support to victims.
- ◆ Refer victims to stress management and mental health professionals based on their needs.
- ◆ Receive training on red flag indicators for substance abuse and alcohol addiction that may develop as a result of a victimization and make appropriate referrals.

Segment Four: Building Trust

Many victims report that their trust in the world as a safe place is shattered as a result of a victimization. If individuals are victimized for reasons having to do with their gender and/or identification with a particular religious, ethnic, or other group, this loss of trust can be profound. One of the tasks of victim service providers is to help victims move forward and reclaim the trust they have lost. One of the best ways victim advocates can achieve this is by being trustworthy in every aspect of their work with victims. This segment will help viewers understand

- ❖ The loss of sense of safety and trust that victims experience after a victimization.
- ❖ What providers can do to help victims regain their sense of trust and safety.

1. What are some of the reasons that it may be difficult to establish trusting relationships with crime victims?

Facilitator Probes

- ❖ Victims' fundamental assumptions about life may have been shattered and therefore they may have difficulty identifying what they can believe in and trust.
- ❖ They may belong to a different culture.
- ❖ They may speak a different language.

- ❖ Victims of hate and bias crimes may feel persecuted and expect repeat victimizations.
- ❖ They may not trust anyone they perceive as a representative of the criminal justice system.
- ❖ Their previous experiences with the criminal justice system may have been unsatisfactory.
- ❖ Victims may have concerns about their rights to confidentiality.
- ❖ They may be on their guard that people in the system may try to blame them.
- ❖ They may be angry.
- ❖ They may feel guilty.

2. What can victim service providers say or do to help build trust?

Facilitator Probes

- ❖ Express sorrow for what has happened to victims.
- ❖ Be clear in communicating that it was not the victims' fault that they were victimized.
- ❖ Explain the specific role of the professional and how it can help victims. In the role of advocate, do not make promises to victims that cannot be kept.
- ❖ Explain the specific rules of privilege that may apply to communications with victims, i.e., disclosure requirements versus confidential communication between advocates and victims.

- ❖ Know the state laws and agency rules about confidentiality and abide by them.
- ❖ Explain the criminal justice process as it relates to victims.
- ❖ Explain the purpose behind the questions that are being asked.
- ❖ Explain to victims what their options are with regard to reporting a crime and participating in the process.
- ❖ Be sensitive to victims' mental health and medical needs and make appropriate referrals.
- ❖ Explain victim compensation and help victims apply for it when they are eligible.
- ❖ If victims feel alienated as a result of their age, culture, race, religion, gender, or sexual preference, partner with a representative from the relevant community to improve the quality of victim assistance.

Segment Five: Becoming Aware of Communication Barriers

Victim service providers must do everything in their power to become aware of and overcome any communication barriers that might exist in their relationships with crime victims. Barriers to communication might include cultural differences between providers and victims, programmatic barriers such as lack of adequate training, and physical

barriers such as the geographical distances some victims must travel to access services. This segment will help viewers understand

- ◆ Cultural barriers to effective communication with victims.
- ◆ Programmatic barriers to effective communication with victims.
- ◆ Physical barriers to effective communication with victims.

1. What are the cultural barriers that might impede good communication with crime victims?

Facilitator Probes

- ◆ The role of family (e.g., sharing intimate information about a crime generally may be frowned on in certain cultures).
- ◆ Cultural mores that emphasize loyalty to a group over an individual.
- ◆ Cultural indications of shame with respect to victims.
- ◆ Variations among cultures in the grieving process.
- ◆ Prejudice, either conscious or unconscious, on the part of helping individuals.
- ◆ Victims' perception of what will be held private and what must be shared with law enforcement officials.

- ❖ Distrust of the criminal justice system because of culture or experiences that members of a culture have had with the criminal justice system.
- ❖ Fear of deportation.
- ❖ Poor understanding of service providers' role.
- ❖ Poor understanding of victims' rights and/or the criminal justice process.
- ❖ Culture of gender-based passivity.
- ❖ Fear of law enforcement.
- ❖ Religious beliefs.
- ❖ Disenfranchisement for various reasons (e.g., extreme poverty, illness, isolation).

2. What are the programmatic barriers that might impede good communication with crime victims?

Facilitator Probes

- ❖ False assumption by service providers that they have qualities or attitudes in common with victims.
- ❖ Lack of diversity among victim services staff.
- ❖ Language barriers.
- ❖ Absence of outreach to different groups about victims' rights and services.
- ❖ Prejudice.
- ❖ Lack of training to develop skills and preparedness so victim service providers can address the

needs of the populations served; lack of cultural competency.

3. What are some of the physical barriers that might impede good communication with crime victims?

Facilitator Probes

- ◆ Location of service providers.
- ◆ Long distances victims need to travel to access services in rural areas.
- ◆ Victims' isolation and lack of awareness of services for crime victims.
- ◆ Victims' lack of transportation.
- ◆ Victims' lack of a telephone.
- ◆ Poor access to service providers' offices for people with disabilities.
- ◆ Elderly victims who are dependent on others for access to services.
- ◆ Child victims who are dependent on others for access to services.

4. What efforts can service providers make to address barriers that impede communication with crime victims?

Facilitator Probes

- ◆ Participate in diversity training.
- ◆ Identify populations in the community that are challenging to serve.

- ❖ Assess the general needs of victims from populations in the community that are challenging to serve.
- ❖ Evaluate staff's cultural competence for assisting underserved victim groups.
- ❖ Determine ways in which agency policy can change to better serve target groups.
- ❖ Develop a culturally diverse staff.
- ❖ Form partnerships with culturally diverse individuals and engage their assistance in serving victims from their communities.

Additional Resources

Web Sites

Academic Resource Center, Utah State University:
Active Listening Skills

Web site: www.usu.edu/arc/idea_sheets/active.htm

Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado: International Online Training Program on Intractable Conflict

Web site: www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/activel.htm

Homicide Support Project, Virginia Mason Medical Center, Seattle, WA

Web site: www.vmmc.org/dbSeparation/sec70517.htm

National Crime Victims Research and
Treatment Center

Web site: www.musc.edu/cvc

National MultiCultural Institute

Web site: www.nmci.org

New York State Governor's Office of Employee
Relations: Communication Skills

Web site: [www.goer.state.ny.us/Train/
onlinelearning/FTMS/600s3.html](http://www.goer.state.ny.us/Train/onlinelearning/FTMS/600s3.html)

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Guidelines for Active Listening

Active listening is a structured form of listening and responding to another person that conveys empathy, focused attention, and understanding. It involves listening not only with the ears but also with the eyes and other senses and an awareness of body language. Active listening has several benefits:

- ◆ People are forced to listen attentively to what others are saying.
- ◆ Paraphrasing to confirm what has been said helps avoid misunderstandings.
- ◆ Paraphrasing to validate feelings helps create an open environment for exchange.

Several communication techniques come into play in active listening:

- ◆ **Asking open questions.** Rather than ask questions that require only a “yes” or “no” answer, ask open questions. For example, instead of saying “Has this been going on a long time?” ask “How long has this been going on?” That way, instead of closing the conversation with a “yes” or “no” response, individuals are encouraged to keep talking.
- ◆ **Paraphrasing.** It helps to show that you have been listening attentively and have an accurate understanding of what has been said. For example, if a victim tells you about an abusive relationship that she does not know how to get out of, you can paraphrase this as, “You’re being treated terribly by your partner but you are afraid to leave.”
- ◆ **Reflecting.** Repeating back a word or phrase can encourage people to go on. If a victim says “It’s been really difficult recently,” keep the conversation going simply by repeating the word “Difficult”

- ❖ **Clarifying.** Everyone skirts around or glosses over the most difficult situations and emotions. They will avoid discussing them if allowed. If a victim glosses over an important point, help him or her clarify it by saying, “Tell me more about . . .” or “. . . sounds like a difficult area for you.”
- ❖ **Using short words of encouragement.** Saying “yes,” “go on,” or “I see” can give some much-needed encouragement.
- ❖ **Reacting.** Sympathy and understanding are vital. Saying, for example, “That must have been difficult,” can help a person feel he or she is being understood.

Source: Adapted from “Active Listening,” Change Our Minds awareness campaign, Samaritans, Surrey, England.

Web site: www.changeourminds.com/do_listen_approaches.html

Other Resources for Active Listening

Active Listening, Study Guides and Strategies, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota

Web site: www.studygs.net/listening.htm

Active Listening Resources for Educators

Web site: 7-12educators.about.com/cs/activelisting

Academic Resource Center, Utah State University: Active Listening Skills

Web site: www.usu.edu/arc/idea_sheets/active.htm

Telephone Communications: Responding to Difficult Questions

The following examples of telephone call exchanges between victim and listener/responder may be useful in checking one's own way of responding to victims that promotes active listening skills.

Victim Caller	Listener/Responder
Can you help me?	I'd like to try. Can you tell me more about your situation and we'll see what we can do.
Tell me more about what that means.	Perhaps it will become clearer as we discuss the reasons why you called.
What should I do about my problem?	What do you feel is possible for you to do at this time?
I want you to help me make a decision. That's why I called.	I'd like to be helpful to you. Which of the things we've discussed do you feel most comfortable in carrying out?
Everyone so far has treated me like a dog.	I'm so sorry you feel you've been treated badly. I'm going to try my best to help you in a respectful way.

Victim Caller	Listener/Responder
I hope you have a couple of hours to talk to me.	I wish I did. Right now I have [amount of time]. Let's try and identify your major needs and concerns, and see if we can address them in this time. Otherwise, we can reschedule when we both have more time.
That [allied professional] is an idiot!	I'm sorry you had such a bad experience. Let's talk about what happened and see if I can help you solve your problem.
Can you guarantee [this] will happen?	I'm sorry, I can't guarantee anything. However, I can work closely with you to see if we can help make it happen.
Do I have to tell you who I am?	Only if you decide to do so.
You seem so factual and objective. Do you really care what happens to me?	Yes, I do.
How can you care about a stranger, someone you've never met?	If you share your personal concerns with me, I don't feel you are a stranger.
You don't care!	Why do you feel that way? Perhaps if we talk more about the reason you've called, you'll be better able to judge.



Some “Do’s” and “Don’ts” When Communicating With Victims

Do

- ❖ Attempt foremost to communicate trust, support, and confidence.
- ❖ Calm and comfort victims. Ask “How are you doing?”
- ❖ Allow victims time to tell what happened and describe how they are feeling in their own words.
- ❖ Give victims back the control an offender took away by letting them decide when and where to talk.
- ❖ Reassure them that their feelings are quite normal and natural, even though they may seem a bit unusual at the moment.
- ❖ Let victims know that any feelings of anger, distress, frustration, fear, and the like are not uncommon and are justifiable.
- ❖ Be willing to listen to victims share their experiences if they want to talk about a crime and its effects, and validate that experience with empathy and support.
- ❖ Be alert for hidden meanings and messages not directly expressed by victims, without making unwarranted assumptions.
- ❖ Be encouraging, but not unrealistic.

- ❖ Be alert for opportunities to stress victims' qualities and strengths, but do not patronize.
- ❖ Accept the fact that you may never know whether victims follow through with your recommendations.
- ❖ Have an information and referral system—with names, addresses, telephone numbers, e-mails, and Web sites and pages—to determine appropriate referrals.
- ❖ Offer to make referral calls and contacts for further information and victim support to ensure that victims make the connections.
- ❖ Ask for assistance from a supervisor if a call appears to be too difficult to handle yourself.
- ❖ Recognize that mistakes will be made and that improved communication skills come from learning from your mistakes.
- ❖ Understand that many victims will have extreme difficulty reconstructing their lives after a violent crime, and that some may *never* recover from the tragedy.

Don't

- ❖ Be judgmental or blame victims for the crimes that were committed against them.
- ❖ "Second guess" how victims have reacted to a crime, either at the time it was occurring or in its aftermath.

- ❖ Avoid victims or avoid listening to their reactions to a crime. Listening and validating those experiences and emotions are critical to victims' reconstruction after a crime.
- ❖ Try to compare victims' experiences with similar ones, including your own. It is essential to individualize each victim, each crime, and each victim's reaction to that crime.
- ❖ Be "over-helpful" by making decisions and choices for victims. Because individuals do not choose to be victimized or have control over a violent act committed against them, their ability to regain control over and make decisions affecting their lives becomes extremely important.
- ❖ Be discouraged if you feel a call has been unsuccessful. You are not expected to "solve" most problems with a single phone call.
- ❖ Be afraid of silence. Use it constructively. Do not talk more than your victim callers.
- ❖ Become flustered by victims' anxiety or urgency. One of the most important factors is that you must remain calm, even in a crisis. Remember that *your* anxiety also can easily be transmitted over the telephone.
- ❖ "Take sides" with victims who have difficult experiences with the criminal or juvenile justice system. Work to solve problems and assure victims that you will do your best to address their identified needs. Avoid "trash talk" about allied professionals at all costs.

- ◆ Become defensive or arrogant or get into an argument with victims.
- ◆ Expect to be a psychotherapist or to know all the “right” answers. Your job is to listen and help victims—to the degree possible—in handling their immediate issues.

Sources

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Information in this guide also was gathered from unpublished material written by Louise Kaufman-Yavitz, Anne Seymour, and Ed Stout.

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OVC Resource Center
P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
Telephone: 1-800-851-3420 or 301-519-5500
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