Crime Victims' Needs and VOCA-Funded Services: Findings and Recommendations from Two National Studies

Report to the National Institute of Justice

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Note: Need to add Tables and Figures here, or present them in their own TOCs

Acknowledgements

This report is a synthesized summary of the final reports from two studies sponsored by the National Institute of Justice with funds from the Office for Victims of Crime.

Safe Horizon, the Vera Institute of Justice, and Westat, Inc. conducted an analysis of victims' needs and use of helping resources. This study resulted in the final report:

- Ellen Brickman, Robert Davis, Beth Rabinovich, David Cantor, and Gary Shapiro (2002). *Victim Needs and Victim Assistance*. Report to the National Institute of Justice. New York: Safe Horizon. Grant Number NIJ-98-VF-GX-0011.

For the full report or additional information on this study, contact Heike Thiel de Bocanegra at hthiel@safehorizon.org, or at (718) 928-6916.

The Urban Institute and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) analyzed the efficiency and effectiveness of state victim assistance programs, direct service providers they fund, and state compensation programs supported in part by federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds. This study resulted in the final report:

- Lisa Newmark, Judy Bonderman, Barbara Smith, and Blaine Liner (2003). *The National Evaluation of State VOCA Assistance and Compensation Programs: Trends and Strategies for the Future.* Report to the National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Grant Number NIJ-98-VF-GX-0016.

For the full report or additional information on this study, contact Lisa Newmark at lnewmark@cox.net.

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- The more than 1,800 crime victims who shared their experiences and insights through the surveys and focus groups.

Summary

This document presents an integrated summary of findings and recommendations from two major national studies commissioned by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) with funds from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). It is also informed by discussions at the Evaluation Workshop in April 2003, sponsored by NIJ and facilitated by the Institute for Law and Justice, to review the individual study reports and obtain feedback from a broad range of advocates, policymakers, program administrators, service providers, and researchers.

OVC administers federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds to support a wide variety of victim services. VOCA funds are not the only source of funding for compensation and victim assistance programs, but they are a significant source of support. Since the mid-1980's, OVC has awarded more than $4.2 billion to state victim compensation programs for direct payments to victims or their beneficiaries, and to state VOCA assistance administrators to use for awards to direct service providers. This money comes from the Crime Victims Fund (CVF), which is almost entirely offender-generated revenues (criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties, and special assessments), with private donations recently authorized as well[1] – *not tax dollars*. While deposits into the CVF and allocations to states from it have grown significantly since the passage of VOCA, current trends, in which collections have decreased markedly since Fiscal Year 2000 and allocations in the last three years have had to draw on previous years' deposits, predict a drop in funding levels beginning with FY 2003 allocations. It is therefore more critical than ever to assure that scarce resources are put to the best possible use, so that the funds are used to support services that meet critical victim needs in an efficient and effective manner.

The goals of the NIJ studies, conducted by teams led by Safe Horizon in New York and the Urban Institute in Washington, DC, were to examine crime victims' needs for services; their use of formal[2] and informal help sources, including compensation and assistance services funded in part with VOCA funds; victims' satisfaction with VOCA-funded services; needs that are and are not addressed by the various help sources; and policy and operational issues for state administrators of VOCA funds and VOCA-funded direct service providers. These issues were studied through telephone surveys with all state VOCA assistance and compensation administrators; site visits to a total of 12 states and 24 communities; focus groups with crime victims; and telephone surveys of over 1,800 crime victims who had reported certain crimes to law enforcement agencies, accessed VOCA-funded direct service providers, or filed a compensation claim.

[1] Private gifts, bequests, and donations were authorized by the USA Patriot Act of 2001, to take effect in Fiscal Year 2002.

[2] Formal help sources include justice-based and non-governmental victim service programs, as well as other helping agencies that serve victims as part of their larger mission (e.g., healthcare and mental healthcare facilities, faith-based organizations, and so on). Informal help sources are the personal networks, such as family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers that victims turn to for emotional support, help with practical safety needs, and referrals to formal services.

Victims' Needs and Use of Services

These studies found that victims often have a range of service needs, including help with emotional/psychological recovery, concrete/tangible needs, and information/advocacy with the justice and other systems. Further, victims typically have more than one need for help; an average of six needs from Safe Horizon's list of 23 needs, and an average of four needs from the Urban Institute's list of 18 needs. Needs may vary by type of crime and victim demographics. While the most common needs are more often addressed by a victim service or other formal or informal help source than not addressed, needs for help with concrete/tangible and information/advocacy issues are often likely to go unaddressed. Services should be developed to better meet these types of needs and marketed to victims.

Many victims do not access formal victim service programs; only four percent of victims' needs were addressed by these types of providers, from a sample of victims who reported an assault, burglary, robbery, or domestic violence crime to law enforcement. This finding indicates the need for service expansion and/or outreach to underserved victims, since substantial numbers of victims do not get their needs addressed by other sources, either. However, victims who do receive services from a variety of VOCA-funded providers found the services to be fairly comprehensive (addressing 60 percent of their needs on average) and highly satisfactory (average score of 22 on a scale ranging from eight to 24). Clearly, investment of VOCA funds in service programs has been very worthwhile for the programs' clients. Whether they access formal victim service programs or not, victims reported turning to a variety of other types of formal help sources, including justice agencies, healthcare providers. This indicates the importance of community-level coordination among agencies who have a common pool of clients. Closer collaboration between victim service providers and justice agencies may be especially important to resolve victims' concerns about case handling practices and gaps in the provision of victim rights.

VOCA Victim Assistance

VOCA assistance funds, along with other federal and state funding streams, are administered by state agencies who make awards to direct service providers. In 2001, states across the nation made over 5,400 awards with VOCA assistance funds, for programs that provided a wide variety of services to over 3.5 million victims. Nearly three-quarters of these clients were victims of domestic violence, child abuse, or sexual assault.

A number of policy and operational issues affect the use of funds at the state and local levels. The instability of deposits into the CVF (which may vary by 200 to 300 percent from one year to the next) produces a difficult environment for state administrators and service program managers. Thus, the development of supplementary and/or more stable ways of funding programs would be very helpful. Many state administrators access the five percent allowance for administrative activities, but would like to enhance their efforts in terms of strategic planning, needs assessments, coordination, training, grantee monitoring, and development of automated systems. An increase in the allowance would help support more administrative activities but

would also decrease the amount available for subgrant awards, and so would work best when funding levels are up. Direct service providers funded by state administrators cannot currently use any VOCA funds for administrative activities, although pending OVC regulations (currently under review with the Office of General Counsel) may change this. Many providers would like support for activities such as coordination and public education/awareness, to enhance the way they serve victims. Direct service programs also confront operational issues such as staff burnout, limited usefulness of volunteers, and multiple and sometimes conflicting reporting requirements from various funders.

Crime Victim Compensation

State victim compensation programs serve victims' needs for financial assistance to ameliorate the consequences of crime, such as medical or mental health care bills, lost wages, or funeral expenses. Every state runs a program that receives about one-third of its support from federal VOCA allocations, with the rest from state funds (again, offender-generated revenues in most cases). These funds are most commonly used to pay medical/dental bills of assault victims, for a nation-wide total of $460 million in 2002. Since state funding is shrinking because of state budget difficulties and federal allocations are tied to state spending, expenditures may shrink in the coming years.

It is important to maximize funding and continue program growth as much as possible, since these programs are highly valued by their clients. A survey of compensation claimants found that they were on the whole quite satisfied with program services (an average score of 21.8 on a scale of 12 to 24). Nonetheless, about one-quarter reported problems with the timeliness of claims processing, and many (73 percent) were left with unreimbursed expenses even though the approval rate was quite high (87 percent). Program operations could be improved by continuing efforts to streamline case processing and expand benefits, and more advanced administrative activities such as strategic planning, needs assessments, outreach, coordination, monitoring referral sources, developing better communication channels with service providers and victims, and developing operational manuals and technology.

It is important for state administrators of compensation programs, VOCA assistance programs, and other federal and state sources of funding for victim service programs to coordinate their efforts. Effective coordination can fill service gaps, reduce inefficient duplication of services, and resolve conflicting policies and requirements. Collaboration can be improved through cross-training; shared development of strategic plans and funding priorities; and shared decision-making on the subgrant award selection process. Compensation programs can also coordinate with service providers on a case-by-case basis to improve client services (e.g., assistance with claim filing and verification, keeping providers notified of claim status, and so on).

Directions for Research

Future research could be very helpful to policymakers and practitioners as they continue to develop innovative ways to serve victims more efficiently and effectively. The studies and the Workshop discussion identified a number of potential topics. Additional research identifying how victims' needs and access to services vary by type of crime, racial/ethnic, and cultural/linguistic groups; how needs change over time; and groups of victims who are underserved could be helpful. It could also be very useful to learn more about how to best serve victims, including the impact of services, especially special initiatives (e.g., innovative programs funded by OVC, such as Victim Services 2000); what kind of outreach is most effective and with whom; how victim service systems should be structured and integrated; the level of unaddressed need for compensation and access barriers; and operational issues such as the impact of funding decreases and countering staff burnout.

Crime Victims' Needs and VOCA-Funded Services: Findings and Recommendations from Two National Studies

This document presents a summary of findings and recommendations from two major national studies commissioned by the National Institute of Justice with funds from the Office for Victims of Crime, both in the U.S. Department of Justice. This synthesis is also informed by discussions at the VOCA Evaluation Workshop sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and facilitated by the Institute for Law and Justice in April 2003, to review and obtain feedback from a broad range of advocates, policymakers, program administrators, service providers, and researchers.

Victims' Needs and the Growth of Victim Services

Criminal victimization can have many harmful impacts on victims, and victims often need assistance with financial, practical, and emotional burdens imposed by the crime, and in navigating the criminal justice system. A myriad of research has documented the varied consequences of criminal victimization. Skogan, Davis, and Lurigio (1990) noted that security-related concerns and having someone to talk to about feelings were the primary needs of victims, with specific needs varying by type of crime. Davis, Lurigio, and Skogan (1997) found that victimization has powerful psychological consequences and frequently prompts a need for mental health services. Child sexual abuse victims have a particularly high rate of mental health service utilization (New and Berliner, 2000). A study of victims of violent crime by the Crime Victims Institute in Texas (1999) found that the greatest impact of crime is psychological, but there are also impacts on victims' physical, financial, social, and spiritual well-being. Studies in New York (Friedman, Bischoff, Davis, and Person, 1982) and England (Maguire and Corbett, 1987) found that security and financial concerns were paramount.

Service programs to meet the needs of crime victims first took root in the 1960's and have proliferated to over 10,000 such programs today. These programs may be based in state governments; federal, state, and local criminal justice agencies such as law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, or courts; non-governmental agencies dedicated specifically to serving victims; and non-governmental agencies that serve victims as part of their wider mission (such as hospitals, mental health centers, faith-based organizations, and so on).

Services to victims have a legal foundation in a number of laws establishing the rights of crime victims, at least in regard to their interactions with, participation in, and treatment by the justice system. There is federal legislation establishing the rights of victims of federal crimes in the federal justice system and services to be provided (42 U.S.C. 10606 and 10607), but there is not yet a federal constitutional amendment guaranteeing victims' rights. States have also passed a wealth of legislation to establish legal rights and services for victims in regard to state and local justice agencies, and to provide funding for victim compensation and direct services. At this writing (October 1, 2003), every state has legislation providing rights to victims, and about two-thirds of the states have constitutional amendments guaranteeing victims' rights.

The earliest public response to the needs of crime victims addressed the financial impacts of crime. State legislatures began establishing and funding crime victims' compensation programs in state government agencies in the mid-1960's to help alleviate the financial impact of criminal victimization. Today every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam operate compensation programs using state funds from criminal offender fees (most commonly) or legislative appropriations (in a few states), as well as offender-generated federal funds from the U.S. Department of Justice. Together, these programs paid out over $460 million dollars in 2002 to victims, their survivors, and those who served them.

While financial concerns are very important to victims, their needs go well beyond financial matters. By the early 1970's, local community groups, often motivated by dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system's response to victims, began establishing programs that provided emotional support and advocacy services to survivors of violent crime, particularly domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. These programs typically address a wide range of needs by offering emergency services, needs assessments and referrals, safety planning, counseling services, help with shelter and other emergency needs, advocacy with justice and other agencies, and a host of other types of services.

The U.S. Department of Justice, through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), soon followed suit in 1974 by supporting the development of eight prosecutor-based and two law enforcement-based victim/witness programs. The LEAA contributed a total of $50 million to victim service programs during its tenure. Many of these programs were based in or worked closely with law enforcement agencies, in order to encourage victims to cooperate in the apprehension and convictions of offenders (Davis and Henley, 1990) and to improve the treatment of victims by criminal justice personnel.

Federal funding for victim assistance declined with the termination of the LEAA in the early 1980s. When the Report of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime (1982) recommended that a federal funding stream was essential to the continued viability of both assistance and compensation programs, Congress responded by passing the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) in 1984. Other federal funding streams for crime victim services have also been established by other legislation (such as the Violence Against Women Act; the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act; and the Preventive Health and Health Services Act), but VOCA funds remain by far the largest federal source of support for victim services. Programs also make extensive use of state, local, and private funding.

Federal Funding for Services Through The Victims of Crime Act of 1984

With the passage of VOCA, the federal government reasserted its role in the victim assistance field and provided significant resources for its continued expansion. VOCA established the Crime Victims' Fund (CVF), which is funded by fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties, and special assessments in federal criminal cases, and private donations, *not by appropriated tax dollars*. The vast majority of the CVF is used in two major formula grant programs that supplement the states' provision of financial assistance and direct services to crime victims[3]. The Victim Compensation Program receives up to 47.5 percent of CVF funds

[3] After set-asides to support a federal victim notification system, U.S. Attorneys' Office and FBI Victim Coordinators, child abuse investigations and prosecutions, an international victim compensation program, and a

and is allocated to the states as a 60 percent[4] payout on most state expenditures, so that about 37 percent of a state's total compensation funds are VOCA dollars. The Victim Assistance Program receives at least[5] 47.5 percent of CVF funds and is allocated according to a base amount and state populations. The remaining five percent of CVF funds is used for training and technical assistance projects sponsored by the federal agency that administers the CVF, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) within the Department of Justice.

VOCA Purposes and Funding

Statutory language and OVC guidelines direct states to use these funds for:

- Enhancing accessibility to services, particularly for priority and underserved populations.
- Encouraging victim cooperation with criminal justice officials.
- Promoting coordinated public and private assistance efforts at the community level.
- Maximizing resources to reduce the financial, physical, psychological, and emotional costs of victimization.

Since the mid-1980's, a total of over $5 billion has been deposited into the CVF, and OVC has awarded more than $4.2 billion to state victim compensation and assistance programs. Figure 1 presents year-by-year data for deposits into the CVF, awards to states for compensation and assistance programs, and other allocations authorized by VOCA.

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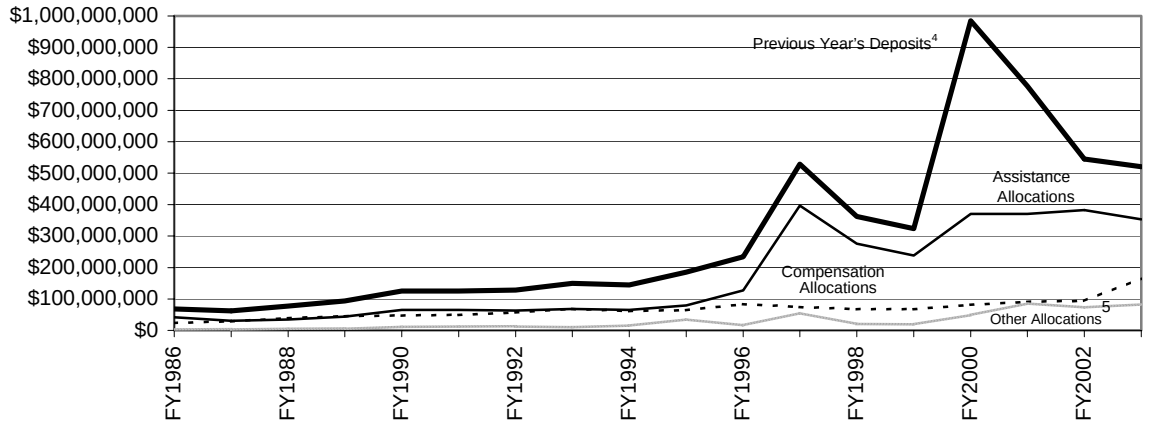
reserve fund for assisting victims of terrorism or mass violence, or for offsetting fluctuations in CVF awards to the states.

[4] The federal payout was 40 percent prior to its increase to 60 percent under the USA PATRIOT ACT of 2001. This increase took effect with FY 2003 allocations.

[5] If 60 percent of combined state compensation expenditures is less than the 47.5 percent of the CVF reserved for federal compensation allocations, the remainder of the 47.5 percent is allocated to the assistance program.

Figure 1. Crime Victims Fund Deposits and Allocations



Annual deposits into the CVF have increased from under $100 million in 1985 to over $500 million in 2002. This growth reflects strengthened efforts by U.S. Attorneys and the Antitrust Division to pursue fines from convicted offenders (OVC, 1999a). Some years, notably 1996, 1999, and 2000, were record years due to large deposits into the Fund from substantial penalties in a handful of corporate fraud, antitrust, and price-fixing cases. More recent years, however, have seen a downward trend. Deposits for FY 2003 are at this writing projected to total about $375 million, which would be the lowest level since 1998.

Compensation and assistance allocations have grown from $64.7 million in 1986 to $521 million in 2003, an eight-fold increase. The allocations grew steadily in the first ten years, increasing about 225 percent from 1986 to 1996. Compensation allocations have continued a pattern of modest growth, until the abrupt increase from FY 2002 to FY 2003 allocations due to the payout formula change. Future years could see a continued growth pattern if state funds, to which federal allocations are tied, continue to increase. However, most states are facing budget crises and many compensation programs have already seen reductions in the state funds available to them, which will bring reductions in federal allocations in the coming years.

The years from 1997 to 2000 brought wide fluctuations in annual allocations to state assistance programs.[8] Prior to FY 2000, allocations were tied directly to collections, so that "windfall" collection years were followed by sharp increases in allocations to state, and decreases in deposits produced decreases in allocations. Congress responded to this unstable

[6] The previous year's deposit is shown for each year because those are the funds available for allocations for that year. For example, $985 million was deposited in FY 1999 and was available for allocation in FY 2000.
[7] Includes or has included Children's Justice Act awards, federal earmarks, discretionary awards, terrorism reserve funds, and an international victim compensation program.
[8] State assistance programs have been most subject to fluctuations because the allocation formula provides that funds not used to meet the compensation payout are directed to assistance.

situation by imposing caps on total CVF allocations to stabilize funding levels. The allocation cap has risen from $500 million in 2000 to $600 million in 2003.

While total CVF allocations for FY 2003 exceeded FY 2002 allocations, the amount allocated to state victim assistance administrators *decreased* by about eight percent. This occurred because increases in the compensation allocation formula and in amounts devoted to earmarks and set-asides used up a relatively greater percentage of the total allocations than they had in previous years. Many program administrators, service providers, and advocates have been dissatisfied with a drop in assistance allocations when the use of caps since 2000 has produced significant levels of excess collected but unallocated funds. These unallocated funds rose to over $700 million in 2001, but are now approximately $638. These funds have been accessed to meet allocation caps for the last three years, since the allocation amounts since 2001 have exceeded the previous years' deposits. If the cap of $675 million currently being considered for FY 2004 allocations is imposed**,** and if FY 2003 deposits total about $375 million as expected, this means the $638 million in "reserve" funds would drop precipitously to around $338 million, as about $300 million would have to be used to meet FY 2004 funding allocation amounts. While it may be unpalatable to face drops in allocations while significant "reserve" funds are sitting unused, it is also very difficult to predict what levels of deposits the future years may bring and how the collections may or may not match up with allocation amounts. It may therefore be prudent to accept restricted allocations to forestall a precipitous drop in allocations in the near future.

Policy Questions and NIJ/OVC Research on Victim Services

As federal and state program administrators, along with direct service providers, face an uncertain funding future with some decreases already in effect, it becomes more critical than ever to assure that scarce resources are put to the best possible use. Funds should be used to support services that meet critical victim needs in an efficient and effective manner. Davis and Henley (1990) articulated three basic policy questions that are still relevant today: (1) Are programs reaching the people they seek to serve? (2) Are programs providing the services that victims need? (3) Are the services that programs provide effective?

With funding from OVC, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in the U.S. Department of Justice commissioned two large national studies to address these questions. This decision was one product of a strategic planning meeting OVC and NIJ held in 1997, which focused on identifying victims (Lynch, 1997), the effects of victimization (Burt, 1997), and the structure and future of victim services (Brodie, 1997 and Friedman, 1997). These studies were performed by Safe Horizon, the Vera Institute of Justice, and Westat, Inc. (Brickman, Davis, Rabinovich, Cantor, and Shapiro, 2002); and the Urban Institute and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) (Newmark, Bonderman, Smith, and Liner, 2003). The Safe Horizon study focused on identifying victims' needs and use of help sources (without regard to funding source), while the Urban Institute study was an evaluation of the efficiency, effectiveness, and coordination of VOCA-funded direct service programs and state administrative agencies. The goals and methods used in these studies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Goals and Methods of NIJ/OVC Research Studies

	Research Goals	Research Methods
Safe Horizon, Vera, and Westat Study	What are crime victims' needs? What formal and informal[9] help sources do they use, and how does the context in which services are provided relate to help-seeking? Which needs are and are not addressed[10] by the various help sources? How do needs and the use of help vary by urban/suburban/rural location, service outreach strategies, and type of crime?	Telephone surveys of 800 adult victims, youth victims, and parents of youth victims, for four selected crime types,[11] in six communities. Seven focus groups and 32 in-depth individual interviews with crime victims. Contextual analysis[12] of service resources and systems in the six communities. Communities varied on urban/suburban/rural locations, region of the nation, and the use of active[13] vs. passive[14] outreach strategies by the primary VOCA-funded provider. Service providers included justice-based and non-governmental agencies.
Urban Institute and SANDAG Evaluation	What key policy and operational issues affect the states' administration of VOCA victim assistance and compensation programs to address victims' needs most efficiently and effectively? What policy and operational issues do direct service providers supported by VOCA assistance funds face in their efforts to serve victims best? For victims who access VOCA-funded assistance or compensation programs, what are their perspectives on services received? How satisfied are they with the services?	Telephone survey with all state compensation and assistance administrators. Site visits to state administrators, advisors, and advocates in six states. Site visits to justice-based and non-governmental VOCA-funded assistance programs serving victims of a wide variety of crimes in three communities within each state, for a total of 18 providers. Telephone surveys of 452 compensation claimants in the six states. Telephone surveys with 594 VOCA-funded assistance program clients in 17 communities. Focus groups with clients of five assistance programs.[15]

[9] Formal help sources include justice-based and non-governmental victim service programs, as well as other helping agencies that serve victims as part of their larger mission (e.g., healthcare and mental healthcare facilities, faith-based organizations, and so on). Informal help sources are the personal networks, such as family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers that victims turn to for emotional support, help with practical safety needs, and referrals to formal services.

[10] In these studies, needs are said to be "addressed" or "unaddressed" rather than "met" or "unmet" because the survey items assessed whether help was received, but did not thoroughly assess the extent to which the help received satisfied the need. Given the breadth of topics of interest and the resources available for the studies, it was not possible to explore topics in as much detail as would have been desirable.

[11] The Safe Horizon survey included victims of assault, domestic violence, robbery, and burglary. **Question for Safe Horizon: why these 4, specifically why burglary? Why not sexual assault and drunk driving?**

[12] "Contextual analysis" refers to Safe Horizon's qualitative analyses of community demographics, victim populations, justice systems, and victim service resources and systems in each site.

[13] "Active" outreach is defined as individualized outreach to large numbers of victims, by letter and ideally by phone.

[14] "Passive" outreach is defined as relying primarily on media campaigns and police and prosecutor referrals to bring victims to the program for services.

[15] Urban's surveys included only victims of violent crime, because they sampled clients of VOCA-funded programs and VOCA funds are used overwhelmingly to serve violent crime victims.

Findings on Victims' Needs and Use of Help Sources

We begin the presentation of findings with information on crime impacts and victims' needs, use of formal and informal helping resources, satisfaction with VOCA-funded victim services, and service gaps. These results are based primarily on the telephone surveys conducted in the two studies, with supplementary information from contextual analysis of communities and the focus groups. The results are best interpreted with an understanding of the survey methods used and the samples obtained, so we start with more detailed information on Safe Horizon's and the Urban Institute's sampling and survey methods, and the advantages and limitations of the approaches taken (see Table 2).

Table 2. Sampling and Survey Methods of the NIJ/OVC Studies

	Urban Institute	Safe Horizon
Sampling Base	Client lists of 17 VOCA-funded direct service programs, including four justice-based and 13 non-governmental programs. Various regions of the nation are represented, along with a mix of urban, suburban, and rural sites.	Victims who reported selected crimes to law enforcement agencies in six communities: two urban, two suburban, two rural. Within each geographical type, the primary VOCA-funded provider uses active outreach strategies in one site and passive outreach strategies in the other site. Providers are both justice-based and non-governmental. Various regions of the nation are represented.
Sample Size	594 adult clients of VOCA-funded service providers.	800 primary and secondary[16] victims, including 648 adults, 93 parents of youth victims, and 59 youth victims.
Sample Demographics	82% female, 18% male 70% White; 16% African-American; 3% Asian, Native American, or Pacific Islander; 10% Hispanic	55% female, 45% male 66% White; 24% African-American; 6% Asian, Native American, or Pacific Islander; 6% Hispanic
Types of Crime	36% domestic violence 15% robbery 12% homicide 9% child abuse 9% assault (non-domestic, non-sexual) 7% sexual assault 7% drunk driving crashes 3% adult survivors of child sexual abuse	40% burglary 23% robbery 19% domestic violence 19% assault (non-domestic, non-sexual)

[16] Secondary victims are those who are impacted by the crime but did not directly experience the crimes themselves (e.g., the non-offending parent of an abused child, or the survivor of a homicide victim).

	Urban Institute	Safe Horizon
Survey Topics[17]	Help needed, using a list of 18 items including help with emotional/psychological recovery, concrete/tangible needs, and needs for information/advocacy with various systems. For each need, source of help received (VOCA-funded program, other service program, healthcare, justice agency, personal network, employee assistance program, or no help received). Satisfaction with VOCA-funded program services. Satisfaction with justice agency services.	Help needed, using a list of 23 items including help with emotional/psychological recovery, concrete/tangible needs, and needs for information/advocacy with various systems. For each need, source of help received (victim assistance program, police, prosecutor, other agency or professional, personal network, or no help received). Knowledge of victim service programs and referral sources. Health consequences and behavioral impact of the crime.
Advantages	Sampling program clients allows feedback on VOCA-funded services. Broad range of crimes included.	Sampling method includes both service recipients and non-recipients, allowing an analysis of needs and service access issues.
Limitations	Victims who do not access service programs are not included, so access barriers cannot be examined. Various crimes are not represented in sufficient numbers to make extensive comparisons across different types of crime. Survey sample may or may not represent clients in general; it was not possible to thoroughly assess potential biases due to selection processes and response rates. Members of racial/ethnic minority groups were not included in numbers proportional to their representation among crime victims in general, and detailed comparisons among various racial/ethnic groups were not possible.	Victims who do not report to law enforcement are not included, nor are a number of crime types, limiting how generalizeable the findings are to crime victims across the board. Sample sizes were not as large as planned because numbers of victims were limited in rural sites, and survey response rates were lower than expected. Members of racial/ethnic minority groups were not included in numbers proportional to their representation among crime victims in general, and detailed comparisons among various racial/ethnic groups were not possible.

The surveys, while having several commonalities, used different sampling methods because of the different goals of each study: the Urban Institute study focused on evaluating VOCA-funded services, while the Safe Horizon study was a broader-based analysis of victims' needs and use of helping resources in general. It is worth noting that the Safe Horizon survey sample includes a large proportion of burglary victims. Victims of property crimes are not often included in victim research and are typically not prioritized for services. Their inclusion here helps expand the scope of victim research as a body, and may partially explain some of the findings presented below.

[17] The surveys also addressed financial impact and victim compensation, but these findings will be reported in a later section that focuses on compensation.

Findings on Victims' Experiences

Crime Impacts and Need for Services

Because adult victims comprised all the Urban Institute respondents and over 80 percent of the Safe Horizon survey sample, and because it can be difficult to aggregate findings across the Safe Horizon adult and youth surveys because of differences in the survey items, findings from Safe Horizon's 648 adults are presented here along with findings from the Urban Institute's survey of adults. Findings on Safe Horizon's youth victims are summarized separately.

The Safe Horizon study (Brickman et al., 2002) found that crime has significant health, social, and behavioral impacts on victims. More than one-quarter (29 percent) of the respondents were injured during the crime, although less than half (48 percent) of those with injuries sought medical treatment. About one in ten (11 percent) victims sought psychological counseling, and a number took medication for depression or anxiety. Nearly half the respondents had changed their daily routine in some way or instituted other safety measures to avoid re-victimization. Almost one in five (18 percent) reported problems with friends or family, and eight percent said they used alcohol or drugs more than before the crime.

The consequences of crime may or may not produce the need for assistance from others, whether formal victim assistance or other formal help sources, or informal sources such as personal networks (family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and so on). Some victims may be able to address at least some needs on their own, but some victims and some needs may require outside assistance.

Using similar lists of possible needs, both studies found that victims tend to have multiple needs for assistance and to need help with various types of needs, including help with emotional/psychological recovery, concrete/tangible needs, and needs for information/advocacy with various systems. Table 3 describes how each category of needs was measured in each of the surveys, showing a number of similarities and some differences.

Table 3. Survey Measures of Three Categories of Needs

	Urban Institute	Safe Horizon
Emotional, psychological recovery	Emotional support, someone to listen/talk to Support group with other victims Professional therapy or counseling	Listen to you talk when upset
Information or advocacy with systems	Information, help with police or court case Information, help with civil court case Help with financial assistance (e.g., welfare, unemployment)	Understand how case is handled Get info. re case from police/court Get order of protection Escort or help you in court Get advice from a lawyer Deal with other agencies (e.g., public assistance, social security)

	Urban Institute	Safe Horizon
Concrete or tangible needs	Service needs assessment/referrals Safety planning and safety steps (e.g., change locks) Household chores, shopping, transportation Emergency housing, food, clothes Transitional or permanent housing Child-related help (e.g., childcare) Job-related issues Medical exams or treatment Help with insurance Assistance with creditors, debts Translation or interpretation services Own or others' use of alcohol/drugs	Get info. to avoid revictimization Install locks/improve security Go to doctor, police, or court Replace door/lock Household work/shopping Replace other property Care of children or aged parents Replace ID Repair damaged property Get time off to take care of things Find a temporary place to stay File insurance claims Find home in a safer area Learn new job skills Find interpreters/translators Make modifications to home

Using a list of 18 possible needs, the Urban Institute study found that victims have an average of four different types of needs, with only six percent of victims reporting no service needs. With a list of 23 possible needs, Safe Horizon found an average of six different types of needs. The most common needs from each survey are presented in Figures 2 and 3. These needs were reported by anywhere from one-quarter to three-quarters of the sample, for each study. They span the three major categories of needs, in both studies.

Figure 2. Urban Institute Findings on Most Common Needs for Help

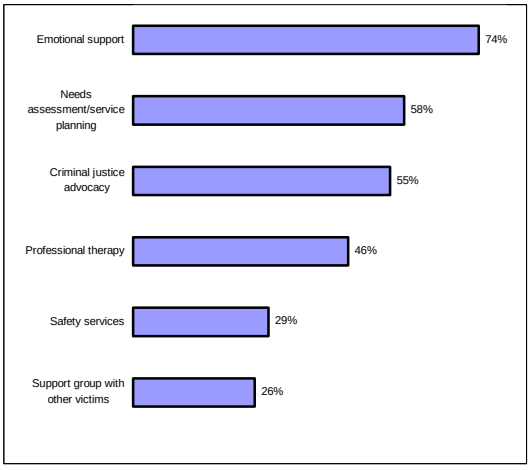
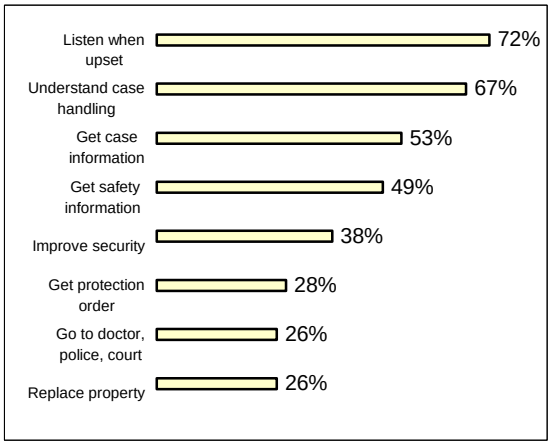


Figure 3. Safe Horizon Findings on Most Common Needs for Help



Brickman et al. (2002) examined how several factors are related to victims' needs. The total number of needs was significantly related to *type of crime*: domestic violence victims had an average of 8.0 needs, compared with victims of robbery (5.5 needs on average), assault (5.4 needs), and burglary (5.3 needs) [$F(3, 644) = 12.7$, $p < .001$]. The number of needs was also

related to *victims' personal characteristics*: for crimes other than domestic violence (in which the vast majority of victims are women), women reported having more needs than men (5.8 needs for women vs. 5.0 needs for men) [t (514) = -2.35, p < .005]. White victims have fewer needs than non-White[18] victims (5.3 for Whites compared with 7.1 for non-Whites); the racial difference was particularly strong in *urban* sites. Finally, the Safe Horizon study found that *passive vs. active outreach strategy*[19] by the primary VOCA-funded service provider in the community was related to the number of needs victims reported: victims at sites in which the primary provider used active outreach reported more needs than victims in passive-outreach sites. Since victims at active outreach sites were more likely to have had contact with the service program (to be discussed in more detail below), it is possible that these programs were more effective at identifying and serving needier victims, or at helping victims to identify their needs more thoroughly.

Newmark et al. (2003) also examined the factors associated with numbers of needs, finding some similar but also some different results. Like the Safe Horizon study, the Urban Institute study found that victims of *domestic violence*, along with victims of sexual assault and drunk driving crashes (two crime categories not included in the Safe Horizon study), had more needs than victims of other crime types [b = .31, t = 3.7, p < .001]. The Urban Institute study also found that victims and survivors of crimes involving a *weapon* reported more needs [b = 1.3, t = 4.7, p < .001]; this variable was not examined in Safe Horizon analyses. Unlike the Safe Horizon findings, the Urban Institute did not find that victims' sex or race was associated with the total number of needs.

Use of Formal and Informal Help Sources to Address Needs

Both surveys assess the extent to which victims access formal victim service programs and other formal and informal providers to address their various needs for assistance. In addition, the Safe Horizon survey provides estimates of the proportion of victims who reported crimes to law enforcement and who also access victim service programs (whereas the Urban Institute sample is entirely service recipients). For each service need reported by a survey respondent, the Safe Horizon study asked whether services to address that need were provided by police; the prosecutor's office; a victim assistance program; another agency or professional; or an informal support network including friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors. Because of the way the questions are structured, this survey also assesses unaddressed needs. The Urban Institute survey asked whether services to address reported needs were provided by the VOCA-funded program that had served the victim; another victim or social service provider; a healthcare provider; a justice system agency; family, friends, or other personal supports; an employee assistance program; or by no one (to assess unaddressed needs).

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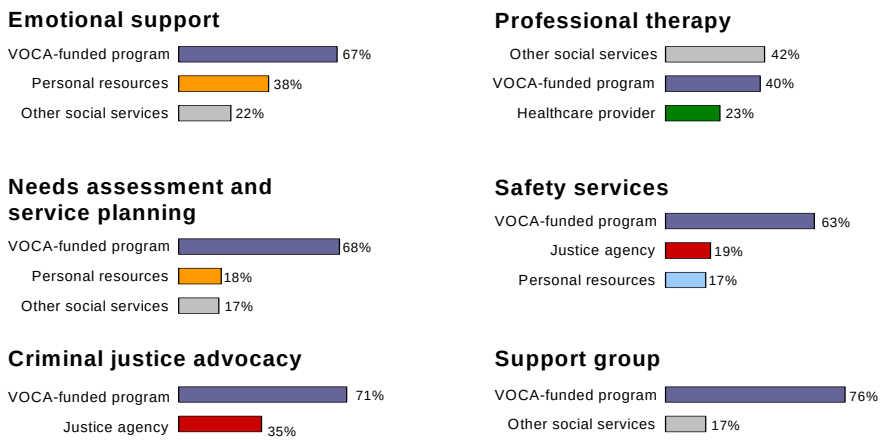
[18] It was necessary to aggregate across non-White racial/ethnic categories because, while several non-White categories are represented, there are not sufficient numbers of victims in each category to permit valid statistical comparisons without aggregating.

[19] A passive outreach strategy is defined as relying on general public education and referrals from other agencies to reach clients, whereas an active outreach strategy is defined as significant efforts to identify victims and reach out to them directly through letters or phone calls by the service provider.

The Urban Institute study found that, for victims who access VOCA-funded service programs, that provider is the most common source of help for the most common needs. The VOCA programs address 60 percent of victims' reported needs, on average, and all needs for 26 percent of the victims. Victims received more comprehensive services from non-governmental VOCA-funded programs with which they had a longer service relationship [b = .14, t = 2.0, p < .05 for program type; b = .30, t = 4.7, p < .001 for length of service relationship]. However, even clients of VOCA-funded programs still draw on other resources to address their needs. These findings indicate that, while VOCA-funded services are fairly comprehensive in addressing many of their clients' needs, they do not operate in a vacuum. See Figure 4 for survey findings on the sources that most frequently address victims' most common needs.[20]

Figure 4. Urban Institute Findings on Most Frequent Sources of Help for Most Common Needs



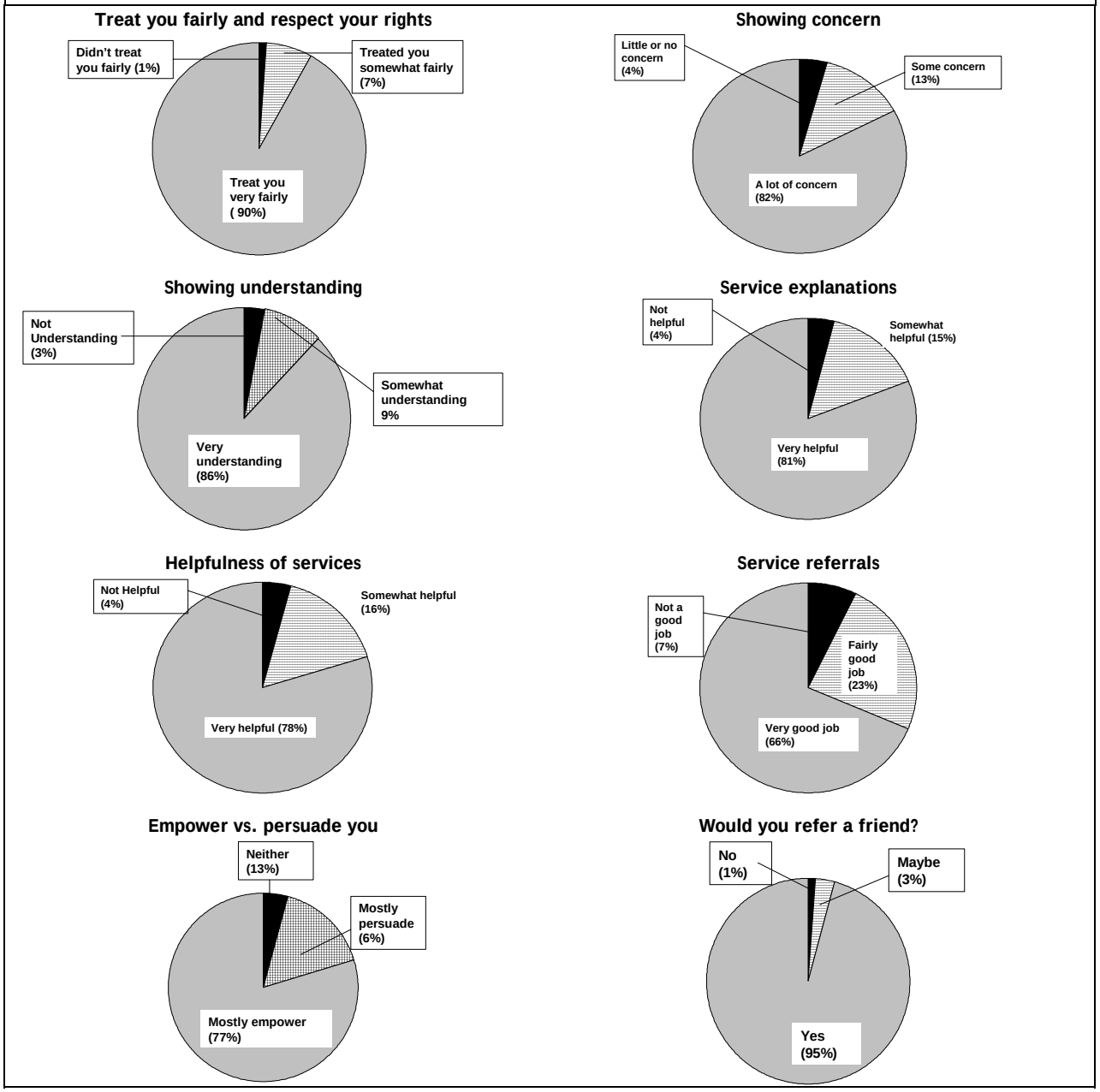
Further, the Urban Institute survey found that victims who access VOCA-funded service programs are on the whole highly satisfied with the program and the services they received. A series of eight items asked clients' opinions on how well the VOCA-funded program provided information on their services; service referrals; understanding of the victimization experience; showing concern; treating the victim fairly and respecting his or her rights; empowering the victim to make his or her own choices; services that were helpful; and a positive experience that the victim would recommend to a friend. See Figure 5 for the scores on each of these measures.

These items were used to form an overall scale of clients satisfaction,[21] in which scores could range from eight (lowest rating) to 24 (highest rating). While the hypothetical midpoint of

[20] The percentages show how many victims who had each type of need received help for this need from each source.
[21] The scale has a Cronbach's alpha of .84, showing strong internal consistency among the component items. In other words, this is a cohesive scale that measures a single construct.

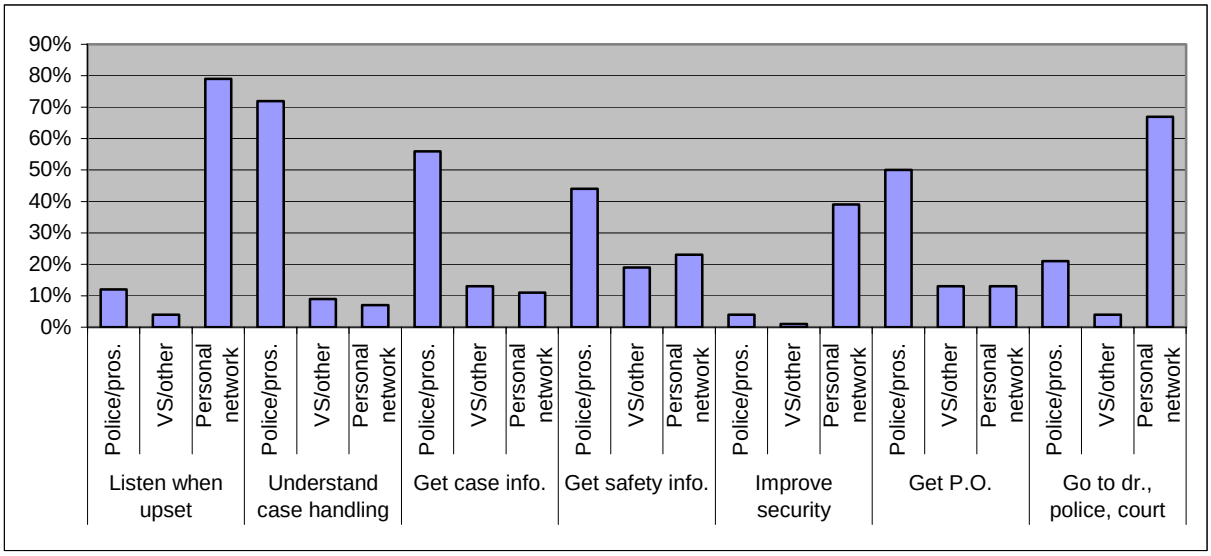
this scale is 16, the actual midpoint for clients' ratings was 23, and the statistical average was 22. Fewer than ten percent of victims' scale scores fell below the scale's midpoint of 16. This provides a very strong and unified measure of VOCA-funded program clients' satisfaction with the services they received from these providers. Further analyses of scale scores showed that the most satisfied clients are those who receive services for a longer period of time [b = .30, t = 3.3, p < .001]; have all needs addressed by the VOCA-funded provider or other help source [b = 2.2, t = 6.6, p < .001]; and fall into the older age groups [b = .47, t = 3.2, p < .002].

Figure 5. Clients' Satisfaction with VOCA-Funded Programs and Services, from Urban Institute Survey



The Safe Horizon survey also examined what service resources victims call on to address their needs, in a sample of victims who reported crimes to law enforcement. This study found that victims' most common needs were *much less likely* to be addressed by victim service providers than by justice agencies or personal support networks. The Safe Horizon survey did not distinguish between VOCA-funded and non-VOCA-funded providers, but referred to victim service programs in general. These providers addressed an average of only four percent of victims' needs, and were much less likely to address the most frequent needs (see Figure 3) than justice agencies or personal support networks. See Figure 6 for data from victims who had each need, and for whom the need was addressed.

Figure 6. Safe Horizon Findings on Most Frequent Sources of Help for Most Common Needs



Why were so few of the victims' needs addressed by victim service and allied providers in the Safe Horizon sample, and what can be done to increase service utilization? Additional survey data along with findings from the authors' contextual analysis of the research sites, insights from focus groups, and consideration of the crime types included in the survey may provide some answers.

Survey data addressing knowledge of victim service programs indicate that many victims were not even aware of service resources in their communities. Only half (51 percent) of the victims in active outreach sites even knew about victim service availability, and even fewer victims – 23 percent – knew about services in passive outreach sites. It seems quite likely, then, that victim service programs were not a significant help resource for many victims because many victims did not even become aware of these programs, let alone establish a service relationship with them.

Even some victims who are aware of service programs may not receive services from them. This might happen when resources are scarce and providers must prioritize whom to serve. Burglary victims, for example – who make up 40 percent of the survey sample and the largest single crime type – may not have access to non-governmental providers to the same extent that victims of domestic violence and certain other crime types may. Service providers based in law enforcement and prosecution agencies may not be able to provide burglary victims with the same level of services devoted to victims of violent crime, since these providers are often under-resourced and may prioritize violent crime victims for the scarce resources available (as reported in focus group discussions).

In other cases, barriers may arise from victims' perceptions or circumstances. Victims may choose not to receive services because, as Safe Horizon found from victim focus groups, they may perceive the services as intended for other types of victims, victims of more "serious" crimes, not for them. Or they may believe service eligibility is restricted to indigent individuals. A number of barriers can arise for domestic violence victims, including fear of retaliation by the abuser and lack of protection from the system, worries about living in a shelter and uprooting their children, anxieties about the impact of intervention on the family's finances, the isolation and lack of confidentiality in rural or small-town or tribal communities, and fear of negative legal implications for immigrant victims.

An active outreach strategy can help improve victims' access to these programs to address their needs. Victims in communities served by programs using active outreach strategies were more likely to be contacted directly by the providers (28 percent vs. 12 percent of victims in passive outreach sites), and were more likely to be referred to programs by police (19 percent vs. 13 percent) and prosecutors (15 percent vs. 8 percent). Focus group discussions with victims indicate that phone calls were more memorable than letters as an outreach tool. Further, providers in active outreach sites address significantly more of victims' needs than providers in passive outreach sites (an average of 18 percent of needs vs. four percent).

Underserved Victims and Unaddressed Needs

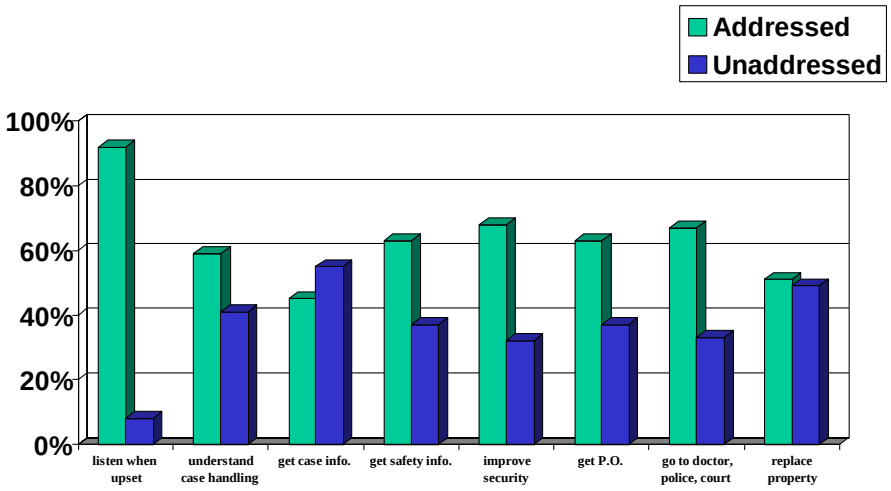
The findings that many victims are not served and some needs of even served victims are not addressed by victim service programs would not be particularly troubling if all victims needing help were able to turn to other sources for help with all their needs. However, both studies identified needs that often go unaddressed by *any* helping resource, leaving victims to resolve crime-related problems on their own. Some victims may be more likely to find themselves in this situation than others.

The Urban Institute survey found that 15 percent of victims who accessed VOCA-funded programs still had at least one need that was not addressed by *any* source of help. The most common types of needs that went unaddressed were needs for criminal justice advocacy or information, financial or creditor assistance, and service needs assessments and referrals.

Victims with any unaddressed needs were more likely to be members of racial/ethnic minority groups than victims whose needs were all addressed [X^2 (1) = 4.2, $p < .04$].

The Safe Horizon study found that victims' most common needs are more often addressed by some source than not addressed at all, with the exception of the need for information on the criminal case. See Figure 7 for the percentages of victims whose needs were addressed and unaddressed, for victims who had each of the most common types of needs.

Figure 7. Percentages of Victims with Addressed and Unaddressed Needs, from the Safe Horizon Survey



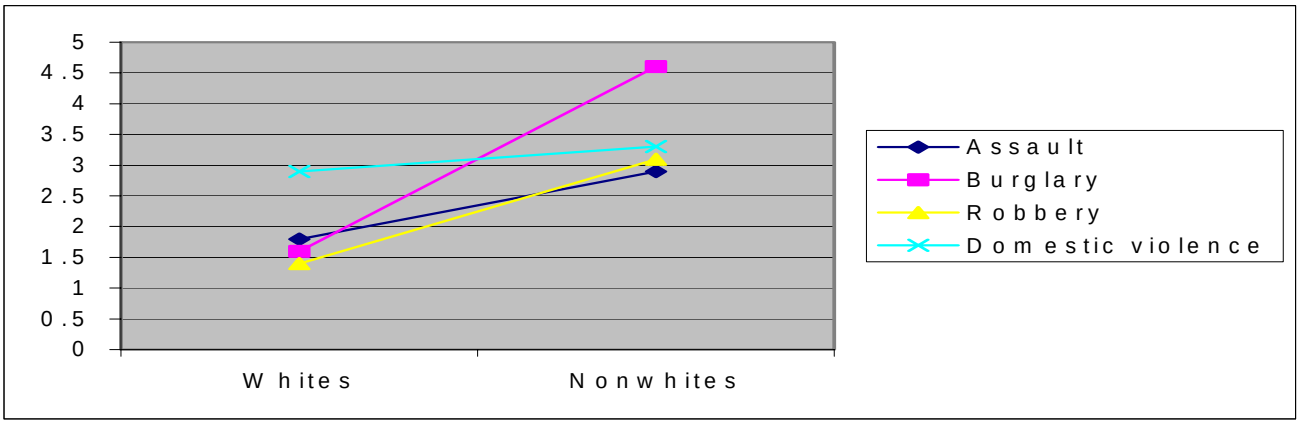
Even though more victims had the most common needs addressed than went without assistance (with the exception of the need for information on the criminal case, which was more often unaddressed than addressed), there are still significant numbers of victims going without needed help. The proportion of victims who did not receive help for each need ranges from about one-third to just over one-half, with the exception of the need for someone to listen to the victim when he or she is upset (nearly all victims had access to this resource, which was most often personal social networks such as friends and family members).

Safe Horizon did a series of analyses to identify who is most likely to have unaddressed needs, and found that race matters, especially in urban communities and among burglary victims. Members of non-White racial/ethnic groups have more unaddressed needs than Whites [an average of 3.6 unaddressed needs for non-Whites vs. 1.8 for Whites; $t (303) = 5.1$, $p < .001$]. These needs included tangible/concrete assistance and information/advocacy, but racial/ethnic differences were not found for emotional support. The difference between Whites' and non-Whites' unaddressed needs was particularly striking in urban sites, where Whites reported an average of 1.8 unaddressed needs compared with non-Whites' average of 4.1. There was also a significant interaction between race and type of crime [$F (3, 632) = 3.4$, $p < .05$]. That is, non-

White burglary victims had significantly more unaddressed needs than White victims and than non-White victims of other crimes. See Figure 8 for a presentation of these data.

Additional analyses found no differences in number of unaddressed needs by victims' gender (for crimes other than domestic violence), crime type (no difference for crime type *per se* – that is, not in conjunction with victims' race), and outreach strategy used by the primary VOCA-funded provider in the community. As discussed previously, these factors were associated with differences in the total number of needs: victims of domestic violence, female victims (excluding domestic violence), and victims in active outreach sites reported a greater number of service needs. Since they have no more unaddressed needs than victims of other types of crime, male victims, and victims in passive outreach sites, this means they are likely to have more of their needs addressed.

Figure 8. The Relationship Between Race/Ethnicity and Type of Crime in Number of Unaddressed Needs, from Safe Horizon Survey



Findings on Youth Victims

The Safe Horizon study also included surveys regarding 93 crimes against youths (ages 13 to 17). Surveys were conducted with 93 parents of youth victims, and with 59 of the youth with the parent's consent; analyses of both surveys are presented. These surveys shed some light on the unique needs and help sources used by youth victims.

The youth victims were primarily male (80 percent); White (59 percent) or African-American (32 percent); victims of robbery (50 percent), assault (42 percent), or burglary (eight percent). Over one-third (36 percent) reported the offender used a weapon during the crime, and a similar number (37 percent) were physically injured. For many youth victims, the crime had financial impacts, caused them to miss school and/or not perform as well, caused them to change their daily routines to avoid re-victimization, and caused problems getting along with friends and family.

Youths' most common needs were for help reporting the crime to police (81 percent of youths); having someone listen to them talk when they were upset (72 percent); getting

information on how their case would be handled by the police or courts (72 percent); being protected from the offender (40 percent); and replacing property (36 percent). These needs were more often addressed than not, with family and friends being the most common source of help. Victim assistance programs were not often accessed to help youth victims; over half the parents did not even know such programs existed, and about half felt such help was not necessary or appropriate. However, there were still some significant areas of unaddressed need. Two areas of need in which between one-third and one-half of victims needed did not receive help were being protected from the offender and understanding case handling. These would seem to be areas in which non-governmental and justice-based service providers could be effective.

Victims' Experiences with the Justice System and Victim Rights

Although victim needs and services were the primary focus of these studies, the Urban Institute survey included a few questions about victims' experiences with law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, and criminal case processing and outcomes. Both sets of researchers also discussed justice system issues in their focus groups with victims. These data provide some insights on how well the justice system functions from the victims' perspective.

The Urban Institute survey respondents reported a very consistent pattern of experiences with justice system agencies. While not all victims were involved with all agencies, for victims who were involved with each type of justice agency (law enforcement, prosecution, or courts), about half rated the agency's handling of the case, their own role in the case, and their satisfaction with case outcomes very highly (said they were "very satisfied"). Another quarter said they were "somewhat satisfied" with agencies' case handling, their own role, and case outcomes. Satisfaction was higher for clients of justice-based victim service providers and for victims who had no unaddressed service needs, indicating that the frequently-unaddressed need for case information may have been satisfied by these providers.

However, about one-fifth were "not satisfied" in their experiences with the justice system agencies. Sources of dissatisfaction with case outcomes were primarily insufficiently severe charges or punishment for the offender, unhappiness that one or more offenders were not held accountable, or a desire for offenders to pay restitution, admit guilt, or receive therapy. Other victims reported problems with how agencies handled the case (centering around failure to protect victims, cultural misunderstandings, system inefficiencies, and failure to respond to victims' needs). Some victims also reported that their rights, needs, or input as victims were ignored.

Focus group participants elaborated on ways in which the justice system does not serve victims well. Many victims felt that system personnel did not take the crimes seriously or afford them their rights as victims to stay informed and choose to participate in the criminal case. Some complained of slow response time and failure to take action by law enforcement officers; overly lenient plea bargaining practices by prosecutors, along with failure to take the victims' concerns and wishes into account; inefficient court operations; and inadequate punishments imposed by judges. Domestic violence victims seemed particularly dissatisfied with justice system services

and interactions in most communities. However, Safe Horizon's community contextual analysis found that domestic violence victims are better served by justice agencies in communities with strong collaboration between justice systems and non-governmental advocates and service providers (as in Malheur County, Oregon).

Recommendations from Findings on Victims' Perspectives

These studies emphasized somewhat different goals, although their research methods were similar: the Safe Horizon study focused on victims' needs and use of help sources, while the Urban Institute study focused on the use of and results achieved with VOCA funds. Synthesizing across the two studies' major findings, a number of recommendations for future improvements in the provision of victim services suggest themselves.

- *Service providers must be prepared to help victims with multiple and wide-ranging needs, including emotional/psychological recovery, assistance with concrete/tangible needs, and needs for information/advocacy with the justice and other systems.* Some victims may have more service needs than others, including victims of particular crimes (such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and drunk driving crashes) and crimes involving weapons; female victims; non-White victims; and urban residents. Programs that serve these victims may need to provide especially broad-ranging services.

- *Assistance with concrete/tangible needs and criminal justice system advocacy/information may be in particular need of development, as these needs more often go unaddressed than needs for emotional/psychological support.* This may mean investing additional resources into programs that already provide such services, so they can serve more victims, or developing new types of services to more fully address clients' needs. One promising practice many state compensation programs are using involves providing direct service programs with funds to meet victims' immediate concrete needs (lock repairs, emergency housing, and so on), since community programs can respond to these needs more quickly and with fewer requirements than state compensation programs. This may be especially true for domestic violence victims, who reported problems addressing safety, need-based low-cost legal services, and housing needs. Both studies found that help with the justice system (advocacy and information) was one of the most frequently unaddressed need, which indicates that more resources may need to be channeled toward this type of service, even though this is the third-most prevalent type of service supported by VOCA funds (to be presented in Figure 9).

- *VOCA-funded direct service programs should be nurtured, as they provide reasonably comprehensive services that victims who access them find very satisfactory.* Investment of VOCA funds in service programs has clearly been very worthwhile and should be expanded.

- *Many victims do not access victim service programs; appropriate services and outreach efforts (particularly active outreach such as personal phone calls) should be expanded.* Active outreach can be useful in informing more victims about the program's existence, who it serves, and what services it provides. Programs will need additional support to respond to the increased caseload this should bring. Service expansion may mean expanding the scope of current programs and/or developing new programs to reach underserved groups. Some groups of victims may be particularly underserved, including non-White victims, especially non-White urban victims and non-White victims of specific crimes such as burglary. Services and outreach should be developed in culturally appropriate ways for specific victim groups, tailored to their unique needs.

- *Many victims access multiple sources of help, including victim service programs, many other types of providers, and informal personal networks, so community-level coordination is critical.* Clearly, VOCA-funded providers need to coordinate, and often do coordinate, with other providers in the community, to avoid gaps or duplication of services to shared clients. This coordination should reach across traditional boundaries of "victim service providers" and include those working in other fields as well, such as the justice system and healthcare. Coordination is the responsibility of everyone who serves victims. Coordination activities can take various forms, such as cross-training, developing coordinated policies or procedures, developing referral procedures and resources (such as palm cards), or multidisciplinary task forces. Issues arising from conflicting missions and victim confidentiality are likely to arise and must be resolved for coordination efforts to move forward.

- *Closer coordination between victim advocates/service providers and the justice system may be especially important, since victims (especially victims of domestic violence) voiced a number of concerns about case handling practices and gaps in provision of victims rights.* Efforts by victim service programs to strengthen the justice system's response to offenders, primarily in the form of more severe punishment, would fulfill a major unmet service need of many victims and address a primary source of victims' dissatisfaction with the justice system. These efforts may take the form of system advocacy, in which advocates work to strengthen sentencing laws across the board. Or they may do case advocacy by working with prosecutors to represent the victim's experiences and input in an effective way that the court will heed (such as victim impact statements). Another frequent complaint was the lack of information given victims on case events and progress, and the lack of opportunity to have input into case decisions. It would help make the justice system more responsive to victims' concerns if the resources for implementing and enforcing victims' rights, including case information and notification, were bolstered.

State and Local Administration of VOCA Assistance Awards

Direct victim service providers rely on a number of federal, state, local, and private funders. While VOCA is by no means the only funding stream, it is one of the largest and many providers rely on VOCA to a significant extent. These funds make their way into the hands of direct service programs through state VOCA assistance administrators, who receive allocations from OVC and award grants to providers. This section explores a number of policy and operational issues for both state administrators and direct providers, offering findings and recommendations from the Urban Institute's site visits and Safe Horizon's contextual analyses of communities.

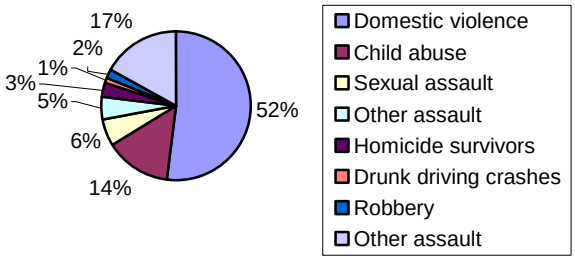
OVC issues guidelines governing the administration of funds at the state level and the use of funds by local subgrantees. As specified in 1997 guidelines, state programs must award at least ten percent of funds for domestic violence victims, ten percent for sexual assault victims, ten percent for child abuse victims, and ten percent for underserved populations, with the remainder at the administrators' discretion. State programs have four years to obligate federal allocations, and may use up to five percent for administrative activities and one percent for training activities (with the rest to be distributed to community-level agencies). OVC guidelines specify that VOCA funds awarded to community-level service providers can support public non-federal and private non-profit organizations that provide a 20 percent match, do not charge victims for services, and use volunteers. VOCA funds can only be used to support direct services (although this requirement may be relaxed with new regulations currently under consideration), and providers must assist clients with compensation.

The Use of VOCA Assistance Funds

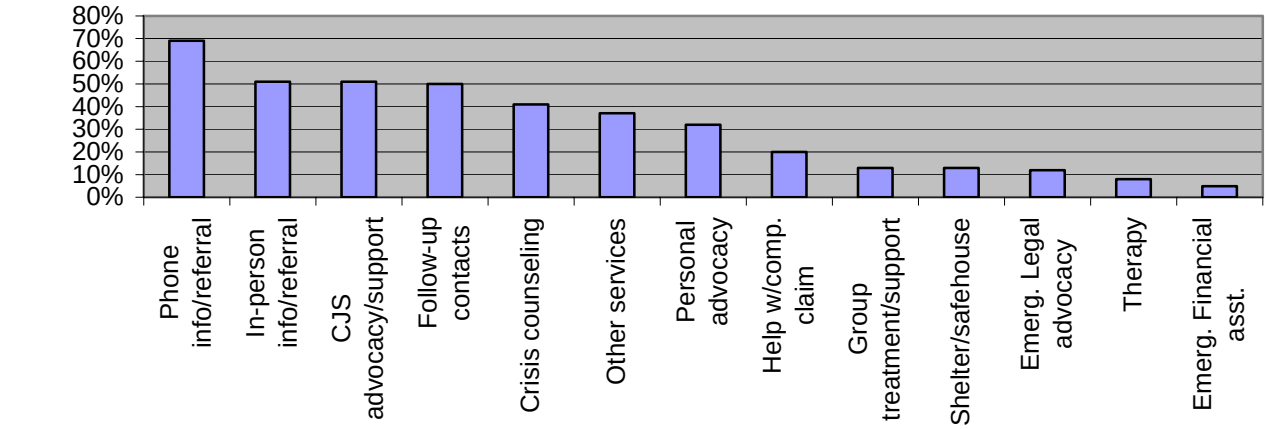
In 2002 the states received an average of $6.8 million each, with a midpoint of $4.8 million. Allocations are based on population so state-by-state figures vary considerably; the largest allocation was California's $42.7 million. In 2001 over 5,400 awards were made with VOCA assistance funds, and over 3.5 million victims were served by VOCA-funded programs. Figure 9 presents cross-state averages on the use of funds (these statistics vary widely from state to state).

Figure 9: Types of Victims Served and Services Provided with VOCA Assistance Funds, 2001

Types of Victims Served



Types of Services Provided (Percent of Victims Receiving Each Type)



Policy and Program Issues

In 1997 OVC held regional meetings of state VOCA assistance administrators to discuss critical issues in program administration and share innovative funding strategies and programs. These meetings were spurred by the enormous increase in allocations that year, and by new OVC guidelines allowing the four-year obligation period. The issues identified as critical included funding fluctuations and long-range planning; needs and service assessments; use of administrative funds; outreach to underserved victims; outreach to providers; coordination of federal funding streams and reporting requirements; use of advisory boards; implementing victims' rights legislation; training efforts; statewide toll-free numbers for victims; and use of technology. OVC's New Directions (1998) expanded on these issues with recommendations to develop services for special situations (such as mass crisis events) and special victims (such as the disabled). Other recommendations include assisting victims in interacting with the media, public awareness activities, development of program standards, staff training and certification, and program evaluation.

These earlier efforts helped to provide a framework from which Urban Institute researchers approached the task of describing and evaluating how well state grant administration and local

service providers function to serve victims, and to offer recommendations for future developments. The following sections integrate the findings, conclusions, and recommendations from Urban's national survey of all state VOCA assistance administrators in 1999, and two subsequent rounds of site visits for in-depth analyses of assistance in six states through interviews with program administrators and staff, members of oversight bodies, advocacy groups, and direct service providers. Findings from Safe Horizon's contextual analyses of six communities are also integrated. The presentation begins with summary information on the states, VOCA-funded programs, and communities that hosted the studies. The findings and recommendations are then organized around major themes of program policies and operations.

Urban Institute and Safe Horizon Research Sites

Tables 4 and 5 provide brief summary information on the Urban Institute research sites. The six states were chosen to bring geographic diversity to the sample and to represent various configurations of program administration factors. The 18 community-level sites were chosen to represent programs serving victims of various types of crimes; justice-based and non-governmental programs; and urban, suburban, and rural areas. Table 6 briefly describes the communities that participated in Safe Horizon's study. **Why these 6 sites?**

Table 4. State VOCA Assistance Program Profiles for Urban Institute Site Visit States

State	Administrative Agency	2002 VOCA Allocation	Number of Subgrants Awarded	Number of Victims Served	Percent of Victims by Type of Crime
California	Governor's Office	$42,709,000	300	283,030	DV 58%; SA 10%; CA 9%
Idaho	Council on DV and Victim Asst.	$2,112,000	24	8,856	DV 50%; SA 4%; CA 15%
Pennsylvania	Comm. on Crime and Delinquency	$15,804,000	128	131,276	DV 51%; SA 7%; CA 9%
South Carolina	Dept. of Public Safety	$5,500,000	110	64,924	DV 26%; SA 2%; CA 5%
Vermont	Center for Crime Victim Services	$1,259,000	26	10,101	DV 69%; SA 9%; CA 9%
Wisconsin	Dept. of Justice	$7,184,000	74	37, 137	DV 42%; SA 7%; CA 16%

DV=domestic violence; SA=sexual assault; CA=child abuse (OVC priority categories, plus "underserved" as defined by each state)

Table 5. VOCA-Funded Program Profiles for Urban Institute Site Visit Programs			
Program Name	**Location**	**Administration**	**Victims Served**
Community Service Programs	Orange, CA	Private non-profit	Victims of all crimes
Indian Health Council	Pauma Valley, CA	Private non-profit	Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
Su Casa Family Crisis and Support Center	Artesia, CA	Private non-profit	Victims of domestic violence
Victim Impact Project	Kootenai County, ID	Court-based	Adult victims of juvenile property crimes with court cases
SANE Solutions	Boise and Canyon Co., ID	Private non-profit	Child sexual abuse victims and adult survivors
Women's and Children's Alliance	Boise, ID	Private non-profit	Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
Anti-Violence Partnership	Philadelphia, PA	Private non-profit	Survivors of homicide
Comprehensive Victim Center	West Chester, PA	Private non-profit	Victims of all crimes
Senior Victim Services	Media, PA	Private non-profit	Senior victims of all crimes
Mothers Against Drunk Driving	Columbia, SC	Private non-profit	Victims of drunk driving crashes
Sheriff's Office Victim Assistance Program	Newberry Co., SC	Law enforcement-based	Victims of all crimes reported to the Sheriff's Office
Rape Crisis Council	Pickens, SC	Private non-profit	Adult and child victims of sexual assault
St. Albans Abuse and Rape Crisis Center	Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, VT	Private non-profit	Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
State's Attorney's Office, Victim Advocate Program	Windsor Co., VT	Prosecution-based	Victims of all crimes prosecuted by the State's Attorney's Office
Women Helping Battered Women	Chittenden, VT	Private non-profit	Victims of domestic violence
Counseling Center, Hand-in-Hand Program	Milwaukee, WI	Private non-profit	Child victims of sexual abuse or survival sex
Pathways of Courage	Kenosha Co., WI	Private non-profit	Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
District Attorney's Office, Victim Asst. Program	Racine, WI	Prosecution-based	Victims of violent felonies prosecuted by the District Attorney's Office

Table 6. Community Profiles for Safe Horizon Research Sites			
Community	**Type of Location**	**Outreach Strategy**	**Primary VOCA-Funded Provider**
Hamilton Co., OH (Cincinnati)	Urban	Active	*Talbert House Victim Services:* Private non-profit that serves all crime victims
King Co., WA (Seattle)	Urban	Passive	*Seattle Victim Assistance Network:* Based in Seattle Police Dept., it serves mostly violent felony victims plus all domestic violence victims
Johnson Co., KS (Kansas City suburb)	Suburban	Active	*District Attorney's Victim Assistance Unit:* Serves victims of felonies and all domestic violence crimes with an arrest

Community	Type of Location	Outreach Strategy	Primary VOCA-Funded Provider
Westchester Co., NY (N.Y.C. suburb)	Suburban	Passive	*Victim Assistance Services:* Private non-profit that serves all victims
Malheur Co., OR (eastern OR)	Rural	Active	*Victim/Witness Assistance Program:* Based in the District Attorney's Office, it serves all victims where an arrest is made
Pearl River Co., MS (southern MS)	Rural	Passive	*Pearl River Basin Victim Assistance Network:* Based in the District Attorney's Office, it serves felony victims where an arrest is made

Findings on State Program Management

According to Urban's 1999 survey, assistance administrators tend to make fairly full use of the five percent *administrative allowance*, with two-thirds of state programs reporting at least some use and the others reporting full use. These funds have supported staffing, training, subgrantee monitoring, and the purchase of office equipment, which may be described as "basic" administrative activities. More "advanced" activities, such as strategic planning, improved coordination, and automation, were less commonly reported. Many administrators expressed the need for greater support for administrative activities.

This survey of state administrators also found that only half had a formal *strategic plan* to identify priorities and future developments in subgrant funding. Continuation awards are the norm. While it was the original intent of VOCA legislation to provide core funding to stabilize services, and this is very important, it may be difficult to expand into new areas when funds are committed to current subgrantees to continue ongoing work. Administrators may also be reluctant to undertake new projects given the uncertainties of future funding availability. Since there is a considerable emphasis on continuation funding of current subgrantees, it is not surprising that state administrators' *outreach* to potential subgrantees to publicize funding availability tended to emphasize current subgrantees (although there were exceptions, with some site visit states describing proactive efforts to recruit and assist new applicants).

Needs assessments can be useful to identify gaps in services and plan priorities. Urban found that most states use a specific process for identifying needs, usually informal processes such as consulting with those working in the field. Formal systematic methods are not without drawbacks, but can be more inclusive than methods that rely on people already working in the area. We found in site visits that needs assessments may be conducted at the local level by community-based groups, or in a more centralized fashion through a state-wide process.

States use various methods for making *subgrant award decisions*, and each procedure has its advantages and drawbacks. Some states concentrate the decision-making power in the administrative agency, others use a state-level multidisciplinary board, and others use a decentralized system with decision-making power effectively evolved to local-level bodies across the state. Each is subject to at least perceived political pressures. Service providers that belong to a strong network, such as domestic violence coalitions, are often thought to have the advantage in obtaining funding because of the strength and the connections of the coalition.

There is no single model that works best in all circumstances, and any method of distributing funding will be subject to criticism because of the sensitive nature of this function.

As with needs assessment procedures, *monitoring* processes are largely informal and constrained to review of progress reports (unless problems are noted, then more active monitoring such as site visits may occur). Monitoring is very important to ensure that funds are put to best use, particularly in an atmosphere of largely continuation funding (to make sure funds do not get automatically awarded year after year to a poorly performing agency). Some states are stepping up monitoring procedures and many providers welcome these efforts. However, few proactive efforts by state administrators to monitor and enforce providers' compliance with requirements to assist victims with compensation were observed. As monitoring efforts are enhanced, this would be an important area to include.

One percent of the VOCA allocation can be used for *training*, with a 20 percent match (these restrictions may be expanded under pending new regulations). Many state administrators access these funds to provide training to subgrantees, but some have not made use of them because state and other federal (such as STOP VAWA) funds are explicitly targeted for training activities. This suggests that the use of VOCA funds for training could be directed toward service providers who would not be eligible for training supported by other funds. For example, STOP VAWA funds focus on violence against women, so training of providers who serve victims other than domestic violence and sexual assault might be a priority for VOCA training funds.

An important resource for state administrators is their new *professional association*, the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators. The Association can be a very useful vehicle for exchanging information among administrators on these critical activities, so that states can learn from each other's experiences and innovative ideas. While this association is too new to have been included as a focus of the evaluation, it seems to have the support of administrators and good resources to accomplish useful program development goals.

Findings on Direct Service Providers

Urban Institute site visit interviews with VOCA-funded providers focused on several important issues in service provision. Safe Horizon's contextual analysis of the service system in selected communities also identified such issues. Some of these issues revolve around program *administrative activities* – outreach, coordination, and reporting requirements – rather than direct service, so cannot be supported with VOCA funds under current OVC guidelines. Some providers have difficulty finding support for administrative activities, and would like to have an administrative allowance from their VOCA subgrants. New OVC regulations currently under review may authorize this allowance.

There is consensus that many types of victims (defined by both type of crime and victim characteristics, such as racial/ethnic group, sexual orientation, disability, or rural residence) are

underserved. Efforts to meet these needs may involve expanding current victim service programs, including developing new programs as well as new staffing patterns or training to respond appropriately to new victim populations. Another approach is to develop victim service programs within other types of organizations that currently work with underserved populations. *Outreach* is critical to ensure that victims have the chance to avail themselves of service opportunities.

The use of *volunteers* is problematic for some programs, because of the nature of the services provided (such as therapy), limits on volunteers' availability, and privacy/confidentiality concerns (as in small communities such as rural or tribal areas). It would be helpful to some programs if the requirement for using volunteers was relaxed to respond to particular concerns with the use of volunteers (as it is in some states).

Paid staff work under stressful conditions for low pay. Efforts to improve the pay scale, reduce disparities between various segments of the workforce, and recognize special contributions are helpful in improving quality of life and *reducing staff burnout and turnover*.

As discussed in the previous section, *community coordination* among those who serve victims is very important and should cross disciplinary boundaries, since victims call on a wide range of providers for help with their various needs. Safe Horizon's contextual analysis of communities in their study found that some had relatively sparse networks of providers, as well as significant access barriers for many victims (such as limited transportation options). This may explain in part why service needs assessments and referrals were a frequently-unaddressed need from the Urban Institute survey; if there are limited viable places to refer victims to, fewer referrals may be made. One Safe Horizon research site, Malheur County, Oregon, was notable for its extensive coordination across governmental and non-governmental agencies, and for how safe and supported domestic violence victims felt in that community.

Coordination of reporting requirements across various funding sources (including the many federal funding streams) would help reduce programs' record-keeping requirements. Currently, each of many funding sources may have its own reporting requirements, and this requires programs to spend a good deal of time keeping the same data in many different ways. A multi-agency federal task force has explored ways to coordinate reporting requirements, but a unified form has not yet been made available.

Recommendations for VOCA Assistance Program Administration

State administrators and community-level subgrantees who provide direct services are clearly functioning well in a number of areas. This is commendable particularly in light of the difficult funding situation (with the historical fluctuations in federal allocations and collections). Useful directions for future developments in federal, state, and local policy and administration may include:

- *Balance the need to provide funding with the need to provide stability in the face of a funding source subject to extreme fluctuations.* While the capping approach has provided stability and built a large "reserve" for lean years, even this reserve may be depleted within a very few years if current collections and allocation trends continue. It would be very helpful to develop ways of increasing CVF deposits from "core" cases (i.e., not the very few and very large corporate cases that have produced dramatic fluctuations), and/or to develop supplemental and more stable methods of funding victim assistance programs that augment CVF collections, to increase support and provide more stability.
- *Support state administrators' activities to enhance fund management.* The Urban Institute study found that programs are generally well-run but that administrators could, and would like to, do much more if more support for these activities was available. More systematic *needs assessments*, development of *strategic planning* to balance continuation funding with funding of new programs to reach underserved victims and/or underserved needs, enhanced *coordination* with other fund administrators, expanded *training*, more active *monitoring* of subgrantees, and development of *automated systems* could greatly enhance grant management and the delivery of services to victims. Since many states can and do make use of the federal administrative and training allowances, increases in these allowances could provide very valuable support. This may work best when overall allocations increase, so that reserving more funds for administrative and training activities would not contribute to a decrease in funds available for subgrant awards. State administrators have recently formed a professional association, the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators. This may be a very useful vehicle for exchanging information among state agencies so that states can learn from each other's experiences and innovative ideas.
- *Support service providers' administrative activities.* Pending regulations that would allow subgrantees to use some of their VOCA awards to support *essential administrative activities* such as *coordination* and *outreach* would be very welcome to many providers. The surveys found that many clients of VOCA-funded programs work with additional providers as well, so it is critical to coordinate services. Many groups are unserved or underserved; outreach is essential for reaching these groups of victims. In some cases the development of new services or specialized training to meet specific needs of newly-served victims may be important.
- *Address operational challenges to direct service programs. Staff burnout*, due to demanding work conditions and low pay, is problematic for many programs (especially nonprofit programs, where pay scales may be lower than public-based programs). Some programs are able to use *volunteers* with great success, whereas others are reluctant to make extensive use of this resource because of the nature of the work, limits on volunteers' availability, and privacy and confidentiality concerns (particularly in rural or tribal areas). Another challenge is posed by unique *reporting requirements* imposed by many funders, which requires a great deal of record-keeping. These challenges could be addressed by enhancing staffing resources and pay scales, relaxing requirements around the use of volunteers where warranted, and promoting efforts to coordinate reporting requirements, at least across federal funders of victim services.

Victim Compensation

Many victims cannot pay crime-related expenses on their own. Crime victims' compensation is available to some of these victims, so that they do not have to bear the financial burdens of crime. Compensation programs make payments to victims, their survivors, or those who have provided services (such as hospitals, mental health counselors, or funeral homes) necessitated by the crime. These programs are funded by CVF allocations and by state funds. Like the CVF, most of the states raise their funds from criminal offenders rather than tax revenues. In 2003, the total allocation to states from the CVF was nearly $165 million, a 60 percent payout on states' expenditures in 2001 as per the allocation formula.

The Use of Compensation Funds

Both federal and state laws and guidelines govern how compensation funds are used. OVC guidelines provide that federal funds are for victims of state and federal violent crimes with injury (physical or otherwise, at each state's discretion), and for certain counseling services to victims of nonviolent crimes. Federal funds may be used for medical/dental expenses, mental health counseling, funeral and burial costs, economic support (lost wages and loss of support), and crime scene clean-up expenses, but not for property losses. Compensation programs must promote victim cooperation with the reasonable requests of law enforcement authorities, and may not deny compensation because of a victim's relationship with the offender, except to prevent unjust enrichment of the offender.

The states stipulate further that compensation may be denied to victims whose "contributory misconduct" played a role in the crime. All states treat compensation as the payer of last resort, so that all other means of meeting crime-related expenses must be exhausted for compensation to be awarded. The states also impose claim filing and law enforcement reporting requirements (to document that a crime occurred and to encourage cooperation with the justice system), but the specifics of these requirements vary from state to state. States also vary on the types of losses that are eligible for compensation, with some states going far beyond federal provisions to cover a wide variety of crime-related expenses (such as moving expenses, replacement services, travel expenses, rehabilitation services, attorney fees, some property expenses, and pain and suffering in two states).

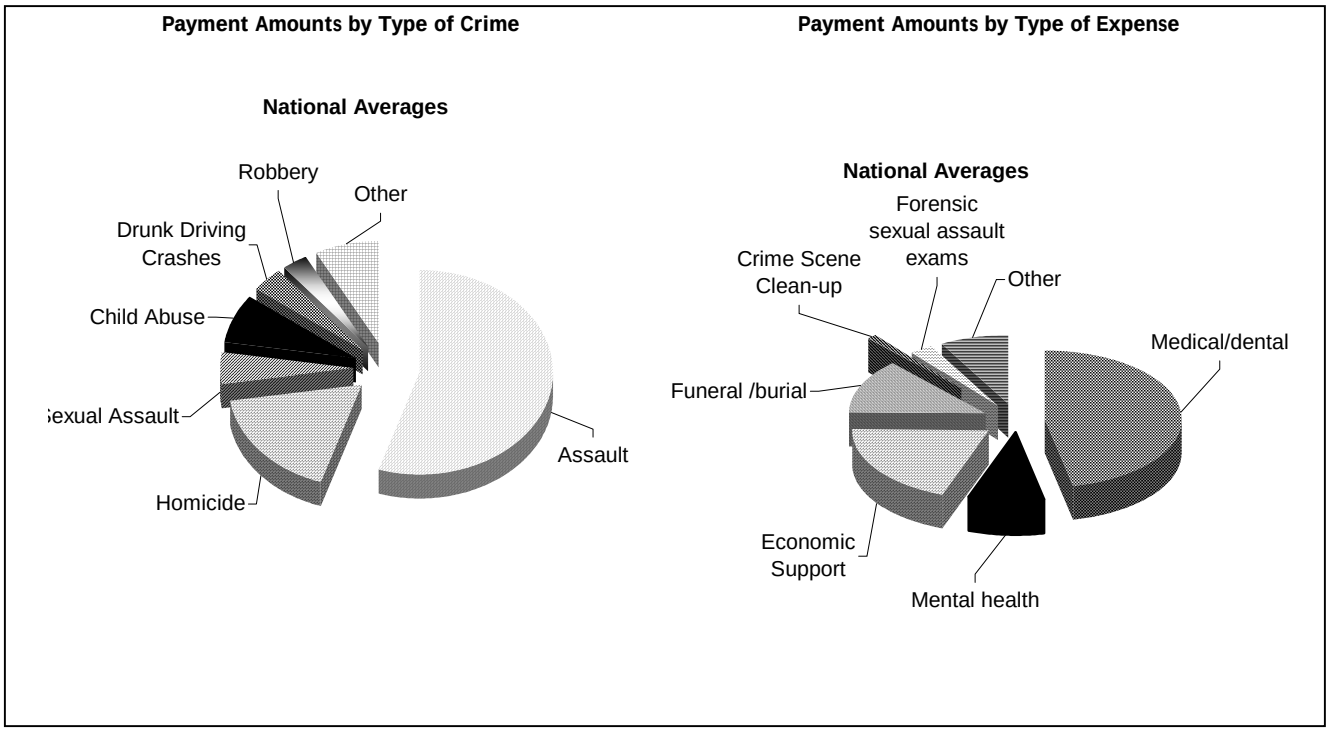
Compensation funds are used mostly to pay the types of expenses provided under federal guidelines; see Figure 10 for cross-state averages. Compensation serves victims of a broad range of crimes, with a heavy emphasis on violent crimes. See Figure 10 for the distribution of payments by type of crime.[22]

All but two states impose a cap on the amount that can be paid to claimants, and many states have caps on categories of expenses within the overall amount (such as medical, lost wages, and so on). The overall caps vary widely but average around $35,000 (the extremes are $5,000 and

[22] Statistics on the numbers of claim paid indicate that 18 percent of claims are for domestic violence-related crime.

$180,000). Only catastrophic injury claims come near the maximums; the average claim is about $2,800 per claim across states.

Figure 10. Compensation Payments, 2001[23]



Analysis of Victim Compensation Programs

The Urban Institute's survey of clients of VOCA-funded assistance programs included a section on compensation issues, and Safe Horizon's victim survey included several questions on financial impacts of crime and experiences with compensation. In addition, the Urban Institute conducted an early (1999) telephone survey with all state compensation administrators; conducted site visits to compensation programs in six states to learn more about administration issues; and completed telephone surveys with 452 claimants who had applied for compensation in these states. Table 7 presents a summary description of each state's program. Note that differences between states in indicators such as the number of domestic violence-related claims paid, or the use of compensation funds for different types of expenses, may reflect the extent to which other resources are available to meet these needs, since compensation is the payer of last resort. For example, some states may have more free services available to domestic violence victims under VOCA assistance or other grants; how much of the population has health insurance coverage may vary across states.

[23] Source: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/fund.

Table 7. State Compensation Program Profiles for Urban Institute Site Visit States					
State	**Administrative Agency**	**2002 VOCA Grant**	**Claims Paid (FY 2001)**	**N Paid For DV**	**Payments by Types of Expenses**
California	Victim Comp. & Govt. Claims Board	$23,305,000	N=43,158 $94,553,541	23%	MD 37%; MH 41%; ES 13%; FB 9%
Idaho	Industrial Comm.	$345,000	N=921 $1,604,320	16%	MD 66%; MH 17%; ES 14%; FB 3%
Pennsylvania	Comm. on Crime & Delinquency	$1,833,000	N=2,301 $8,222,011	5%	MD 46%; MH 3%; ES 28%; FB 11%
South Carolina	Governor's Office	$2,443,000	N=3,046 $7,654,926	11%	MD 60%; MH 7%; ES 17%; FB 11%
Vermont	Center for Crime Victim Services	$120,000	N=544 $575,843	31%	MD 20%; MH 24%; ES 13%; FB 24%
Wisconsin	Dept. of Justice	$556,000	N=1,237 $2,507,350	7%	MD 57%; MH 6%; ES 29%; FB 6%
N=number; DV=domestic violence; MD=medical/dental; MH=mental health; ES=economic support; FB=funeral/burial (the primary categories for use of federal funds)					

Victims' Need for, Awareness of, and Access to Compensation

The Safe Horizon survey of law enforcement reporters is a good platform for examining victims' need for, awareness of, and access to compensation, since compensation programs typically require law enforcement reporting as an eligibility criterion (although again it should be noted that 40 percent of this survey sample was burglary victims, and property crime victims have very limited eligibility for compensation). The Urban Institute survey of VOCA-funded program clients also speaks to these issues, and provides a vehicle for estimating the extent to which these programs are complying with their mandate to assist clients with compensation.

These surveys found that crime can have significant financial impacts on many victims, who often incur the types of expenses eligible for compensation. In the Safe Horizons study, 77 percent of the victims who incurred health or mental health care costs had insurance, which leaves nearly one-quarter responsible for the bills themselves. Even those who had insurance were still sometimes responsible for the costs of care; 11 percent of these victims had uncovered expenses averaging $656. In addition, 37 percent of employed victims missed work because of the crime, and 60 percent of this group had income losses averaging $1,489. The Urban Institute survey found that 57 percent of victims had out-of-pocket losses, at a median (midpoint) of $800. These losses typically fell into the categories of expenses eligible for compensation, indicating that policies on what expenses are covered are well-targeted to many of victims' financial needs.

The Urban Institute survey found that 45 percent of victims served by VOCA-funded programs were aware of compensation. Further, those with expenses were more likely to be familiar with compensation than those without expenses [X^2 (1) = 9.7, $p < .003$], and by far the most frequent source of this information was the VOCA-funded program (54 percent of clients who knew of compensation). These findings indicate that the VOCA-funded programs are generally doing a good job of informing clients about compensation when appropriate, in keeping with their mandate as VOCA assistance grantees. The Safe Horizon survey found that only 21 percent of victims with financial losses were aware of compensation; this may be due to the facts that rates of accessing victim service programs (a prime source of information about compensation) were low among this sample, and/or 40 percent of this group were property crime victims and so would have limited eligibility for compensation (as per program regulations).

The Urban Institute survey found that 41 percent of those who had heard of compensation had filed a claim. The most common reason victims chose not to apply was that they had no expenses; a number of other reasons were cited by less than ten percent of non-applicants, so did not indicate any particular pattern of access barriers.

Claimants' Experiences with Compensation Programs

The Urban Institute study included a brief telephone survey with 452 victims or survivors who had filed compensation claims in the six site visit states. The primary purpose of this survey was to assess clients' perspectives on the process and outcome of compensation claims. The survey sample represents a broad range of crime types, with nearly three-quarters of the victims having suffered a physical (43 percent) or sexual (29 percent) assault[24] (claims for homicide, robbery, drunk driving crashes, and other crimes were also included). The claimants were mostly White[25] (73 percent) women (70 percent) with an average age of 42 (adults apply on behalf of minors).

Policies on the types of expenses eligible for compensation seem to cover the major types of expenses victims incur. However, many (73 percent) were still left with unreimbursed costs for these as well as other types of expenses, despite the fact that 87 percent of the claims in our sample were approved for payment (at an average of $1,553 per claim). Out-of-pocket losses centered around a midpoint value of $600 for these victims. While few claims were denied, the survey found that only half the claimants with denials recalled being given reasons for denials, and a mere 16 percent reported receiving information on the appeals process.

Speedy case processing is important to claimants awaiting reimbursement, those who provided crime-related services and are awaiting payment, and compensation programs. The

[24] Twenty-eight percent of the total sample of 452 claimants were victims of intimate partner or other family violence crimes.

[25] African-Americans were 16 percent of the sample; Hispanics were eight percent; and Asians, Native Americans, and other groups were three percent.

average claim processing time for the Urban Institute claimant survey sample was ten weeks, which is well within identified program standards (National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards, 1996) and represents a significant decrease from average times of 20 weeks or more just a few years ago. Nonetheless, 22 percent of the survey felt the claim was not processed within a reasonable amount of time, and 29 percent said the length of the claim process caused problems for them. The verification process is the major source of delay, as it may take some time to gather all the documents needed to verify compliance with eligibility rules (i.e., an eligible type of crime occurred, eligible types of expenses were incurred, no other sources of payment are available, there was no contributory misconduct on the victim's part, etc.). Many programs described innovative and proactive practices they have undertaken to speed the process and assume more responsibility for obtaining verifications, such as contacting law enforcement and service providers for necessary documentation directly, rather than relying entirely on claimants. Still, over one-quarter (29 percent) of the surveyed claimants said it was hard or burdensome to get all the paperwork together.

This survey also included a series of items assessing claimants' overall satisfaction with the claims process and outcomes. The survey found that claimants were generally quite satisfied with the process and outcome of their experiences with compensation programs; the average score on a satisfaction scale ranging from 12 (lowest possible score) to 24 (highest possible score) was 21.8. Claimants with the most positive perceptions of the compensation experience were White female claimants whose claims were processed more quickly, and with more claimed expenses paid [$R^2 = .23$; $F(4,277) = 22.3$, $p < .001$]. The findings for race and sex hold even when accounting for the effects of other factors associated with the claim (such as case processing time and payment amounts). This finding seems worthy of further examination.

Findings and Recommendations for Compensation Program Development

Many programs have expanded substantially in recent years, using more funds to make awards to more victims. Programs place a high priority on serving victims as the underlying mission, along with enforcing legislation and regulations. They are taking proactive steps to expand client services through a number of developments, such as relaxing program requirements, expanding benefit levels, and streamlining case processing. These efforts are paying off in high levels of client satisfaction, as claimant survey findings show.

Urban Institute telephone surveys and site visits interviews with compensation program staff, members of advisory bodies, and advocates, along with the survey findings, indicate that useful directions for future developments may include:

- *Service expansion and protection of funding.* Many states may have significantly more federal funding available in FY 2003 because of the increase in the federal payout formula. As long as program budgets are not negatively impacted by state budget crises and state funding levels do not drop, programs may be able to continue expansion trends to serve more victims more completely. State programs facing decreased funding or "raids" to fund other types of programs need to make every effort to preserve their

budgets; enrolling the assistance of advocates can be very helpful. It is important to remember that most state compensation funds, like the federal funds, come from offender fees – not taxes.

- *Program management.* While the goal of compensation is to provide payments for crime-related expenses, some funds must be used to run the programs if they are to be well-run. Up to five percent of the federal allocation may be used for administrative activities, and state funds may be available as well. The National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Board's *Program Standards* (1996) discusses "basic" and "advanced" administrative activities. We found that administrative activities generally focus on "basic" activities such as staffing, training, and office equipment. More "advanced" administrative activities, such as strategic planning, needs assessments, coordination, and the development of operational manuals and technology, are less widely in use (although there are of course exceptions). Those states that did undertake these activities found them to be very useful. While funding for these activities is likely to continue to be in short supply, programs and the victims they serve may benefit. Technical assistance from OVC and others with expertise in these areas (such as the compensation administrators' professional association, the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards) may be needed to help administrators explore these new areas in productive ways.
- *Outreach.* Since victims' compensation is not a household name like workers' compensation is, it is critical for victims and those who work directly with them – law enforcement, prosecutors, advocates, health care providers, counselors, and so on – to become familiar with the compensation program and how it works. Compensation programs often provide training and resources to service providers who work directly with victims, in order to cultivate eligible claims and enhance claim processing. Outreach to victim service providers and criminal justice personnel should continue, to orient new staff and to keep existing staff current on policy and program changes. Outreach should also emphasize a broader range of service providers to reach broader groups of victims who may have been historically underserved, including healthcare providers and groups who work with racial, ethnic, language, or cultural minorities. Direct communications with victims can also be enhanced by having victim liaisons on compensation program staff.
- *Claims processing.* Once a victim learns of compensation, there is a process that must be activated to file for benefits and verify that the claim meets legislative and regulatory requirements. Verification may involve obtaining police reports, bills for services, insurance statements, proof of employment, and other relevant documents. Many programs have made great strides to reduce burdens inherent in the application process, such as taking on more proactive verification procedures to increase approval rates and decrease case processing time. Case processing is likely to see further improvements as advocates and other service providers are better trained in compensation policies and procedures, and can better screen potentially eligible claimants and provide better assistance during the filing process (as required of some programs by state laws or constitutional amendments and VOCA assistance regulations). Automation and the development of innovative and proactive verification procedures by compensation staff also hold great promise for improving the efficiency of program operations.

- *Claims decision-making.* Approval rates are high (87 percent in our survey sample), which may indicate vigorous pre-screening of potential claims by direct service providers. However, some claims are denied and special efforts may be needed to help claimants understand why their claims were denied and what their options are. Again, better-informed service providers may be able to assist victims whose claims were denied, so that they can take additional steps to appeal the decision, if appropriate.

Providing a Seamless Web of Support for Victims

Coordination Among Victim Assistance Administrators

Ideally, those who directly serve victims in a community would work together collaboratively to provide comprehensive, effective services in an efficient, integrated system. There is a similar ideal for those in state, local, and private agencies who administer the many sources of funding for victim service programs (i.e., VOCA, VAWA, FVPSA, PHHS, state funding streams, and so on), to effectively leverage these resources on victims' behalf. Effective coordination can fill service gaps, reduce inefficient duplication of services, and resolve conflicting policies and requirements.

Opportunities for improving collaboration include cross-training; shared development of strategic plans, funding priorities, policies, grantee requirements, and innovative procedures; and mechanisms for shared decision-making (such as cross-agency grant application review committees). One important factor that may influence the success of coordination efforts is the degree of co-location of the various fund administrators. The more closely aligned the program offices, the more likely coordination may occur because of logistical advantages in co-location. Some states may concentrate all or most of the funding streams in a central administrative agency, but others may fear the concentration of too much power in too few hands. In addition, coordination may be complicated by the different missions and administrative regulations of the various funding streams.

Coordination Between Compensation Programs, VOCA Assistance Administrators, and Direct Service Providers

State compensation programs can work with assistance administrators on a systemic level to enhance the coordination of policies. For example, one of the site visit states minimizes VOCA assistance grants for services payable through compensation, such as mental health services, in order to maximize state compensation expenditures and therefore federal compensation allocations. Assistance programs can provide input into compensation policies by identifying victims' emerging financial needs and concerns about compensation procedures and requirements. Compensation programs can monitor claim referral sources so VOCA administrators can provide assistance to grantees with their referral requirements, as needed. Compensation programs can also provide valuable input to VOCA assistance administrators' grant selection process by identifying areas of need.

Compensation programs can coordinate with direct service providers on a systemic and case-by-case basis as well. They can provide service programs with training on compensation policies and procedures, and keep them well-stocked with informational and application materials. On a case level, providers with a good understanding of the compensation program can be invaluable in pre-screening potential claimants for eligibility, and helping applicants through the application process. Some compensation programs are developing automated systems for filing claims and/or checking claim status, which assistance providers can access on behalf of victims. Some compensation programs have victim liaisons on staff who are trained to work with claimants to identify unmet service needs and make referrals to community programs.

A Research Agenda for the Future

These studies and the April 2003 workshop NIJ convened identified a number of topics on which further research is needed to inform the direction of policymakers' and practitioners' future efforts. The topics fall into several more general subject areas, including research to better understand victims, their needs for services, and service access issues; and research to better understand what works in victim services and how to promote effective program functioning.

Research on Victims

To make the results as broadly applicable as possible, it is important to include a wide-ranging and representative sample of victims in studies. A national household survey such as the National Crime Victimization Survey or the General Social Survey offers one platform for reaching victims of all types of crimes, reporters and non-reporters, service users and service non-users. However, household surveys exclude households without telephones and people living in other settings (such as institutional settings and the homeless).

Topics for further research on victims should include:

- What is the general population's awareness and perceptions of services for victims? What are the access barriers, and how can they be overcome?
- What are the differences in victims' needs, awareness of services, perceptions of services, access to services, use of services, and impact of services, across different racial/ethnic and cultural/linguistic groups of victims, including Native American, immigrant, and non-English-speaking victims? What factors account for these differences?
- What are victims' needs immediately after the crime, their short-term needs, and their long-term needs? How do needs change over time?
- What groups of victims, in terms of types and crime and demographics, are underserved? Why? What can be done to increase service access?

Research on Services

Topics for further research on services should include:

- What works? More evaluations of the impact of services on victims' recovery (going beyond whether services are received and whether victims are satisfied with

the services) are needed. These evaluations should be linked with demonstration projects, so the effectiveness of new initiatives and their usefulness as model programs is documented. A wide range of victims, in terms of types of crimes and personal demographics, should be included in programs and evaluations.

- What kind of outreach is effective at reaching various groups of victims with information about services available, and how/by whom is the outreach best delivered? Who are outreach efforts missing?
- How do providers screen incoming cases and decide whom to help and how? How well does this process serve victims' needs?
- How should victim service systems be structured? What are the strengths of non-governmental and justice-based providers? What are the most effective methods of system integration? How does co-location of victim service programs (e.g., justice-based and non-governmental programs; domestic violence and sexual assault programs) work – what challenges does co-location face and what results can it achieve?
- What is the level of unaddressed need for compensation? How many and what types of victims may need compensation and be eligible for it, and how many of those are actually filing claims? What are the barriers for non-claimants, and how can they be overcome? How does pre-screening by direct service providers affect victims' access to compensation?
- How do changes in funding levels, emphasizing decreased funding, affect victim service organizations and the victims they serve? How can negative impacts be minimized?
- How do different reporting requirements from different federal, state, local, and private funders impact on providers' need for data systems and other administrative support to satisfy requirements? How can these requirements be coordinated to reduce the reporting burden on providers, while still meeting funders' needs for information?
- What are effective ways of responding to staff burnout and enhancing staff resiliency?
- What are effective approaches for obtaining restitution from offenders?
- What are the unique needs of victims who are also defendants in criminal cases (such as battered women who were arrested under allegations of assaults against their batterers), and how can their needs be served?

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