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**ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS
OF THE NATIONAL VICTIM
ASSISTANCE ACADEMY**

Final Report

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I. ACADEMY BACKGROUND AND REPORT OVERVIEW

1. ACADEMY BACKGROUND

Established in 1995 as part of a cooperative agreement between the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) and the Victims' Assistance Legal Organization (VALOR) on behalf of a consortium of national victim assistance organizations, the National Victim Assistance Academy (NVAA) to date has provided education and training to approximately 1,800 victim services professionals throughout the United States, in several of its territories, and in six foreign countries.

Offered simultaneously for 40 hours (one week) on the campuses of select universities/colleges across the United States, the academic-based curriculum emphasizes foundations in victimology and victims' rights and services, as well as new developments in the field of victim assistance. The curriculum (Academy Text) covers 30 different subject areas such as historical review of the victims' rights discipline, respecting diversity, child victimization, research and evaluation, and collaboration, all taught to participants through a variety of approaches including lectures, interactive and experiential exercises, distance learning, working groups, computer laboratories, and mentoring groups.

The three primary goals of the NVAA are:

- To develop and implement a comprehensive, research-based, foundation-level course of academic instruction that provides victim advocates with current and cutting-edge knowledge about victim assistance and the field of victimology
- To provide high quality, intensive education and training to victim services providers, advocates, and professionals from Federal, state, local and tribal settings
- To create a training model that can be adapted and integrated into institutions of higher learning and other venues (e.g., State Victim Assistance Academies).

While the overall accomplishments of the NVAA are believed to be many and range from educating a wide array of victim service providers to providing the framework for the development of ten State Victim Assistance Academies, a formalized evaluation was needed across the academies to assess the effectiveness of the NVAA in achieving the above goals.

To accomplish this task, the National Institute of Justice awarded a grant to Caliber Associates, Inc. to design and implement an evaluation of the 2002 NVAA.

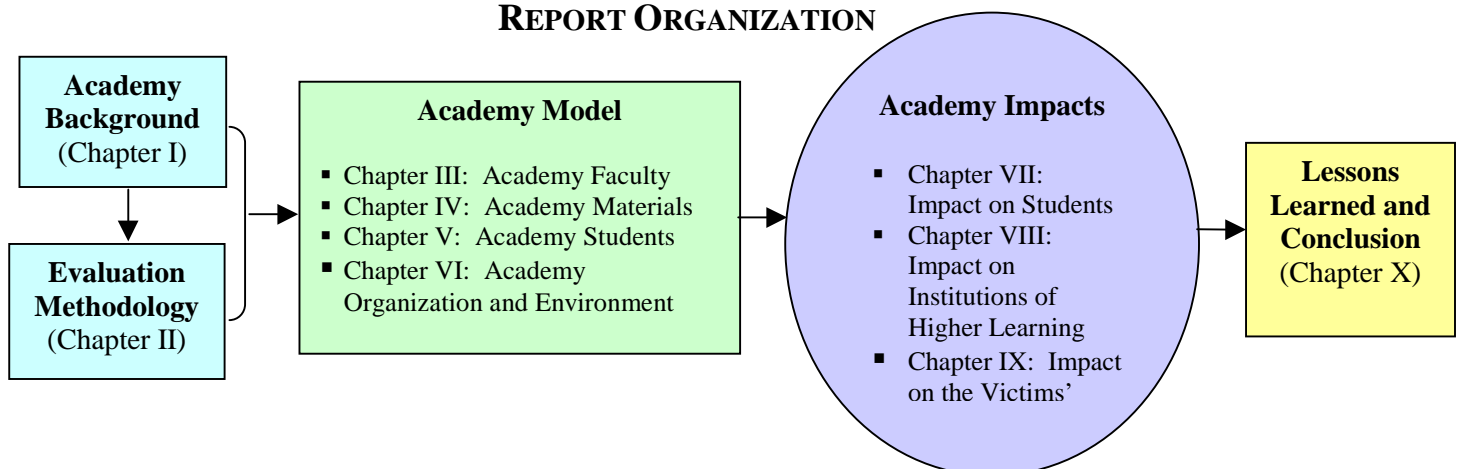
2. REPORT OVERVIEW

The remaining chapters of the evaluation report are organized according to four broad areas:

- **Evaluation Approach—Chapter II** makes up this section of the report. This chapter presents a detailed description of the evaluation methodology including evaluation questions, design, data collection, study sample, and presentation of findings.
- **Academy Model—Chapters III – VI** make up this section of the report. The information presented includes key findings and recommendations related to different aspects of the Academy Model. These include Academy faculty, materials (Instructor’s Manual and Academy Text), students, and the overall Academy organization and (learning) environment.
- **Academy Impacts—Chapters VII – IX** make up this section of the report. The information presented in these chapters describes the impact of the NVAA on students, institutions of higher learning, and the victim services field, in general. This includes a discussion of the impact of the NVAA on State Victim Assistance Academies.
- **Lessons Learned and Conclusion—Chapter X** makes up this section of the report. This chapter provides highlights of key lessons learned and a summary of the evaluation findings.

Exhibit I-1 provides a graphic depiction of how the chapters of the report are organized. Together the information in this report is intended to assist the Office for Victims of Crime in its decision making and planning regarding possible future implementation of a national-level academy for the victims’ assistance field.

EXHIBIT I-1 REPORT ORGANIZATION



II. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This chapter of the report describes the approach to the NVAA evaluation in detail.

1. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation of the NVAA was guided by three overarching evaluation questions linked to the goals of the NVAA:

- Has the NVAA developed and implemented a comprehensive, research-based, foundation-level course of academic instruction that provides victim advocates with current and cutting-edge knowledge about victim assistance and the field of victimology?
- Does the NVAA provide high quality, intensive education and training to victim services providers, advocates, and professionals from Federal, state, local, and tribal settings?
- Has the NVAA model been adapted and integrated into institutions of higher learning and other venues (e.g., State Victim Assistance Academies)?

Additionally, a set of more detailed questions were identified to further guide the assessment of the NVAA's impact on Academy participants, educational institutions, and the victim's field. These questions are presented in Exhibit II-1.

In addition to the questions focused on outcomes and impacts, other questions were posed about the NVAA, in general, to determine whether the Academy was conducive to student learning. The specific questions included:

- Did the Academy's structure, environment, training curriculum, and faculty facilitate student learning?
- How did differences in student and faculty (e.g., years experience, area of focus, educational background, etc.) affect the course content and learning environments at the NVAA sites?
- What has been the most valuable aspect of the NVAA model for adaptation at the Federal, state, local, and tribal levels?

The answers to these questions were used to formulate recommendations for improving future Academy planning and implementation.

EXHIBIT II-1 DETAILED QUESTIONS GUIDING THE NVAA EVALUATION		
IMPACT ON STUDENTS	IMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	IMPACT ON THE VICTIMS SERVICES FIELD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What new skills/knowledge did students learn as a result of the NVAA? ■ How were students' attitudes changed as a result of attending the NVAA? ■ How have the students used information gained from the NVAA to expand or improve as well as formulate new policies, practices, or programs/services for victims? ■ Have students pursued formal education, achieved career enhancements, or improved their potential for promotion as a result of the NVAA training? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What changes have occurred, as a result of the creation of the NVAA, at non-participating universities offering victim-related course work? ■ What has been the value of the NVAA curriculum (Academy Text) for assisting colleges/ universities in expanding or enhancing victim-related training and educational programs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What has been the value of the NVAA curriculum (Academy Text) for assisting victim service programs in expanding or enhancing their victim-related training and educational programs? ■ What has been the value of the Academy Text for assisting non-participating states in developing and implementing State Victim Assistance Academies (SVAA)? ■ To what extent has the NVAA contributed to "professionalizing" the victims' field?

2. DESIGN

A multi-method approach to the evaluation of the NVAA was developed and implemented by Caliber Associates to address the questions presented above. A multi-method or multi-level evaluation design was selected based on state-of-the-art research on evaluating training programs and prior experience evaluating similar training initiatives. The evaluation incorporates what are known as the "four levels" of training evaluation:¹

- **Level 1: Reaction**—Evaluation at this level measures how participants react to the training. It is similar to a measure of customer satisfaction. Reactions and, more importantly, positive reactions are important not only because they indicate participants had a favorable experience, but positive reactions are more likely to be associated with learning gains than negative reactions. That is, a positive experience is more conducive to learning than a negative experience. For these reasons, Level 1 or reaction evaluation was part of the NVAA design.

¹ D. Kirkpatrick (1998). *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. San Francisco: CA.

- **Level 2: Learning**—Evaluation at this level measures the extent to which participants change attitudes, improve knowledge, and/or increase skills after having attended the training. Not only are these changes important in and of themselves, but it is often stated that behavior change cannot occur unless learning has occurred. In this case, participants must demonstrate a change in attitudes, knowledge, and/or skills before true behavior change can occur. These learning gains are also important for the NVAA evaluation because they address the immediate outcomes of the Academy. Faculty have the greatest “control” of these areas.
- **Level 3: Behavior**—Evaluation at this level measures the extent to which participants change behavior after having attended the NVAA. Specifically, this level of the evaluation is concerned with the impact of the NVAA on participants’ job performance, especially regarding their work with victims. It is important to note that positive reactions and learning gains (Levels 1 and 2) do not ensure behavior change. Additionally, an absence of change in behavior does not mean that a program is ineffective. For behavior change to occur, “four conditions are necessary: 1) the person must want to change, 2) the person must know what to do and how to do it, 3) the person must work in the right climate (i.e., one that fosters/encourages change), and 4) the person must be rewarded for a change in behavior.”² The first two factors are within the control of the NVAA. That is, the NVAA can help participants recognize the need to change, instill in them a desire or motivation to change, and provide them with the tools to facilitate change. The last two factors, however, are outside the control of the NVAA and can be critical as to whether behavior change occurs following the Academy.
- **Level 4: Results**—The last and perhaps most challenging level measures long-term impacts or results that occurred because the participants attended the training. For the NVAA, these long-term impacts represent changes to organizations/agencies where the participants are employed (e.g., new policies and programs), changes to the victims’ field at large (e.g., professionalizing the field), and changes to universities and colleges not affiliated with the NVAA (e.g., new courses/degree programs in victimology).

For the purpose of the NVAA evaluation, the greatest emphasis was placed on Level 1 and 2, with follow-on data collection enabling the evaluation to address questions pertaining to Level 3 and 4. Most of the data addressing behavior change and long-term impacts/results represent personal opinion or perceptions and are interpreted with caution.

² D. Kirkpatrick (1998). *Another Look at Evaluating Training Programs: Fifty articles from training, development and technical assistance training magazines covering the essentials of evaluation and return-on-investment*. American Society for Training and Development. Alexandria: VA.

3. DATA COLLECTION

The data collection for the NVAA evaluation occurred in three phases:

- On-site data collection
- Document review
- Follow-on interviews.

All data collection instruments involving human subjects were reviewed and granted approval by Caliber’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The confidentiality of all students, faculty, and supervisors, was guaranteed, and participation in the evaluation was voluntary. Each phase of data collection is described below. Copies of the data collection protocols are included in Appendix A.

3.1 On-Site Data Collection

The primary data collection for the evaluation occurred on-site at each of the three Academies. Two members of the evaluation team were present at each site to administer data collection protocols, assess instruction, gather completed evaluation forms to ensure a high response rate, and document the Academy environment and experience. Additionally, the evaluation team members were available to answer questions about the evaluation forms and/or the evaluation in general. The data collection instruments used on-site at the NVAA included:

- **Participant Information Form**—This form was mailed to every registered NVAA participant prior to arrival at the Academy. The form was designed to capture student background and experience data, identify areas of interest, and gather information regarding students’ expectations about the NVAA. Students returned their completed forms during registration.
- **Academy Knowledge Assessment**—This assessment instrument was used to evaluate the extent to which participants acquired factual knowledge during the course of the Academy. A pool of test items with multiple-choice responses were created for each of the learning objectives identified for every chapter in the Academy Text. An external Evaluation Advisory Board and members of the NVAA site coordinating teams identified from the pool of questions key learning objectives to assess during the Academy. One test item for each chapter was included on the assessment instrument. Only those chapters identified as “core” sessions during the Academy were tested. That is, sessions identified as electives, or those which participants had a choice in taking, were not assessed with respect to specific knowledge gains. The Academy Knowledge Assessment was administered at the start and end of the Academy. The Pre-Knowledge Assessment was administered following registration on the opening day of the Academy before sessions began. The assessment was administered by a member of the evaluation team in a single room. No study aids were allowed during the test (e.g., use of the Academy Text, notes,

- etc.). At the completion of the core sessions, participants were administered the Post-Knowledge Assessment. Differences in scores on the pre- and post-assessments were analyzed to identify changes in factual knowledge.
- **Session Observation Form**—During each of the core sessions at each site, the evaluation team observed the instruction by faculty. Faculty were assessed on several criteria including learning objectives, student expectations, instructor presence, presentation skills, session management, and content knowledge. This information was used as part of the overall evaluation of NVAA faculty. Both members of the two-person site team observed the faculty presentation(s) for a given session and then the results of their assessments were compared for consistency. All session observation results were assessed for inter-rater reliability following the completion of the session. On average, judge-pairs gave relatively similar ratings of faculty ($W = .73$, where W represents Kendall's W statistic, the coefficient of concordance).
 - **Session Evaluation Form**—For each of the sessions offered at the Academy, a Session Evaluation Form was provided to students to complete after attending each session. The forms captured students' reactions to the session, corresponding Academy Text materials for each session, and faculty presentations.
 - **Networking and Mentoring Group Evaluation Form**—This form was designed to capture information about the mentoring group sessions and about each students' interactions with faculty and other students outside the classroom. It provided data on how networking and mentoring contribute to the students' experience at the Academy, what students learned from their participation in the Academy, and how students may later apply the learning to their work. Participants completed this form on the last day of the Academy.
 - **Overall Evaluation Form**—This form was completed by participants on the last day of the Academy. Like many end of training evaluations, the Overall Evaluation Form gathered information about students' reactions to the overall Academy, the Academy Text, learning environment, faculty, and other participants. Additionally, the forms gathered data regarding students' attitudes and practical knowledge that could be used to assess change during the course of the Academy. Students were asked to indicate their intentions for applying what they learned at the Academy in their work with victims and were prompted to identify up to three actions they would take as a result of the NVAA. Finally, participants were given an opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the NVAA and make recommendations for improving the Academy in the future.

The data from these instruments formed the basis for most of the analyses conducted for this evaluation. Analysis included descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, cross-tabulations), tests of significance (comparison of means, chi-Squares, differences of proportions), and content analysis of qualitative data.

3.2 Document Review

Two important variables of the NVAA are the Academy Text and the faculty. In order to assess the appropriateness, usefulness, and effectiveness of these key factors of the NVAA, additional data collection was necessary.

Academy Text

In addition to information gathered from participants and faculty regarding the NVAA Academy Text through evaluation forms and interview guides, an extensive review of the Text was conducted to include all chapters and subchapters. The Academy Text consists of 35 chapters/subchapters covering 30 different topics, such as the criminal justice continuum, military and tribal justice, domestic violence, terrorism, innovative technologies, research and evaluation, and professionalizing the discipline of victim services. A critical step in the assessment of the Academy Text was to establish a standard by which each chapter would be evaluated by an objective reviewer. The *Office for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Core Performance Standards for Effective Practice in Training* was used as the standard for this assessment. Specifically, the *Core Performance Standards* document was used to identify the criteria for assessing the Academy Text in four key areas:

- **Organization.** This refers to how the material was arranged and formatted. Specific criteria for rating the organization of a chapter/subchapter included a clean and uncluttered format; consistent layout; information that is easy to locate within the chapter; and information arranged in sequences that facilitated learning.
- **Readability.** This refers to the reader's ability to easily understand the concepts presented in the chapter/subchapter. The criteria for assessing readability included clear and concise writing; a writing style that was direct and to the point with language/tones easy to understand and a fluent expression of ideas; and reader-friendly information.
- **Content.** This refers to subject matter. The criteria for assessing content included accurate subject matter; current information; information appropriate and applicable for the subject matter presented; and subject matter adequately explored the training topic.
- **Instructional value.** This refers to the usefulness, relevancy, and importance of the material in transferring the knowledge intended. The criteria for assessing instructional value included a clear relationship to the learning objectives presented for the chapter/subchapter; clear measurable goals and objectives; use of examples or illustrations to highlight or get the key points across; and cultural appropriateness of information presented.

In addition to rating each chapter and subchapter on the above criteria, an overall assessment of each chapter was conducted and a series of yes/no questions was answered by each reviewer. A Rating Criteria Form and Academy Text Overall Assessment Form were developed for reviewers to use in assessing each chapter and subchapter. The forms outlined the criteria upon which each would be reviewed and defined each rating (a copy of the forms and written instructions for completing the forms are included in Appendix A). Ten reviewers were selected from among Caliber staff based on their background in victim services, victimology, and/or their subject matter expertise as it related to each chapter/subchapter in the Text. Additionally, experience in training and curriculum development was represented by at least 25% of the reviewers. Each reviewer was given, on average, three to four chapters to review. Reviewers were provided an overview of the NVAA evaluation and trained on how to use the Rating Criteria and Academy Text Evaluation Forms.

Faculty Resume Review

In addition to feedback from participants regarding the NVAA faculty on the Session Evaluation Forms and the Overall Evaluation Form, a review of faculty resumes and biographies was conducted by the evaluation team to ensure the NVAA faculty represented nationally recognized leaders in the fields of victimology, criminal justice, victims' rights, and victim services. Specifically, the resume and biography reviews were conducted to determine the educational background and areas of expertise of the NVAA faculty, including experience in education, training, and direct service provision.

3.3 Follow-on Interviews

Approximately 5 to 6 months following the NVAA, telephone interviews were conducted with faculty, students, and a sample of students' supervisors to assess long-term outcomes of the Academy and to gather recommendations for improving future planning and implementation of the NVAA. Each interview process is described below.

Faculty Interviews. Interviews were conducted with 23 of 26 faculty members (88.4%) from the 2002 NVAA approximately 4 to 6 months following the Academy. The faculty members who were unreachable despite numerous telephone messages, however, only taught four NVAA sessions. The interviews were conducted by the six evaluation team members who had been on-site during the Academy. The interviewers asked faculty questions related to their preparation for the NVAA, their use of NVAA materials, the structure/format of the NVAA, and their perceptions of student change resulting from participation in the NVAA. Additionally, faculty were given an opportunity to identify areas for improvement in planning and implementing future Academies.

Student Interviews. Approximately six months following the NVAA, members of the evaluation team attempted to contact all students who participated in the NVAA to conduct follow-on telephone interviews. Participants were given a gift of \$25 for participating in the interview. The interviews were intended to assess long-term outcomes of Academy participants, specifically in the area of knowledge, attitude, skill, and behavior change. Students also were asked to talk about the three areas they identified at the end of the Academy that they wanted to change or do differently. The current status of those “action steps” was explored with participants. Interviews were completed with 105 NVAA participants by 12 interviewers.

Supervisor Interviews. As part of the NVAA application process, participants were asked to submit letters of recommendation from their supervisor. To determine how NVAA attendance affected the performance of the students and the organizations where they were employed, interviews were conducted with a sample of participants’ supervisors. Letters of recommendation that had been submitted with the students’ applications were reviewed to identify individuals who were immediate supervisors. Of those letters, a second review was conducted to identify supervisors who specifically stated goals and/or expectations they had for the student attending the NVAA. Where possible, emphasis was placed on identifying measurable goals and/or expectations. An eligible sample of 55 supervisors was selected for follow-on interviews.

An initial part of the interview process was determining whether the person contacted was in fact the student’s supervisor both before attending the NVAA and after completing the NVAA. This was an important distinction because questions were asked about changes in the student’s attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors since attending the Academy. In the event that a supervisor indicated he/she was not the student’s supervisor prior to the Academy, the interview was terminated. Contact information was then solicited for the appropriate supervisor, and, if available, he/she was contacted for an interview. If the supervisor no longer supervised the student, a determination was made as to when he/she ceased being the supervisor. If serving as the student’s supervisor ceased prior to September 1, 2002, the interview was terminated.

A total of 30 supervisor interviews (54.6%) was completed for the evaluation by 5 evaluation team members. Of those supervisors interviewed, follow-on data were collected for 20 corresponding participants. It is important to note that one interview represented a supervisor of five NVAA participants. Given the small sample size, supervisor interviews could not be used to validate participants’ follow-on responses. The data were used, however, as an additional source of information regarding the long-term impacts of the Academy for participants and organizations/agencies represented by the participants.

3.4 Study Sample

Academy Sites

The Academy was conducted on June 23-28, 2002, at three locations across the country: California State University-Fresno (Fresno), Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston (MUSC), and Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas (Washburn). A total of 194 students registered for the 2002 NVAA, 60 at Fresno, 83 at MUSC, and 51 at Washburn. Even though data were collected from participants and faculty at each site, for purposes of confidentiality, no data can be linked to a given NVAA site (or person or faculty). All results represent aggregate findings across sites. A brief history of each of the three academy sites is presented below.

California State University-Fresno. California State University-Fresno was the country's first university to develop and conduct a program of study in victim services in 1985. Today it offers an undergraduate degree in victimology, a graduate degree with a specialization in victimology, and a month-long summer institute on victim services. The Department of Criminology has a long history of providing academic credit (undergraduate and graduate) for OVC-sponsored trainings, like the NVAA.

Medical University of South Carolina. The National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center (NCVC) is a division of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, South Carolina. Established in 1974, NCVC is devoted to developing a better understanding of the impact of criminal victimization on adults, children, and their families. Its nationally recognized faculty conducts research, professional education, clinical service and provides public policy consultation at the local, state, Federal and international levels on a broad range of victim-related topics.

Washburn University. Washburn University's Victim Assistance Program, a university-based interdisciplinary program that addresses issues of violence and victimization through education, consultation, and research to enhance professional practice, organizational policies, and societal responses, was established in 1995. The School of Applied Studies, Human Services Department, provides both an associate and baccalaureate degree in victim/survivor services.

Academy Participants

Of the 194 students who registered for the 2002 NVAA, the return rate for completed evaluation forms on site ranged from 55 to 96 percent.³ This is an impressive response rate,

³ Percentages represent completed forms for core topic sessions common to all three sites.

given the fact that participants put their highest priority on their Academy work and a lower priority on completing evaluation forms, and that participation in the evaluation was voluntary.

The sample size used to assess long-term impacts of the NVAA on participants was much smaller than the one used for most of the analysis of the on-site data. This was largely due to unavailable or incorrect contact information, non-responses (participants who did not return telephone messages or e-mail messages requesting their participation in the follow-on interview), and refusals to participate. Specific information on the evaluation sample and attrition of the original sample of 194 registered participants is presented in Exhibit II-2.

Of the 194 participants who registered for the academy, 186 participants or 95.9% completed the Participant Information Form, which served as a key source of baseline data for the evaluation. Only 179 of the 186 completed the Overall Evaluation Form, a necessary requirement for inclusion in the follow-on interviews. Of the 179 participants for whom Overall Evaluation data were available, 105 participants (58.7%) completed follow-on interviews. The response rate is higher when unreachable participants are excluded. These were individuals for whom no current contact information was available. Many had changed jobs with no forwarding information.⁴ After multiple attempts to find these individuals, an unreachable status was assigned to the participants. Removing the 23 unreachable participants from the possible follow-on sample of 179 results in a response rate for the follow-on interviews of 67.3 percent. Only 11 participants declined to participate in the follow-on interviews. However, the 40 non-responses represent individuals who did not return telephone messages and e-mails after five or more attempts to schedule an interview.

⁴ When presenting evaluation findings throughout the report, the following scale is utilized to ensure clarity in the use of certain words when not accompanied by a percentage: Most/majority – 75% or more; Many – 60 to 74%; Half – 40% to 59%; Several – 16% to 39%; Few – Less than 15%.

EXHIBIT II-2	
NVAA PARTICIPANT ATTRITION	
Form	Number Responding (Percentage of Total Registrants Completing Form)
Registration for the NVAA	194 (100%)
Participant Information Form	186 (96%)
Core Session Evaluations*	107 – 185 (55% - 95%)
Both Pre- and Post-Academy Knowledge Assessments	183 (94%)
Mentoring Form	163 (84%)
Overall Evaluation Form	179 (92%)
Follow On**	105 (59%)

* Only those core sessions offered at all sites were included.

** Based on an N of 179 or the total number of participants completing the critical on-site evaluation forms needed for comparison with the follow-on interview data.

Analysis of Respondents and Non-Respondents

Because it was not possible to obtain follow-on interviews with all of the students who had attended the NVAA, there was a concern that the follow-on results might be biased by non-response.

For data collection on site at the three academies, responses were obtained from nearly all students on key data collection instruments, including (in addition to the Academy Application Form) the Participant Information Form and the Overall Evaluation Form. These sources provided data not only on the characteristics of students, but on their NVAA experience. These data make it possible to test whether respondents differ from non-respondents in ways that might yield biased results. For instance, if students who had a less-favorable experience during their time at the Academy subsequently did not respond to the follow-on interviews, findings from the follow-on interviews might over-state the benefits of Academy participation. Or, if follow-on respondents differed from non-respondents on such characteristics as years of experience or type of organization, interview findings might not be generalizable to the whole NVAA student population.

To assess the possibility of non-response bias, we tested for differences between respondents and non-respondents. In addition to testing follow-on respondents and non-respondents, we tested for differences in any instances where the rate of non-response was

greater than 10 percent of the 186 Academy participants, as happened for some of the individual session evaluations during the Academy.

The variables on which tests were done were:

- Years of experience
- Type of agency/organization represented
- Education level
- Type of profession/job
- Rating of overall Academy experience
- Rating of usefulness of information presented at the Academy to one's job.

Tests were done, as appropriate, for differences in proportions, differences in means, and *chi-square* tests of independence. No statistically significant ($p \leq .05$) differences were found between respondents and non-respondents on any of these measures.⁵

This finding of no statistically significant differences between respondents and non-respondents – including no differences on their end-of-Academy ratings of the Academy experience or the usefulness of Academy-provided information to their jobs – supports the conclusion that these findings of the follow-on interviews and other analyses based on data with lower response rates are generalizable to the population of NVAA students and are not biased by the lower response rates.

3.5 Evaluation Findings

For presentation purposes, the NVAA evaluation findings are organized primarily by information related to the Academy model to include faculty, materials, students, and the Academy organization and environment, and information related to the impacts of the Academy on students, institutions of higher learning, and the victims' field, in general. In addition to the key findings related to each area, specific recommendations for improving the current Academy model and enhancing the impact of the Academy for key audiences are presented, where appropriate. The final chapter includes key lessons learned and a summary of the findings from the evaluation.

⁵ The term "significant" when used in this report always refers to statistically significant findings.

III. ACADEMY FACULTY

According to the NVAA brochure, “The prestigious Academy faculty represents nationally recognized leaders in the fields of victimology, criminal justice and victims’ rights and services including: faculty from co-sponsoring academic institutions; speakers from national crime victims’ organizations; and local state and Federal victims’ rights and criminal justice experts.” A major benefit of the NVAA for students is the opportunity to interact with leaders in the field and gain additional knowledge, recognition, and encouragement as victim assistance professionals. This chapter provides information on the actual background of the NVAA faculty, details of the on-site assessment of faculty presentation quality and skills, and student satisfaction with the NVAA faculty.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

To assess the background of the faculty, several sources of information were collected and analyzed including the NVAA faculty resumes/biographies, telephone interviews, and faculty information provided by VALOR. Based on a review of these data, it is clear that the NVAA faculty members are experienced trainers and knowledgeable in victim-related issues. The faculty have a broad range of expertise in subject areas such as crisis management/intervention, training and technical assistance, and information and referral. They represent organizations such as academic institutions, national and community-based non-profits, child/youth services, and court-based/prosecution-based organizations. The remainder of this subsection discusses the NVAA faculty’s education and expertise in victim-related issues and their experience and roles with the NVAA.

1.1 Education/Expertise

As part of the NVAA evaluation, resumes/biographies were collected from 23 NVAA faculty members and used to identify their educational background and areas of expertise. Of the 23 faculty members, 5 were attorneys, 7 had doctoral degrees, and 11 held masters degrees. Additionally, the 23 faculty members reported an average (mean) of 13 years of experience in higher education, 12 years of experience in training instruction, and an average (mean) of 15 years of experience in direct victim services. Key areas of expertise in victim services included crisis management/intervention, short-term counseling, information and referral, and training.

1.2 Knowledge of the Subject Matter Presented

Based on data from the faculty resume review, in general, the faculty members have direct subject matter knowledge or practical experience in the NVAA sessions they taught.

Exhibit III-1 presents a sample of the faculty experience/knowledge relevant to the subject matter presented in the NVAA sessions.

While the NVAA site coordinators were instrumental in assigning sessions to faculty members, these decisions were made in consultation with the faculty members based on their expertise, their teaching load, and their prior experience at the NVAA.

EXHIBIT III-1 FACULTY KNOWLEDGE OF NVAA SUBJECT MATTER PRESENTED	
Core Sessions	Faculty Knowledge of the Subject Matter
2.1: Federal and State Jurisdiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Masters in Public Administration
2.2: Dynamics of the Criminal Justice System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teaches corrections and victim services ■ Teaches criminal law and corrections
3.1: Juvenile Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Works with victims of juvenile offenders ■ Authored this sub-chapter in the NVAA Text
3.2: Federal Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Victim/Witness Coordinator for the US Attorney's Office
4: Restorative Justice/Community Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teaches restorative justice ■ Member of the American Correctional Assoc.'s Restorative Justice Committee ■ Provided legal advocacy and restitution assistance to victims of crime
5.1: Civil Remedies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Attorney
5.2: Restitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teaches restitution ■ Provides services to victims of property and economic crime or fraud
5.3: Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provided compensation claim assistance to victims of crime
6.1: Trauma Assessment and Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teaches psychology, peer counseling, system response to family violence ■ Teaches victimology and victim services, crisis counseling ■ Co-authored NVAA sub-chapter on this topic
6.2: Stress Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teaches psychology, peer counseling, system response to family violence ■ Teaches behavior management

1.3 Experience in Training Delivery and Group Facilitation

As part of the faculty telephone interviews, faculty members were asked if they had formal education or training in specific teaching strategies including: adult learning principles, communication skills and styles, group facilitation, learning styles or presentation techniques. Nearly all the faculty had formal education or training in these teaching strategies. This information is summarized in Exhibit III-2.

EXHIBIT III-2	
FORMAL EDUCATION OR TRAINING IN TEACHING STRATEGIES (N = 23)	
Name of Teaching Strategy	Percent Educated/Trained
Adult Learning Principles	100%
Communication Skills and Styles	91.3%
Group Facilitation	95.7%
Learning Styles	100%
Presentation Techniques	100%

The faculty received formal education or training in these teaching strategies primarily from attendance at seminars and workshops, graduate school training, and on-the-job training. Several faculty members also mentioned the professional development provided by VALOR as a source of their education and training in effective teaching strategies.

1.4 NVAA Experience

The faculty at each of the NVAA sites had substantial years of experience teaching at the NVAA. At each site, the faculty members had an average (mean) of 5-6 years of prior experience with the NVAA. In addition, numerous faculty asked to return to the same NVAA site each year since teamwork and camaraderie developed among the faculty members, who had been originally selected by the NVAA project team based on their level of competence, experience, and specific discipline in victim services. The NVAA project team also sought to have a diverse faculty.

2. ROLES AT THE NVAA

The primary role of the NVAA faculty is to teach scheduled sessions. The core faculty members are assisted in this role by faculty from co-sponsoring academic institutions, speakers from national crime victims' organizations, and local, state and Federal victims' rights and criminal justice experts. This assistance with the instruction helped them to assume other responsibilities for the NVAA, including curriculum development, site coordination, and student mentoring. Each of these roles is described below:

- **Curriculum Development.** Prior to the start the week-long NVAA, faculty members are often involved in preparing or editing revisions to the Academy Text or supplemental chapters. In addition to assisting with these tasks, some of the 2002 NVAA faculty members were members of the NVAA project team that was involved in the original drafting and editing of the Academy Text. Of the 23 chapters in the 2002 Academy Text, the authors of 12 of the chapters were also 2002 faculty members. At the 2002 NVAA, faculty members taught 15 sessions based on the chapters they either authored or co-authored.
- **Site Coordinator.** At CSU-Fresno and Washburn, NVAA faculty members also served as site coordinators with a number of responsibilities for preparing and administering the NVAA in addition to their other faculty responsibilities. At MUSC, a non-faculty member served as the primary site coordinator. The site coordinators had several responsibilities including: (1) preparing the entire faculty for the NVAA via faculty meetings, e-mail exchanges and telephone calls; (2) preparing the students for the NVAA by sending information and assessing student expectations; and (3) providing on-going faculty support by facilitating faculty meetings and overseeing site logistics during the NVAA.
- **Student Mentoring.** The majority of faculty members interviewed following the NVAA (82.6%) reported participating in mentoring groups during the NVAA. At each site, NVAA students were assigned to mentoring groups based on their experience or home agency (e.g., one mentoring group of law enforcement personnel). The mentoring groups met frequently throughout the week and served a number of roles including offering opportunities for student networking and small group discussion. The responsibility for leading a mentoring group was in addition to the faculty members' teaching roles, but generally faculty reported that they enjoyed the experience because it allowed them to address any social or emotional issues that arose among the students, provided one-on-one time with students, and allowed an opportunity for discussion of any advanced or new topics.

3. OBSERVATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF FACULTY QUALITY AND SKILLS

The NVAA evaluation was designed to determine if the NVAA provides high quality, intensive education and training to victim services providers, advocates, and professionals from Federal, state, local and tribal settings. A primary source of data for this analysis included the on-site observations and ratings of the quality and skills of the NVAA faculty by the evaluation team members. This subsection summarizes the data from 83 session observations conducted across the three NVAA sites by the evaluation team members.

3.1 Learning Objectives

When observing when and how instructors introduced learning objectives for their NVAA sessions, Caliber staff rated two specific performance criteria: (1) Were the learning objectives identified at the beginning of the session? (2) Did the learning objectives match those

in the instructor's manual/Text? In addition, the Caliber staff also recorded general observations related to the learning objectives.

Based on the on-site observations, less than half (39%) of the sessions began with an identification of the specific learning objectives for that session. It appeared as though this step (identifying the learning objectives) was often skipped to allow more time to actually cover the information during the session. In some cases, faculty members provided students with a session overview or plan, which was not always linked to the learning objectives stated in the Academy Text. Although the learning objectives were not always identified for the participants, the on-site observers compared the content of each core session with the learning objectives from the Academy Text and found in over 77.9 percent of the sessions, the information presented during the session did in fact address the learning objectives from the Text. There was some variation by instructors, and in many sessions the instructors provided additional information based on their areas of expertise to supplement information from the Text. In sessions where faculty did not cover the learning objectives in the instructor's manual/Text, observers noted that faculty often made reference to the learning objectives and students were guided to the Academy Text to learn more about a specific topic.

3.2 Faculty Teaching Methods

Because teaching methods can greatly influence student learning, the evaluation of NVAA included measures of student and faculty perspectives and evaluation team members' observations of instructors' teaching methods or strategies. In follow-on interviews, students reported that instructors were most effective when utilizing group discussion (52.4%), videotapes (48.6%), and lecture (43.8%). Less effective teaching strategies reported by approximately two-thirds of the participants included role-playing, use of compressed video, and the use of panel discussions. General comments indicate that these instructional methods were not stimulating, poorly transmitted, lacked interaction, and seemed staged.

Faculty were also asked to rate the effectiveness of various teaching strategies used by themselves and other faculty members during the course of the Academy. A little over 60 percent of the faculty rated group discussion as the most effective teaching strategy. Other favorable teaching strategies identified by faculty included lecture (43.5% rated as "very effective"), role-play (39.1% rated as "most effective"), and videotape (34.8% rated as "most effective"). Faculty, like students, rated the satellite/CV, lab exercises, and panel presentations as "least effective."

In addition to student and faculty responses, session observations were conducted by evaluation team members to determine how long each teaching strategy was utilized during a given session. It should be noted that the evaluation team did not observe all elective sessions

because multiple classes may have been occurring at the same time. Overall, teachers primarily utilized group discussion, lecture, and videotape instructional methods. The evaluation team observed that an average of 41 minutes per class was spent lecturing, an average of 21 minutes per class was spent engaging students in group discussion, and an average of 18 minutes per class was spent showing a videotape. While a little more than half of students (52.4%) and faculty (approximately 60%) reported group instruction to be the “most effective” teaching strategy, faculty actually spent the majority of class time lecturing.

3.3 Responding to Student Expectations

In the observation of instructor ability to meet student expectations during NVAA sessions, three performance criteria were specifically rated: (1) Does the instructor respond well to student questions? (2) Does the instructor reference student needs and expectations during the presentation? (3) Does the instructor ask about student needs and expectations? In addition, the Caliber staff also recorded general observations on student expectations. A summary of the session observation data on student expectations is presented in Exhibit III-3.

EXHIBIT III-3 STUDENT EXPECTATIONS*						
	Responds Well to Student Questions (N=82)		References Student Needs and Expectations During Presentation (N=76)		Asks About Student Needs and Expectations (N=78)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	73	89.0%	11	14.5%	10	12.8%
No	9	11.0%	65	85.5%	68	87.2%

*The sample size for each analysis represents the number of sessions observed by the on-site evaluation teams across the three sites for a given question.

Based on the session observations, for most of the sessions (89.0%), faculty responded well to student questions by such means as soliciting assistance from other faculty in responding to student’s questions, practicing active listening techniques, and answering questions throughout the lecture. There were a few sessions, however, for which students did not ask any questions, questions were not solicited from the students, or questions were not answered appropriately. Additionally, there was little attention given by the faculty in most of the sessions (85.5% and 87.2% respectively) to identifying or soliciting information regarding students’ needs or expectations related to a given topic. The observers attributed these deficits to the limited time allocated to each NVAA session and the amount of information to be covered during that time.

3.4 Instructor Presence

In the observation of the NVAA sessions for instructor presence, three performance criteria were specifically rated: (1) Is the instructor comfortable in front of a group? (2) Does the instructor provide constructive feedback? (3) Is the instructor available to students outside of the classroom setting? In addition, Caliber staff also recorded general observations on instructor presence. A summary of the session observation data on instructor presence is presented in Exhibit III-4.

EXHIBIT III-4						
INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE*						
	Is Comfortable in Front of a Group (N=82)		Provides Constructive Feedback (N=67)**		Is Available to Students Outside of Classroom Session (N=82)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	80	97.6%	50	74.6%	77	93.9%
No	2	2.4%	17	25.4%	5	6.1%

* The sample size for each analysis represents the number of sessions observed by the on-site evaluation teams across the three sites for a given question.

**The smaller sample size for this question is the result of “not applicable” responses rather than incomplete or missing data.

Based on the session observations, for most of the sessions, the instructors were observed to be comfortable in front of a group (97.6% of the sessions), providing constructive feedback (74.6%), and being available to students outside of the classroom session (93.9%). Caliber staff commented that the NVAA faculty was very personable, energetic, and engaging. Due to the schedule constraints (e.g., students moving between classroom buildings for sessions, or having inadequate time between sessions) it was sometimes difficult for faculty to meet with students immediately after a session; however, it was observed that faculty were available to meet with students outside of the classroom at varying times throughout the course of the week.

3.5 Presentation Skills

In the observation of the NVAA sessions for presentation skills, six performance criteria were specifically rated: (1) Does the instructor make the materials relevant to students? (2) Does the instructor use a blend of theoretical and practical information? (3) Does the instructor use effective questioning and feedback skills? (4) Does the instructor use clear, concise and understandable speech? (5) Does the instructor acknowledge multiple points of view on controversial subjects? (6) Does the instructor effectively use media/ancillary materials? In addition, Caliber staff also recorded general observations on presentation skills. A summary of the session observation data on presentation skills is presented in Exhibit III-5.

EXHIBIT III-5 PRESENTATION SKILLS*												
	Makes Material Relevant to Students (N=83)		Blends Theoretical and Practical Information (N=81)		Uses Effective Questioning / Feedback Skills (N=76)		Uses Clear, Concise Speech (N=83)		Acknowledge Multiple Points of View (N=56)		Uses Media/ Materials Effectively (N=76)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	76	91.6%	66	81.5%	55	72.4%	82	98.8%	44	78.6%	73	96.1%
No	7	8.4%	15	18.5%	21	27.6%	1	1.2%	12	21.4%	3	3.9%

*The sample size for each analysis represents the number of sessions observed by the on-site evaluation teams across the three sites for a given question.

Based on the session observations, for most of the sessions, the instructors were highly rated in terms of their presentation skills. Caliber staff commented that for most of the sessions, NVAA faculty made the material relevant to students (91.6%), used clear and concise speech (98.8%) and used media/ancillary materials effectively (96.1%). General observations on faculty presentation skills included:

- Faculty asked students to share work experiences/stories, incorporated their personal experience, incorporated adult learning techniques, and gave students practical tips.
- Faculty placed more emphasis on practical information than theory. In fact, some sessions lacked any clear presentation of theory.
- The majority of sessions incorporated student questions and feedback throughout the session.
- Faculty had some difficulties in using media (e.g., loud overhead fans or audio-visual malfunctions). Some slides had Text size that was hard to read, and some instructors used their own slides and flip charts during the sessions.

3.6 Session Management

In the observation of the NVAA sessions for session management, five performance criteria were specifically rated: (1) Does the instructor demonstrate an awareness of time? (2) Does the instructor encourage multiple students to participate? (3) Does the instructor direct student discussion and activity to learning objectives? (4) Does the instructor manage uncomfortable discussion well? (5) Does the instructor create an environment of cultural awareness? In addition, the Caliber staff also recorded general observations on session

management. A summary of the session observations data on presentation skills is presented in Exhibit III-6.

EXHIBIT III-6 SESSION MANAGEMENT*										
	Demonstrates an Awareness of Time (N=80)		Encourages Multiple Students to Participate (N=80)		Directs student Discussion and activity to Learning Obj's. (N=75)		Manages Uncomfortable Discussion Well (N=40)**		Creates an Environment of Cultural Awareness (N=60)**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	69	86.3%	72	90.0%	59	78.7%	32	80.0%	46	76.7%
No	11	13.8%	8	10.0%	16	21.3%	8	20.0%	14	23.3%

* The sample size for each analysis represents the number of sessions observed by the on-site evaluation teams across the three sites for a given question.

**Most of the missing data were the result of the criteria being not applicable to a given session or in the case of creating an environment of cultural awareness, the raters were unable to make a determination because they did not know the backgrounds of many of the audience members.

Based on the session observations, for most of the sessions, the instructors were highly rated in terms of their session management skills. Caliber staff commented that for most of the sessions, the NVAA faculty demonstrated an awareness of time (86.3%), encouraged multiple students to participate (90.0%), directed student discussion and activity to learning objectives (78.7%), managed uncomfortable discussion well (80.0%), and created an atmosphere of cultural awareness (76.7%). General observations on session management included:

- Some faculty deleted planned activities based on time limits, while some sessions were cut short because of time constraints. There were also sessions when the instructors ran out of time, had to abruptly end a session, or extended the session beyond the scheduled ending time.
- Many faculty members expanded the definition of cultural awareness to include different cultures in victim assistance (i.e., district attorneys or community-based advocates). Faculty also discussed their personal experiences with cultural awareness in order to examine differences of both victims and providers. Despite attention to this issue, some sessions included statements or actions by students and faculty that could be viewed as culturally insensitive.

3.7 Content Knowledge

In the observation of the NVAA sessions for content knowledge, four performance criteria were specifically rated: (1) Does the instructor demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the subject? (2) Does the instructor easily explain key principles and skills? (3) Does the instructor demonstrate experience-based knowledge? (4) Is the instructor able to relate discussion to other Academy topics? In addition, the Caliber staff also recorded general observation on content knowledge. A summary of the session observation data on content knowledge is presented in Exhibit III-7.

EXHIBIT III-7 CONTENT KNOWLEDGE*								
	Demonstrates Comprehensive Knowledge of the Subject (N=83)		Explains Key Principles and Skills Easily (N=82)		Demonstrates Experienced-based Knowledge (N=82)		Relates Discussion to Other Academy Topics (N=76)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	79	95.2%	71	86.6%	79	96.3%	56	73.7%
No	4	4.8%	11	13.4%	3	3.7%	20	26.3%

*The sample size for each analysis represents the number of sessions observed by the on-site evaluation teams across the three sites for a given question.

Based on the session observations, for most of the sessions, instructors were highly rated in terms of their content knowledge. Caliber staff commented that for most sessions, the NVAA faculty demonstrated comprehensive knowledge of the subject (95.2%), could explain key principles and skills easily (86.6%), demonstrated experienced-based knowledge (96.3%), and was able to relate discussion to other Academy topics (73.7%). General observations on content knowledge included:

- Faculty referred students to the Text for additional details that they could not provide. It was also observed that some faculty were stronger on teaching the practice of victim services than the theory.
- Faculty discussed cases they have worked on, personal experiences and new research on the session topics.
- Faculty made natural connections among the Academy topics (e.g., mental health and PTSD, victims' rights and restorative justice, domestic violence and stalking).

In addition to recording observations on each of the performance criteria, the Caliber staff also provided an average overall rating on each of the session dimensions (i.e., learning objectives, student expectation, instructor presence, presentation skills, session management, and content knowledge). Each dimension was rated on a 5-point scale from 1-poor to 5-excellent. A summary of the overall ratings for the NVAA sessions observed by Caliber staff is presented in Exhibit III-8.

EXHIBIT III-8					
AVERAGE OBSERVER RATINGS*					
Learning Objectives (N=81)	Student Expectations (N=83)	Instructor Presence (N=83)	Presentation Skills (N=82)	Session Mgt. (N=83)	Content Knowledge (N=83)
Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
3.2	2.9	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.2

*The sample size for each analysis represents the number of sessions observed by the on-site evaluation teams across the three sites for a given question.

Overall, the sessions were rated very favorably, particularly in the areas of instructor presence, presentation skills, session management, and content knowledge. Based on the observer ratings, the session areas with the lowest ratings and perhaps needing the greatest improvement included identification of learning objectives and recognition/solicitation of information related to students needs and expectations for a given topic area.

4. STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMY FACULTY

Overall, students at all three NVAA sites were satisfied with the faculty members as instructors, mentors and on-going professional resources. This information is reflected in the data from the Session Evaluation Forms collected from students following each NVAA session. These data revealed that the majority of students either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- Session was well organized, clear and comprehensive (95.1%)
- The teaching methods employed were appropriate to the session content (94.5%)
- My questions and concerns were answered adequately (76.6%).

In addition to these data on specific NVAA sessions, Overall Evaluation Forms were collected from a large majority of students (179) on the final day of the NVAA. The Overall Evaluation Forms included questions about the students' overall satisfaction with the NVAA faculty. Data on the students' satisfaction with the faculty members are presented in the remainder of this subsection.

4.1 Faculty as Instructors

As noted previously, the NVAA faculty members at each site consisted of teams of both academic and practitioner faculty. This exposed students to both national leaders in the practice and advocacy of victims' assistance, as well as leading academic researchers on victim-related issues. One intent of the blended faculty teams was to expose students to differing points of view and experience from a range of professionals in the victim services field, based on the emerging research and practices that are helping to advance the field. Therefore, the NVAA students were asked on the Overall Evaluation Form, "To what extent did the faculty represent a range of experience and point of view?" Many participants felt faculty "very much" represented a range of experience and point of view, with an additional 24 percent reporting the faculty "more than somewhat" represented such a range.

The Overall Evaluation Form also included a question on how much the faculty presentations enhanced students' learning of the information in the Text. As seen in Exhibit III-9, many students (60.5%) responded that the faculty presentations enhanced their learning of the information in the Text "very much."

EXHIBIT III-9		
OVERALL, HOW MUCH DID THE FACULTY PRESENTATIONS ENHANCE YOUR LEARNING OF THE INFORMATION IN THE TEXT? (N=177)		
	Frequency	Percent
A Little bit	5	
Somewhat	11	
More than Somewhat	54	
Very Much	107	

4.2 Faculty as Mentors

An important component of the NVAA is the opportunity for students to be mentored by the NVAA faculty members. The mentoring is conducted informally through interactions between students and faculty in sessions during the week and on the campus (i.e., dormitories, and cafeterias). In addition, the NVAA also has formalized methods for mentoring through the creation of mentoring groups. The mentoring groups were designed to facilitate networking, small group discussion, addressing social or emotional issues and discussing advanced topics.

On the Overall Evaluation Form, students were asked about their satisfaction with the faculty members in this mentoring role. An analysis of the data reveals that 65.4 percent of the students felt faculty were readily available for consultation and discussion outside of session times and 58.8 percent of the students felt that the faculty/student interaction enhanced the

Academy experience. The following subsection reports how well this mentoring role was sustained following the NVAA.

4.3 Contact with Faculty Following the Academy

Based on data from the student telephone interviews conducted between November 2002-February 2003, 55 of the students interviewed (52.3%) reported having been in contact with NVAA faculty since the Academy. Almost one-fourth of the students (24.1%) reported contacting a faculty member since the Academy, and an additional 19.6 percent reported having been in contact with two to three faculty members since the Academy. The students' reasons for contacting the faculty included: (1) seeking additional/updated information, (2) seeking additional training/inviting faculty to conduct training at their agencies and (3) collaborating on professional events. The students also mentioned contacting faculty members to maintain personal ties formed at the NVAA or for professional advice. Students who had not contacted a member of the faculty provided reasons such as the lack of time, lack of a personal connection to the faculty, and not having any additional questions or reason to contact the faculty members.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACADEMY FACULTY

There were several key recommendations that emerged from the evaluation related to the enhancement or improvement of Academy faculty, primarily related to teaching approaches/strategies used with adults. Some of the specific recommendations included:

- Faculty need to clearly state the learning objectives for a given session at the start of their presentation to ensure participants understand what they are expected to take away from each session. Additionally, faculty need to make sure to coordinate or blend the learning objectives from the instructor's manual, the Academy Text, and their own presentation (if applicable) to avoid confusion for participants.
- Faculty should maximize the use of interactive teaching strategies during each session. Specifically, faculty need to spend more time engaging participants in discussion both with faculty and with other participants.
- Faculty should continue to use instructional aids, such as videotapes, in order to demonstrate "real-world" application of the information being presented at the Academy.
- Faculty need to give greater attention to the specific needs and expectations of participants. This can be done through a needs assessment of participants prior to the start of the Academy or as part of the opening session on day one of the Academy. Additionally, faculty should attempt to solicit input from participants at the start of

each session to ensure the information to be presented addresses the needs and meets the expectations of the students.

- Faculty need to improve their time management for each session to ensure the necessary information is presented, allowing time for discussion. For some of the sessions, faculty had to rush to get through their presentation or abruptly end the session before completing their presentation. The issue of time management coincides with a larger recommendation related to the length of the Academy and each session, which will be discussed later in this report.

In general, participants were satisfied with the expertise and knowledge of the Academy faculty and found the faculty to be approachable, both during the Academy and following the Academy. Because faculty are a key factor associated with the successful transfer of information during the Academy, it is important for them to continually assess their approach to teaching adults and ensure their information and strategies are appropriate for their target audience(s).

IV. ACADEMY MATERIALS

This chapter presents the findings from the assessment of the Instructor's Manual and the Academy Text, the two primary training materials for the NVAA. The results are based on feedback from NVAA faculty, student and supervisor assessments, and individual peer reviews of the Academy Text.

1. THE INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

For the first time in 2002, the NVAA developed an instructor's manual that was distributed to all faculty members prior to the start of the NVAA (although at least one faculty member reported receiving the instructor's manual after arriving on-site). The purpose of the manual was "to ensure the provision of quality, uniform and consistent education and training at all NVAA sites." The instructor's manual included four sections:

- NVAA Nuts & Bolts (guidelines for advance preparation, on-site preparation, on-site faculty coordination, setting the stage for the NVAA and NVAA graduation activities)
- Adult Learning (theory that can augment and enhance NVAA 2002 efforts)
- Presentation (practical tips that can augment and enhance NVAA 2002 efforts)
- NVAA Learning Activities (detailed learning activities for each chapter/subchapter of the Academy Text).

More than half of the faculty (56.5%) reported that the information contained in the instructor's manual did influence their choice of teaching strategies used at the Academy. When asked how helpful the teaching strategies were in preparing to teach at the Academy, faculty, on average, rated the strategies "3" or above on a 5-point scale, with 5 being most helpful. Faculty who rated the teaching strategies favorably reported that: (1) the information was especially beneficial to new faculty members; (2) it provided good summaries of the session information; (3) it triggered ideas for presenting topics; and (4) it was practical information that could increase consistency across sessions and Academy sites.

The faculty who gave low ratings on the teaching strategies reported that the instructor's manual only had a marginal impact on their knowledge of the topic, or they needed more flexibility to vary the training aids or learning objectives to meet their teaching style.

Although there were some benefits to having the instructor's manual available, overall, most faculty (78.3%) felt the instructor's manual needed to be improved. Some of the suggestions for improving the manual or the usefulness of the manual included:

- Ensuring the instructor's manual is received by faculty several weeks prior to the Academy to allow time for review, questions and clarification, and use in preparing presentations. One-half of the NVAA faculty interviewed reported that they received the instructor's manual less than one week before the Academy, which they felt was not enough time to adequately review the document and fully incorporate the information into their sessions. More than one-third of faculty members (34.7%) would have preferred to receive the instructor's manual five or more weeks prior to the start of the Academy.
- Coordinating the learning objectives in the instructor's manual with the learning objectives in the Academy Text to ensure consistency and to highlight the most important points to stress for participants (what are students suppose to learn from each session?). Currently there is no explanation for the difference in learning objectives between the two documents.
- Providing more explanation and instruction on how to use the instructor's manual. It needs to be clarified whether the manual is intended as a guide or a set of required processes and exercises.
- Allowing more flexibility or identifying areas where faculty can and should infuse their expertise or incorporate new research into the delivery of their sessions. Also, allowing more flexibility for faculty to incorporate their own teaching strategies into the sessions.
- Providing more examples and practical information, such as "how to" information for facilitators (e.g., how to facilitate small group activities in an auditorium setting) and include session overheads with the instructor's manual. This is a helpful tool for faculty and can help ensure greater consistency in the presentation of basic information across sites.

Faculty also mentioned adding a section to the instructor's manual on how the faculty should work together at the NVAA, both within and across sites. The faculty indicated that these additions would help faculty to better prepare and improve their professional presentation skills and could improve the flow of the Academy week for faculty and students.

2. THE ACADEMY TEXT

The 23 faculty members interviewed following the NVAA were asked a series of questions about the Academy Text. Specifically, the faculty was asked about the utility, content, currency, and validity of the Text. Only four of the original Academy project team members,

those who wrote and applied for the grant as well as those who organized the first Academy Text, taught at the 2002 NVAA. Of the 2002 faculty, 11 authored at least one chapter of the Academy Text. One faculty member authored five chapters, and another faculty member contributed to 15 chapters.

2.1 Use of the Academy Text for Planning

Of the faculty interviewed, the majority (91.3%) concurred the Academy Text was useful in preparing for the Academy. They felt that the Text is the “backbone” of the Academy that provides a synthesis of broad topic areas and incorporates new information in the field as well as up-to-date statistics. Although the majority of the faculty agreed that the Text is comprehensive and helpful in preparing for the Academy, seven of the 23 specifically commented that it is best used as a resource or reference guide rather than a teaching tool. Faculty who did not find the Text a useful preparation tool reported that it contains a lot of extraneous information and omits more advanced information for more experienced students.

2.2 Currency of Information

Only a third of the faculty interviewed thought the information presented in the Text was current and up-to-date. Even though the Text contains topics that it did not contain five years ago, such as hate and bias crime, innovative technology and the information age, and terrorism, it needs to be updated more frequently, which according to faculty is not occurring. In some cases, faculty report the research for even the “new” topics is at least 10 years old.

One of the biggest disadvantages of the Academy Text, according to the faculty members, is that it has not been collectively revised since it was created. The victim services field has changed and evolved. The Academy Text has been adapted to keep up with these changes, but half of the faculty members interviewed commented that the Text has not been thoroughly updated from start to finish in the past 3 to 5 years. Supplements to the Text are forwarded to faculty shortly before each Academy, yet these do not always flow well with the rest of the Text. A supplement is a replacement chapter, an additional chapter, or additional information to accompany an existing chapter. In the past, chapters have been supplemented, but not reorganized, which results in choppy language that is difficult to follow and seems “thrown together.”

In regard to updating the Text with supplemental material, some faculty members admitted to completely ignoring the supplements, while others said it was difficult to understand the supplemental material in the context of various concepts of a topic. The material appears “thrown together” without the author having consulted the entire Text for corresponding data,

research, references, etc., or having considered consistency. On the other hand, the faculty members realize that a complete annual overhaul of the Academy Text is not feasible given the frequency of statistical and legislative changes. To compensate, many faculty took it upon themselves to provide updated information on the topics they were responsible for teaching. They provided handouts or cited up-to-date information during their lectures.

2.3 Thoroughness of the Text

Faculty members agreed that the Academy Text provides a comprehensive view of each of the 30 topics covered. As one faculty member commented, “It’s impossible for anyone to know all the details of the sections, so the Text provides a roadmap.” Comments about the content indicated that it needed to be simplified; that it had become more of a training manual than an academically-based Text; and that faculty needed to supplement the chapters because they lacked current information. Specifically, the chapters on sexual assault, international issues in victim assistance, and financial crime lacked critical up-to-date information. With regard to the chapter on mental health needs, faculty found it severely outdated and felt more research on dealing with children and adolescents with mental health needs was necessary. In contrast, tribal justice was one topic that received favorable comments regarding its coverage. Faculty members also reported that they were impressed with the sections on Indian Country as it related to Federal, state, Tribal, and local statutes.

2.4 Assessment of the Learning Objectives in the Text

All eleven of the faculty who authored at least one chapter of the Academy Text had input into the learning objectives for their particular chapters. However, all of the chapter learning objectives were edited or revised by the primary writers and editors at VALOR. A majority (91.3%) of the faculty members interviewed found the learning objectives to be relevant for the session topics they taught. Faculty members commented that the learning objectives provided the knowledge students needed to complete the self-examinations and that helped track well with what needed to be taught in the chapter.

Almost one-half of the faculty (43.5%) experienced challenges or barriers in teaching to the learning objectives presented in the Text. Part of the challenges derived from their opinions that the objectives provide broad milestones/information for students at all levels but in fact needed to focus more on trends, promising practices, and practical things the students can use at work. As one faculty member stated, “the topics are broad and don’t cover the specific things that people come to the NVAA to learn.” Although this was the first year that the faculty members received an instructor’s manual in addition to the Academy Text, at times the additional document created more confusion rather than provided useful information or direction.

For example, the learning objectives in the instructor's manual did not match those in the Academy Text. Some faculty admitted to experiencing confusion about which learning objectives to teach. Consequently, faculty chose a variety of ways to address this confusion including: using the objectives of the instructor's manual rather than those of the Academy Text; using the Academy Text learning objectives rather than those of the instructor's manual; choosing to use the "most important" learning objectives (in their view) from both; or attempting to cover both complete sets of learning objectives.

2.5 Appropriateness of the Text for Students

Slightly more than half (56.5%) of the faculty said that there should be changes or additions to the Text to make it a better resource and teaching tool. In addition to updating and re-writing, faculty members were of the opinion that the Text remain a basic Text as originally intended or split into two versions; a basic and advanced Text to accommodate the diverse experiences of the NVAA students. According to one of the original project team members, the Text, "was originally organized for students with [less than] 5 years of experience, but NVAA accepts students with 8-10 years of experience who already know the basics." So, the Text attempts to strike a balance between these two levels of experience. This challenge is evident because years of experience in the victim services field among the 2002 NVAA participants ranged from new-to-the-field to more than 12 years of experience.

2.6 Student Assessments of the Text

In addition to input from faculty and site coordinators, NVAA participants were given an opportunity to provide feedback on the Academy Text through the Session Evaluations and the Overall Evaluation Forms. The Session Evaluation Forms were used to collect such information as whether the Text was relevant to the students' professional needs; if the Text was organized, clear, and comprehensive; whether the critical issues affecting the topic were addressed; and whether or not the students read the Text before arriving at the Academy and/or before each session. The Overall Evaluation Form covered whether the student thought the Academy Text was useful for someone in the victim assistance field with their level of experience and the extent to which they believed they would use the Text in their work upon leaving the Academy.

The majority of participants (89%) completing session evaluation forms reported that the chapters in the Academy Text that corresponded with the topics covered during the NVAA sessions were relevant to their professional needs; the chapters in the Text were organized, clear, and comprehensive; and that the chapters addressed critical issues affecting the topic covered during the session.

On the Overall Evaluation Form, 68 percent of the students thought the Text was useful for someone in the victim assistance field with their level of experience. Sixty-seven percent of the students thought they would be able to use the information in the Text to help in their work after they left the Academy. The Overall Evaluation Form also contained space for general comments about the Academy curriculum or Text of which 58 percent of the students provided comments. The most frequent comments included:

- The Text is great, helpful, valuable, excellent, and comprehensive. One participant even said, "This will be my 'work bible'!"
- They will use it either as a resource or training material.
- They will use it as a resource for statistics and information.
- It is a good guide for new advocates or those with little-to-no experience or just starting out in the victim services field.

One general comment expressed by almost all participants was that the Text should have been sent out sooner. In a section asking for comments, a few students (12%) cited that they received their copy only 11 days to 2 weeks prior to the start of the Academy. Their specific complaint was that if one of the Academy requirements was that students read the Text in its entirety prior to arriving at the Academy, the Text needed to be sent to them sooner. One suggestion was to send the Text to students 1 month to 6 weeks in advance of the Academy.

During follow-on interviews, students were asked if they had used the Text since returning to the workplace; if they found the Text useful in their work with victims; if they had to supplement the information in the Text; if they experienced any difficulties with the Text; and if they thought anything should be changed or added to the Text to make it a better resource for victim service providers. Of the students interviewed, less than half (43%) said they had used the Academy Text since returning to work. For those who had used it, the majority found it to be a useful resource or reference guide in their work with victims. In addition to using the Text as a resource, participants indicated they had used the Text to assist them in writing papers or proposals, to train their staff, to prepare for presentations to their organizations or their communities, or as a supplement to their existing training/presentation material. Additionally, students report passing along excerpts from the Text to their colleagues who had not attended the NVAA or simply referring to specific sections in their work with victims as a refresher. Specifically, the chapters on hate and bias crime, sexual assault, and domestic violence were referred to often. Second to these were the promising practice sections in the chapters and the statistics. Students said the Text was a valuable resource for expanding their knowledge base on various topics.

Almost a quarter of the students interviewed indicated they had to supplement the information in the Academy Text with other resources, but very few (5%) encountered difficulties using the Text. The students who reported difficulty with the Text said it was too dense and contained so much information that it was overwhelming. In contrast, the students who found they needed to supplement the information in the Academy Text with other resources, did so because the Text did not contain state-specific information or because more up-to-date information could be easily found on the Internet. Fifteen percent suggested changes or additions to the Text to make it a better resource for victim service providers. Some of the suggested changes included:

- Provide the Text on CD
- Expand or include information on child forensic interviewing
- Reduce the volume or divide topics into smaller sections
- Continuously update the information.

In addition to student comments about the Text, supervisors were asked during follow-on interviews whether the NVAA materials were used to develop or expand victim-related resources for their agency/organization. Of the supervisors interviewed, 20 percent said that information from the Academy Text has been used to train their employees, apply for grants, or make presentations to members of their organization or the community; echoing what participants had indicated in their follow-on interviews as well.

2.7 Overall Assessment of the Academy Text

A final source of information for the Academy Text assessment came from an extensive peer review of each chapter and subchapter of the Text. All 35 chapters/subchapters of the Academy Text were reviewed for the evaluation. The individuals chosen to review the 2002 Academy Text did so using a pre-established rating criteria (see Appendix A). The four criteria included organization, readability, content, and instructional value. Additionally, an overall or average rating for each chapter/subchapter was calculated based on the ratings given for the four criteria. The results of the peer review are presented in Exhibit IV-1.

The overall rating for the Academy Text and for each of the four criteria for the entire Text was roughly a 3 or “good”. It is important to note, however, that 29 of the 35 chapters/subchapters (82.9%) received a rating of 2 or lower for organization, readability, content, and/or instructional value. Additionally 18 of the 35 chapters/subchapters (51.4%) received an overall rating of 2 or lower. Based on the peer review of the Academy Text, it

appears as though there is a need to make some changes to the organization, readability, content, and/or instructional value for many of the chapters/subchapters. The reviewers' comments and recommendations are summarized below.

EXHIBIT IV-1 RESULTS OF ACADEMY TEXT PEER REVIEW						
Chapter/ Subchapter #	Chapter/Subchapter Title	RATING*				
		Organization	Readability	Content	Instructional Value	Overall Rating
1	Scope of Crime/Historical Review of the Victim's Rights Discipline	3	4	3	3	3
2.1	The Criminal Justice System Continuum: Federal and State Jurisdiction	3	1	3	2	2
2.2	The Criminal Justice System Continuum: Dynamics of the Criminal Justice System	3	1	3	2	2
2.3	The Criminal Justice System Continuum: A Case Study	3	1	3	2	2
3.1	Victims Rights and Specific Justice Systems: Juvenile Justice	2	2	2	2	2
3.2	Victims Rights and Specific Justice Systems: Federal Justice	3	4	3	3	3
3.3	Victims Rights and Specific Justice Systems: Military Justice	2	2	2	2	2
3.4	Tribal Justice	2	2	3	3	3
4	Restorative Justice/Community Justice	5	5	5	5	5
5.1	Financial Assistance for Victims of Crime: Civil Remedies	2	2	2	2	2
5.2	Financial Assistance for Victims of Crime: Restitution	2	2	3	3	3
5.3	Financial Assistance for Victims of Crime: Compensation	2	2	2	2	2
6.1	Mental Health Needs: Trauma Assessment and Intervention	1	1	2	2	2
6.2	Mental Health Needs: Stress Management	2	2	2	2	2
7	Substance Abuse and Victimization	2	3	4	3	3
8	Respecting Diversity: Responding to Underserved Victims of Crime	2	1	3	3	2
9	Domestic Violence	3	2	3	3	3
10	Sexual Assault	4	4	3	4	4
11	Child Victimization	3	3	4	4	4
12	Homicide	5	5	5	5	5
13	Drunk Driving	5	5	5	5	5
14	Victimization of the Elderly	1	2	3	3	2
15	Victimization of Individuals with Disabilities	2	3	3	3	3

EXHIBIT IV-1 RESULTS OF ACADEMY TEXT PEER REVIEW (CONT.)						
Chapter/ Subchapter #	Chapter/Subchapter Title	RATING*				
		Organization	Readability	Content	Instructional Value	Overall Rating
16	Financial Crime	2	4	3	3	3
17	Research and Evaluation	2	3	2	3	3
18	The News Media Coverage of Crime and Victimization	2	2	3	2	2
19	Collaboration for Victims' Rights and Services	1	3	3	2	2
20	Professionalizing the Discipline of Victim Services	1	2	2	1	2
21	Innovative Technologies and Information Age	4	2	3	3	3
22.1	Special Topics: Hate and Bias Crime	4	3	3	3	3
22.2	Special Topics: Stalking	3	1	2	2	2
22.3	Special Topics: Victims of Gang Violence	2	1	1	1	1
22.4	Special Topics: Campus Crime and Victimization	3	3	3	3	3
22.5	Special Topics: Workplace Violence	4	3	2	3	3
22.6	Special Topics: Rural Victims	4	2	3	4	3
22.7	Special Topics: International Issues in Victim Assistance	3	4	2	4	3
22.8	Special Topics: Funding for Victim Service	1	2	2	3	2
22.9	Special Topics: Terrorism and Victim Assistance Issues	1	2	3	3	2
OVERALL ACADEY TEXT RATING		2.6	2.5	2.8	2.8	2.7

*Rating Scale: 5=Outstanding 4=Excellent 3=Good 2=Fair 1=Poor

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING/IMPROVING THE ACADEMY TEXT

Although it was known from the start of the evaluation that the Academy Text was written by multiple authors, it was important to assess whether this was evident from reading the document. That is, did the style, format, grammar, and syntax vary across chapters and author or was there consistency in the presentation of information regardless of authorship? The overall assessment of the Text suggests that there was noticeable shifts in all of these areas, style, format, grammar, and syntax, from chapter to chapter and author to author even within a chapter creating a distraction for the reader/reviewer. Inconsistent verb tense, awkward sentences, and inconsistent presentation of information made chapters with valuable information difficult to

read and/or understand. For example, in some cases, abstracts reiterate content that is included in the body of the Text. In other cases, the abstract provides a general discussion of the issue. Other times, the abstract tells the reader what he/she will learn in the chapter, which is the suggested approach. Similarly, in some chapters the introduction is used to introduce the material, while in other chapters the introduction is used as both an introduction and a statistical overview.

Formatting and organization also need attention. Reviewers noted inconsistencies and errors in formatting and organization. Overuse of bullets was a common problem. Reviewers suggested including more information in narrative paragraph form, particularly in instances where two or three minor issues are listed. The use of bold italics and bold capitalization as section or topic headings was another example of inconsistent formatting. This made locating information in each section difficult because the reader is unsure where sections begin and end. The sections on promising practices are also listed in different ways. Generally, they are listed as bullets, but in some chapters they are listed with a title and description. Placing contact information about the program at the end of a promising practices description and checking the contact information for accuracy were also suggested.

The statistical data and citations need to be checked for the availability of more updated information. In a number of cases, the statistics, research, and references appear outdated. Although some earlier citations are expected given the historical perspective and theory behind the topic areas, references in many cases did not reflect the most state-of-the-art, current research in an area. This was especially evident by the fact that only one chapter contained research or references from the 21st century (i.e., terrorism) and there has been substantial research completed and promising and effective practices identified in recent times.

In general, the writing style is too informal for a research-based, academic Text. Much of the Text is written in a conversational tone that makes it difficult to track some concepts clearly. The Text has a "cut-and-paste" feel about it. For example, two of the most current topics, hate and bias crime and terrorism, appear to have been hastily compiled. Finally, reviewers suggested that all chapters need to start with an introduction.

Based on interviews with the faculty, site coordinators, students, and supervisors, as well as the analysis of each session and overall evaluations submitted by students, the Text is more useful as a resource or reference guide than a teaching tool. A select group of reviewers provided additional insights into the utility, content, currency, and validity of the Text. Their analysis revealed some strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for improving the Text.

According to the 2002 NVAA application form, the Academy is a foundation–level course whose curriculum is “geared toward victim service providers and allied professionals with between 1 and 5 years of experience working with crime victims.” Since the Academy accepts students with anywhere from less than 1 year to more than 12 years experience in the victim services field, the Text’s utility is challenged to operate both as a basic and advanced Textbook. Students with 12 years of experience may find it too basic for their needs. This reduces its utility and effectiveness as a teaching tool. For those with less experience, while the Text may present concepts that are useful, the lack of updated material thwarts its effectiveness as a teaching tool.

Both the faculty and students admitted the information in the Text was overwhelming, and there was not enough time during the Academy to thoroughly address all of it. Even though the information in the Text is comprehensive, the sheer volume of the document hinders the Text's effectiveness as a teaching tool. Eighty-seven percent of the faculty members commented that there was not enough time to cover all the material in the chapters, so they were obliged to decide how much information to cover and how to cover it. Moreover, what students learned was affected by the amount of time they had to prepare for the Academy before arriving and the time they had on-site. Students commented on their Overall Evaluations that they did not receive the Text early enough to conduct pre-Academy reading as instructed during the application process. In fact several students volunteered the comment that they only received their copy 11 days before the Academy, which was not soon enough given their work and personal schedules. Faculty, who likewise would have preferred to have received both the instructor's manual and Text anywhere from 6 weeks to 4 months in advance of the Academy in order to prepare, support this opinion. Therefore, lack of time and the comprehensiveness of the Text further promote the use of the Text as a resource following the Academy rather than a teaching tool during the Academy. One faculty member summed up the difference between a resource and teaching tool by saying that a teaching tool should be short and user-friendly for the students and engaging and focused on the reader for the faculty. Based on this description and the viewpoints of the faculty, students, and their supervisors, the Academy Text as currently written should be presented as more of a resource and reference guide than a teaching tool.

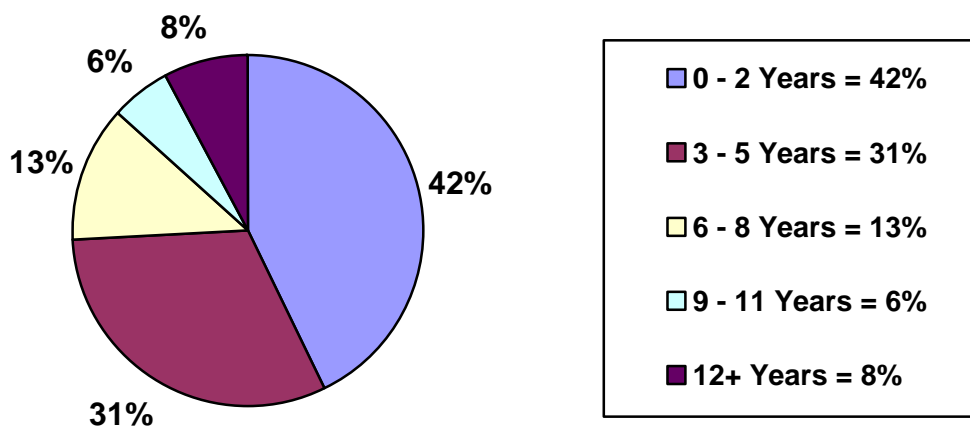
V. ACADEMY STUDENTS

This chapter describes the type of students who attended the 2002 NVAA Academy, including information about their background, goals for attending the Academy (what participants want to get out of the Academy), and their interests. These data were gathered from Academy Application Forms and the Participant Information Forms completed prior to the start of the Academy.

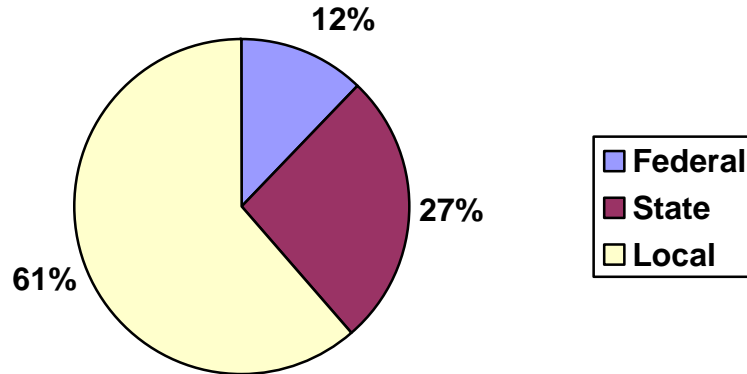
1. CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS

Based on information submitted with their NVAA applications and information collected on the Participant Information Form, important data regarding participants' backgrounds were available for the evaluation. The results are shown in Exhibits V-1 through V-4.

EXHIBIT V-1
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE VICTIM SERVICES FIELD



**EXHIBIT V-2
TYPE OF AGENCY REPRESENTED**



**EXHIBIT V-3
PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS REPORTING
TYPE OF VICTIMS SERVED**

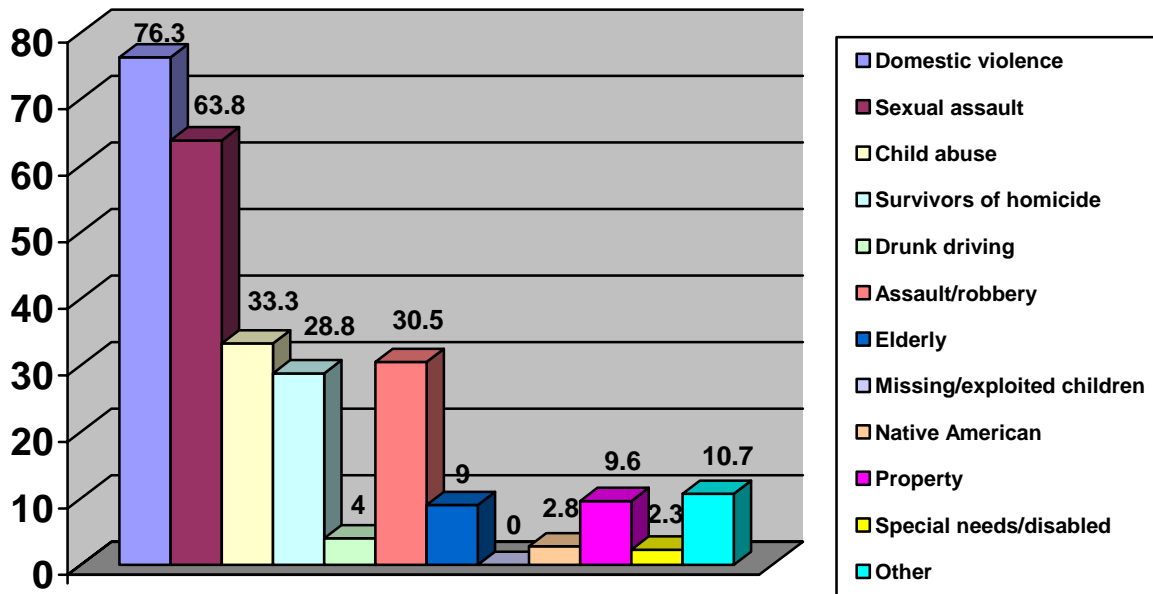
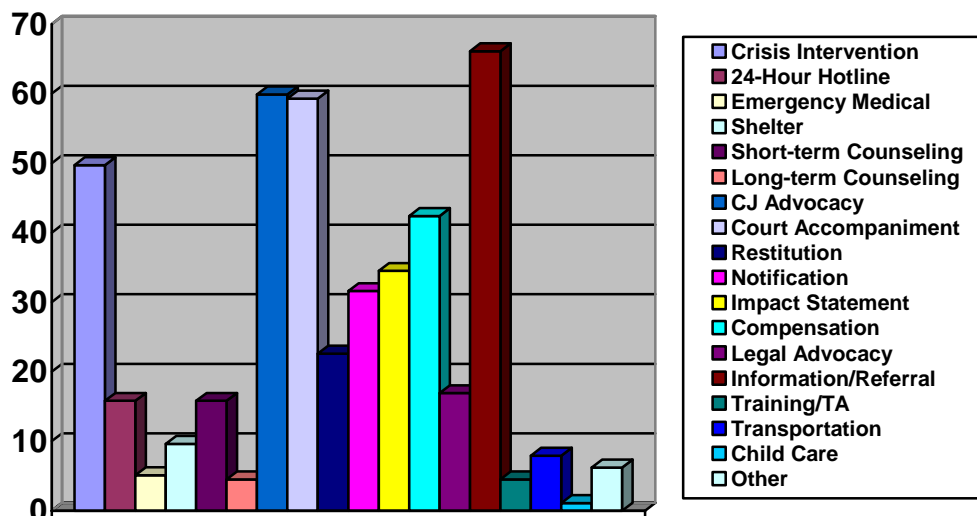


EXHIBIT V-4
PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS REPORTING TYPE
OF SERVICES PROVIDED



The information presented in Exhibits V-1 through V-4 demonstrates the differences among the participants at the NVAA with respect to years of experience, type of agency represented, type of victims served, and type of services provided to victims. More than half of the participants served victims of domestic violence (76.3%) and sexual assault (63.8%). This was followed by approximately one-third of the participants serving victims of child abuse, survivors of homicide victims, and victims of assault/robbery. The most underrepresented victim populations served by NVAA participants included Native American victims, victims with special needs/disabilities, victims of drunk driving, and elderly victims.

Regarding the type of services offered by NVAA participants, many students provided the following services for victims:

- Information and referral services (66.1%)
- Criminal justice advocacy services (59.9%)
- Court accompaniment services (59.3%)
- Crisis intervention services (49.7%).

Although the Academy is intended as a foundation-level course for entry-level service providers, advocates, and allied professionals, approximately one-fourth of the participants reported more than five years of experience in the field, with approximately 8 percent of those participants reporting 12 or more years of experience.

2. STUDENTS' GOALS AT THE START OF THE ACADEMY

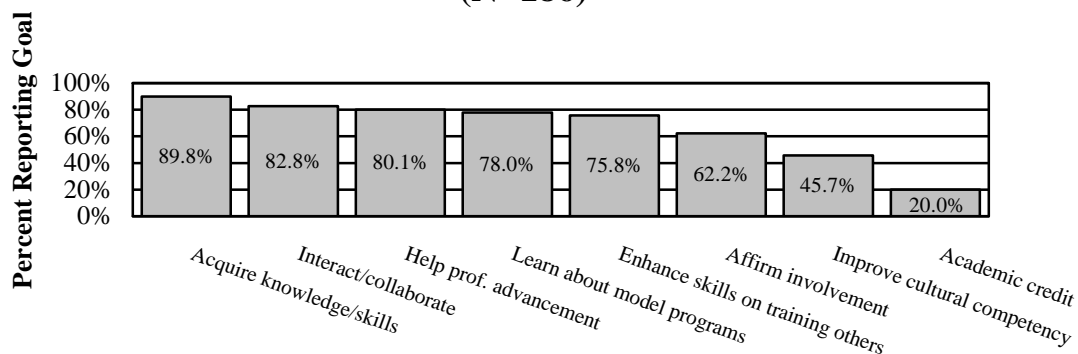
In order for the NVAA to have a lasting impact on students, it is important to understand students' goals and motivation for attending the Academy. Understanding why students attend can help focus faculty efforts on topics and activities that will ensure student needs are met, thereby increasing the usefulness and impact of the Academy on participants. In order to understand the goals of the NVAA students and how those goals were met by their Academy attendance, students identified their goals prior to Academy attendance, and then, at the end of the Academy, rated their experience related to their pre-Academy goals.

Upon arrival at the Academy, students were asked to identify their goals for attending the Academy from a list of eight goals derived from open-ended questions on the participant applications that investigated the reasons for student attendance. If a student's goals did not fit into one of the categories, participants could write in their goal(s). Students were then asked to identify from their list of goals, the three that they considered most important. This section presents a summary of the students' goals for attending the Academy and students' most important goals.

As shown in Exhibit V-5, the goals that most students wanted to achieve were to:

- Acquire knowledge and skills to improve ability to meet the needs of victims, specifically information about:
 - Recent research and innovation in services
 - The legal system, the criminal justice process, and victims' rights
 - Providing high-quality and appropriate referrals with follow-up in a way that helps victims understand the process
 - Improving communication skills when dealing with victims and other agencies
- Interact and collaborate with others in the field
- Acquire information that will help with professional advancement
- Learn about model/innovative services and programs
- Enhance skills on how to train/educate others in victim services.

EXHIBIT V-5
STUDENT REPORTING EACH ACADEMY GOAL
(N=186)



In addition to identifying goals or expectations for the Academy, participants were asked to prioritize their goals by designating the three goals that they considered most important to achieve during their time at the Academy. The results are presented in Exhibit V-6. Participants identified their most important goals as those related to direct victim services, including direct service knowledge and skill improvement, training others in victim services, learning about programs that work to serve victims, and interacting and collaborating with others in the victim services field.

Students are extremely interested in improving their own knowledge and skills, however, they are also very interested in learning how to educate and train others to use the information that they are learning. This is an important finding because it suggests Academy students should not only be learning the information themselves but also should be learning how to educate others once they return from the Academy. Additionally, students thought that their attendance at the Academy could help them advance professionally in their careers, but few felt that completing course credit requirements was important. In fact, only 58 percent of the students who identified completing the Academy for course credit as an interest on their application actually identified this as a goal for themselves at the start of the Academy. This indicates that though students want to advance in their careers, and the information provided at the Academy should help, completing the Academy as course credit is not a priority for most students and thus may not be extremely helpful in their professional advancement. This may be in part due to the fact that there are very few requirements for certification or accreditation within the victim services field.

EXHIBIT V-6 MOST IMPORTANT STUDENT GOALS	
Goal	Percentage of students indicating goal as one of three most important
Acquire knowledge and skills to improve my ability to meet the needs of victims	58.1%
Enhance skills on how to train/educate others in victim services	49.5%
Learn about model/innovative services and programs	45.2%
Acquire information that will help in my professional advancement	43.5%
Interact and collaborate with others in the field	33.3%
Affirm my involvement in the victim services field	19.9%
Improve cultural competency	8.1%
Complete academic course credit requirements	5.9%

3. STUDENTS' INTERESTS AT THE START OF THE ACADEMY

In addition to knowing the goals students hoped to achieve by attending the Academy, the evaluation also assessed the topic areas of greatest interest to participants at the start of the Academy. Prior to their arrival at the Academy, participants were asked to indicate their interest in each of the topic areas covered by the Academy. The topics were derived directly from the Academy Text, and students were asked to identify all topics of interest to them. After identifying all topics in which they were interested, students indicated the three topics they considered most interesting.

At the outset of the Academy, at least some students expressed interest in each of the topics to be covered during the Academy, with all students indicating an interest in more than one category. The percentage of students who were interested in each topic ranged from a high of 77.4 percent for domestic violence and sexual assault to a low of 23.7 percent for training the trainers. Topics with the largest proportion of all students indicating interest were:

- Domestic violence (77.4 %)
- Sexual assault (77.4 %)
- Child victimization (76.9 %)
- Stalking (70.4%)
- Collaboration for victims' rights (69.9 %).

Topics with the lowest proportion of all students indicating an interest included:

- Campus crime and victimization (36.6 %)
- Research and evaluation (30.6 %)
- Financial crime (29.6 %)
- Historical review of the victim rights discipline (28.0 %)
- Train the trainer (23.7%)

Additionally, the topics of greatest interest, or listed as a first priority included:

- Domestic violence
- The criminal justice system continuum
- Sexual assault
- Child victimization
- Terrorism and victim assistance issues.

Together, these five topics accounted for 45.7 percent of the areas of greatest interest listed first. Understanding the students' greatest interests at the outset of the Academy can help ensure the Academy capitalizes on student interests in order to ensure students are getting as much as they can out of the Academy.

4. VALUE OF STUDENT DIVERSITY

Bringing together students with varying backgrounds and interests was seen as a positive asset to the Academy environment by both faculty and students. Eighty-six percent of the 23 faculty interviewed indicated they were aware students would come into the Academy with a range of experience and knowledge, and almost all faculty spoke approvingly about the benefit of these differences. Likewise, six months after the Academy, 92 percent of the students interviewed reported an awareness of the wide range of knowledge and experience among NVAA students and said that the range of experience was conducive to learning. Student comments on this issue suggest several benefits to bringing together students with different characteristics, including:

- Providing real-life examples that expanded on learning
- Providing different approaches to problem solving

- Enhancing networking opportunities
- Increasing the level of enthusiasm about the Academy.

Participants with more experience working with victims were able to share their real-life examples and knowledge on problem solving with those newer to the field. In this case, the range of experience among participants benefited the newer service providers by exposing them to providers with more years of experience.

VI. ACADEMY ORGANIZATION AND ENVIRONMENT

This chapter presents information regarding the organization of the academy (Academy and session length, academy topics covered) and characteristics of the learning environment. This information was obtained from participant and faculty interviews, evaluation forms, and on-site observations of the evaluation team members.

1. LENGTH OF THE OVERALL ACADEMY AND SESSIONS

Program administrators carefully considered the time frame for the Academy, and for each session day, the courses offered and when courses should be scheduled. The goal was to offer core courses that covered foundation-level information and current topics in elective courses all within one week. At the close of the week's activities, students gave feedback on the Academy's overall organization. On the length of the entire Academy program, students' views were generally positive. Students rated the program length as either "good" (37.3%), "very good" (31.6%), or "excellent" (19.2%). When asked for additional comments, 13 students reported that the Academy should be extended to allow certain topics to be covered in greater detail. Ten of the thirteen students who elaborated on their responses to this question suggested extending the Academy an extra day or two in order to allow more time to sessions and for networking.

That said, it is important to note that the many students (60.0%) reported the session length as "good" and "very good" and said that enough time was allowed for topics to be covered appropriately. Despite these positive ratings, when asked what would have made the NVAA instruction more effective, almost half of the students (49.2%) reported that allowing more time to cover specific topics and more time for breaks during the day would have enhanced the learning experience. Specifically, participants indicated that more time would have allowed greater opportunities for discussion and more opportunities to draw on the expertise of the instructors. However, students reported that they struggled with the competing desire for more time at the Academy and the need to return home and/or to their jobs sooner.

Faculty follow-on interviews supported the notion that students, as well as faculty, balance the desire for more time at the Academy with the desire to not be away from home/work for too long. Sixty-one percent of the faculty members who were interviewed reported that they would change the length of the sessions in order to more adequately cover the topic areas, but several of them stated they were not sure how to do so without extending the length of the entire Academy program.

2. ACADEMY TOPICS

The course topics offered were well received by the students, with a majority (79%) indicating that topics were “very good” or “excellent.” Students were also generally satisfied with the division between core and elective courses, with 35 percent of students rating this division as “very good”, 30 percent as “good,” and 22 percent as “excellent.” Student comments indicated that they found the elective offerings to be extremely helpful and interesting, but that these sessions were too rushed and did not leave enough time for in-depth discussion. Some specifically reported that they had a difficult time choosing between two electives offered at the same time. One student suggested asking students in advance about which elective topics were of greatest interest to them, so program administrators could make better planning decisions about when to schedule elective classes. Conducting a needs assessment during the planning phase of the Academy would better inform program administrators on how courses could be organized.

3. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The assessment of the Academy learning/social environment was based on evaluation team observations, faculty input, and participant reactions and comments on various evaluation protocols. The results are presented below.

3.1 Facilities

Program administrators suggest that the university campus setting is vital to participants fully benefiting from the NVAA experience. While other settings have been considered and/or utilized, administrators believe the campus setting is most conducive to achieving the program’s goals. In light of this belief, all three Academies were held on a university campus setting during the evaluation period. Students were asked in the overall evaluation to assess the quality of the classrooms, housing, food, and campus environment. Students’ modal ratings of these aspects of the Academy were that the classrooms were “good,” the housing accommodations were “fair,” the food was “good,” and the campus environment was “excellent”. Exhibit VI-1 details the percentages of student responses for each of these factors.

While some of these scores may appear rather mixed, comments indicate that students found the overall environment to be conducive to their learning needs. Many students (68%) agreed with the statement that “having the NVAA take place on a university campus fosters interaction that contributes to learning.”

EXHIBIT VI-1					
STUDENT EVALUATION OF ACADEMY FACILITIES (N=179)					
	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Classrooms	12.3%	22.9%	25.1%	20.1%	19.6%
Housing	22.0%	26.6%	23.2%	15.3%	13.0%
Food	14.5%	21.8%	26.3%	19.0%	18.4%
Campus Environment	2.8%	9.6%	23.0%	30.3%	34.3%

3.2 Networking Opportunities

The opportunity to network with other victim service providers during the Academy was widely seen by students and faculty as an important component of the Academy experience. Much of the networking took place through the mentoring group sessions and informal interactions among participants. The mentoring groups specifically provided students with an opportunity to network with faculty and fellow students, to delve deeper into course topics, and to discuss ways to apply learned concepts in the workplace. In an evaluation of the mentoring groups completed at the close of the Academy, students reported very favorable (i.e., “agree” and “strongly agree”) opinions of the mentoring groups. For example:

- 72.4 percent found that the mentoring groups helped them gain a greater understanding of the session topics
- 66.9 percent found that the mentoring groups helped them understand how to apply learning from the class session in their workplace
- 57.2 percent found that the mentoring groups provided practice in the application of new skills
- 89.9 percent found that the mentoring groups gave them an opportunity to interact more with other students
- 85.6 percent found that the mentoring groups helped them understand better the work of other victim service providers.

From these initial data it appears that the mentoring groups provided a worthwhile opportunity for students to network and learn practical application of the concepts discussed in class.

In follow-on interviews, students were asked how mentoring group activities complemented other Academy activities. Students generally commented that the mentoring groups allowed time for discussion and gave them an opportunity to form deeper relationships

with other students. These follow-on data support what was learned from the feedback given at the end of the week.

During the telephone interviews with faculty, 86 percent of faculty reported that the mentoring groups complemented other NVAA activities. For example, 69.6 percent of the faculty reported that mentoring groups gave students an opportunity to ask questions and to discuss topics of individual interest. These data support the notion that mentoring groups enhanced the learning/social environment.

4. OVERALL ACADEMY EXPERIENCE

Upon completion of the Academy, students rated their experience as very positive with 97 percent of students rating their Academy experience as at least good, including 48 percent who rated their experience as excellent. Additionally, students appeared satisfied with the content of the Academy, with 94 percent of students rating the overall content as at least good, including 64 percent who rated the content as very good or excellent. When asked how they would describe their Academy experience to their co-workers, common responses were that the Academy could be described as an informative and quality, albeit intense, training experience that provided extensive networking opportunities and resources. Students agreed that the Academy faculty were excellent facilitators, personable with a knowledgeable background. The students also mentioned that the Academy was very broad and basic, a tool useful to people new in the field but also informative and rejuvenating for those with experience. Virtually all 98 percent of the students interviewed six months after the Academy would recommend the Academy to their co-workers.

In general, students found the interaction between faculty and fellow students, the Text, and the training sessions most helpful. Students liked the exposure to diverse service providers from different states and agencies. They learned about programs and resources with which they were unfamiliar (e.g., OVC efforts), shared their experiences, and received a quality education by premier leaders of the field with experience and knowledge. Students thought that learning about a variety of topics was helpful and provided a broad knowledge base. Approximately 95 percent of the students found that the Academy facilitated their understanding of the work of other service providers and 90 percent believed that their Academy experience will help them work with other providers in their communities.

Students found their Academy experience was worth the time and effort, allowing them to learn about the field, obtain resources, and meet other victim service professionals. They stated that the Academy offered a good basic course but that advanced coursework needs to be

developed for those with different levels of experience or specific interests in order to ensure maximum benefit for the participants. One option may be to use a needs assessment tool to ensure the Academy can meet the expressed needs and interests of the participants. An assessment of students' needs is discussed in more detail in Chapter X.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE ACADEMY ORGANIZATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Students provided suggestions on how the Academy could be improved in the future to enhance learning. Suggestions included:

- Many students (65%) felt that while gathering a broad base of knowledge is informative, it would be helpful if they could spend more time learning about the specific subjects pertaining to their profession within the victim services field. Students felt it would be beneficial if they exercised more choice regarding the sessions they could attend. By having some method of gauging student interest in each topic, faculty could target their discussion specifically to their audience. This would allow students to learn more about the topics of interest to them while still getting a broad understanding of the victim services field.
- Lodging, food, and classroom environment could have been made more comfortable (e.g., more breaks). Approximately half of the students reported that by improving the conditions at the Academy (i.e., learning environment) they could more effectively concentrate on learning and gathering resources.
- Many students (65%) reported that by receiving the Text earlier they would have had time to read more of it. This would also allow faculty to concentrate on teaching to the topic, using their own experiences and expertise to supplement the information in the Text, rather than having to “teach to the Text.”
- One-fifth of the students felt the mentoring groups would have been more useful if they were smaller and more inclusive. This would allow everyone's voice to be heard. It would also be helpful to group members according to their profession, so that students can share practical experiences and ideas.

These suggestions are intended to help guide the structure of the Academy and ensure the creation of a learning environment designed to more effectively meet the needs of attending students. Students found the Academy to be a useful tool and a good basic course for victim service professionals; however, it still warrants tailoring to the needs of participants. More

challenging advanced options need to be offered to those with more experience. This would allow the Academy to be more selective in its admissions process and more responsive to students' specific needs, while still ensuring that the basic information be useful to those new in the field.

VII. IMPACT OF THE ACADEMY ON STUDENTS

The 2002 NVAA is intended to be a foundation level course for victim service professionals new to the field (i.e., those with less than 5 years of experience). The premise of the Academy is that it will improve students' knowledge of the victim service field, improve student attitudes, and improve their performance as victim service professionals. The evaluation of the Academy measured improvement and change in each of these areas through data collection efforts before, during, and after the Academy. This chapter presents findings related to the impact of the Academy on attending students through a discussion of how well student goals and interests were addressed by the Academy, student knowledge gains (both factual and practical), student changes in attitude, and student behavior change following the Academy.

1. STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF GOALS MET

Just as important as knowing what goals students had for their participation at the Academy is determining whether those goals were met. Based on responses to the Overall Evaluation Form, which specifically asked about students goals, the Academy appears to be meeting the needs of its students through fulfilling their specific goals for attendance. For each of their most important goals, discussed in Chapter V, students, on average, felt satisfied with what they learned (86.6%) and felt that they would be able to apply what they learned in their work setting (86.6%). Given that most students wanted to acquire specific and general knowledge and skills that they can use to improve their work with victims, the statement that they can apply what they learned to their work provides evidence that the Academy is teaching students useful information that can directly help students improve their job skills. It is important to note, however, that the focus of the NVAA was not on skill building.

At the end of the Academy, students rated their overall experience to be very positive and had many favorable comments regarding the Academy and the extent to which it helped them achieve their desired goals. Participants indicated that the Academy helped them reaffirm their career choice, learn from others, and acquire useful knowledge and materials. However, some students felt that there should have been a session on how to train others in victim services, and that time allocated to specific victimization should be increased so that students can focus their efforts on the information that will be most useful to them in their work. Other students felt that there was not enough time to interact, collaborate, and acquire useful skills specific to victim services, given the hectic schedule of the Academy. Students indicated that although the experience was positive, improvements could be made that would help them fulfill their needs.

2. STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF HOW WELL GREATEST INTERESTS WERE MET

Based on participants' responses on the Overall Evaluation Form, the Academy appears to be meeting the needs of students by providing enough practical and useful information to ensure that most students are satisfied with what they learned related to the topics in which they are most interested (75%)¹. Additionally, students indicated that they would be able to apply the information to their work and that they plan to pursue the topics further. However, as shown in Exhibit VII-1, participants' responses to these questions were related to the priority given to the areas of interest (i.e., first, second, or third). The percentage of students agreeing that they could apply what they learned ranged from 67 percent to 85 percent and the percentage of students agreeing that they plan to pursue the topic further ranged from 76 percent to 81 percent. This information suggests that the topic presented first is the topic students felt was most applicable to their job, and the one that they are most likely to continue to learn about after leaving the Academy. These data indicate that students' work in these areas would be expected to show the largest changes in behavior specifically related both to applying what was learned during the Academy to their work and to pursuing the topic further on their own time.

EXHIBIT VII-1		
STUDENT AREA OF INTEREST AND FUTURE ACTION		
(N=155 – 166)		
Order of Greatest Interest	Percentage Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing That They Will Apply it to Their Work	Percentage Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing That They Will Pursue this Topic Further
Priority 1	84.7%	80.6%
Priority 2	70.9%	79.6%
Priority 3	67.2%	75.8%

Students were satisfied with what they learned at the Academy and reported that they could apply what they learned to their efforts as victim service professionals. They also indicated that even though they were satisfied with what they learned at the Academy, they will pursue their goals and interests further. This suggests that students are very interested in the topics the Academy is presenting; their goals are being met; they are using what they are learning; and their experience at the Academy is inspiring students to learn more and pursue further training and education. In fact, not only did participants intend to pursue their areas of

¹ Topics students are most interested in are presented in Chapter V.

interest further, but follow-on interviews suggest that they have carried through with this intention.

Of the 105 participants interviewed 5 to 6 months after the Academy, 58 percent reported that they have continued to expand their skills and/or knowledge to a greater degree than they would have had they not attended the Academy. Students reported pursuing additional training courses, such as the SVAA and the advanced NVAA training institutes. The NVAA experience helped students determine the areas where they needed and wanted additional training and education. In addition to training opportunities, students reported engaging in research in areas of interest identified from the Academy, as well as engaging in information exchange with others in the field on various topics.

3. STUDENT KNOWLEDGE GAINS

As an event intended for novice professionals, the Academy teaches both factual and practical knowledge regarding victimology, victimization, and victim services. It is anticipated that students should retain the knowledge taught and use the information when they return to their jobs as victim service professionals. Results from the analysis of both factual and practical student knowledge gains are presented in the next two subsections.

3.1 Factual Knowledge Gains

The Academy teaches factual knowledge during the 40-hour course through both attendance at Academy sessions taught by distinguished faculty in the field and through required reading of the corresponding chapters in the Academy Text. Students are presented with a broad variety of topics related to victim services, victimology, and victimization, including types of victimizations, characteristics of the justice system, laws, and current research. The structure of the Academy assumes that students have read the Text and that faculty members can then present and expound upon the learning objectives for the Text during the Academy sessions. Together, reading the Text and reinforcing or explaining what is in the Text should increase students' comprehension. Factual knowledge gain at the 2002 Academy was evaluated by measuring whether students were reading the Text, whether students thought topics were presented clearly and logically, whether the intended learning objectives were covered in each session, and how students performed on a knowledge assessment based on the Text learning objectives.

Reading the Text

One measure of whether knowledge has been acquired is the extent to which students read the chapters in the Academy Text. The Text contains 22 chapters that represent a variety of topics (30) related to victim services. Each chapter contains a set of learning objectives for that chapter along with detailed and current information on the topics presented. In order to assess knowledge gathered from reading the Text, students reported on each Session Evaluation Form whether they read the corresponding chapters for that Academy session either before attending the Academy or during the Academy. On average, students read 3 chapters in full and a portion of 9 chapters before arriving at the academy. Once they arrived at the Academy, students read an average of 2 more chapters in full and a portion of 10 additional chapters before the corresponding sessions occurred. This indicates that of the 31 topics covered in the Text, students were able to read less than a third of the chapters before attending the Academy session corresponding to that topic. Given the Academy premise that students should read the Text and then attend faculty sessions that expound on the information in order to learn the materials, a key component of this process was lacking. This was partially due to the fact that most students received the Text less than two weeks prior to arriving at the Academy. Clearly, more time is needed before the Academy to read the materials and better prepare for the Academy sessions.

Student Interests as a Predictor for Reading the Text

Given that students did not have time to read much of the Text before attending the corresponding topical session, it is important to look at students' motivations for reading the Text. Understanding why students read the chapters that they do may help faculty prepare for each session by providing them a more realistic understanding of the proportion of students who are likely to have read the Text prior to the session. By comparing the amount of reading that each student did for each of the topic areas with his or her topics of interest, it was possible to examine the relationship between student interests and what topics they were more likely to read at least in part, before attending the corresponding session. It was anticipated that those who read the Text and then attended the session would have more reinforcement of material and subsequently retain more information for use in their everyday work than those who only attended the session without reading the material.

As shown in Exhibit VII-2, the number of students who read the Text varied. The percentage of participants reading at least some of the corresponding Text for each Academy topic ranged from 25 percent for the Historical Review of the Victim Rights Discipline topic to 66 percent for the Sexual Assault topic. Using a *chi-square* test for independence for each topic, the relationship between each participant's interest in a given topic and whether he or she read

the topic was assessed. Results indicate students were significantly more likely to read the topics they were interested in. Additionally, most students who indicated that they were interested in a given topic read the corresponding chapters of the Academy Text on that topic before they arrived at the Academy. Not surprisingly, if a student was not interested in a topic, he/she also did not read the section of the Text that corresponded to that topic.

These data suggest that student interests drive their reading of the Text. Those sessions that most directly reflect student interest will be the ones that they have most likely prepared for prior to their arrival, and the ones they will read while at the Academy. Those topics that are not of interest to students will not be read.

EXHIBIT VII-2		
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT INTERESTS AND READING OF ACADEMY TEXT (N=187)		
Academy Topic	Percentage of Students Interested	Percentage of Students Interested Who Read the Text
Sexual Assault*	77 %	66 %
Domestic Violence*	77 %	65 %
Child Victimization*	77 %	63 %
Stalking*	70 %	59 %
Collaboration for Victims' Rights and Services*	70 %	58 %
Professionalizing the Discipline of Victim Services*	66 %	54 %
Funding for Victim Services*	63 %	54 %
Specific Justice Systems*	63 %	54 %
Financial Assistance for Victims of Crime*	63 %	53 %
Victimization of the Elderly*	62 %	53 %
Respecting Diversity: Responding to the Underserved**	61 %	52 %
Homicide*	61 %	51 %
Mental Health Needs*	59 %	50 %
Terrorism and Victims Assistance Issues*	55 %	47 %
Criminal Justice System Continuum*	53 %	45 %
Hate and Bias Crime*	52 %	45 %
Substance Abuse and Victimization*	51 %	44 %
Restorative Justice/ Community Justice*	50 %	41 %
Rural Victims*	48 %	41 %
Victimization of Individuals with Disabilities*	49 %	40 %
News Media Coverage of Crime and Victimization*	49 %	40 %
Drunk Driving*	44 %	37 %
Innovative Technologies and the Information Age*	44 %	37 %
Workplace Violence*	43 %	36 %
Victims of Gang Violence*	41 %	34 %
International Issues in Victim Assistance*	39 %	32 %
Campus Crime and Victimization*	37 %	29 %

EXHIBIT VII-2		
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT INTERESTS AND READING OF ACADEMY TEXT (N=187)		
Academy Topic	Percentage of Students Interested	Percentage of Students Interested Who Read the Text
Research and Evaluation*	31 %	25 %
Financial Crime*	30 %	26 %
Historical Review of Victim Rights Discipline*	28 %	25 %

**chi-square* $p < .001$

***chi-square* $p < .01$

Coverage of Learning Objectives

It was hypothesized that clear and consistent presentation of the learning objectives in the Text and in the sessions would lead to improved factual knowledge. Evaluators attended each session and rated faculty members on their presentation of the identified learning objectives at the beginning of the session and then on whether the faculty member covered the identified learning objectives from the Text.

In 39 percent of the sessions presented across sites, faculty members identified to the students the learning objectives for the session before talking in depth about any given topic. This presentation ranged from a short discussion of what topics would be talked about to PowerPoint presentations of the specific learning objectives to be covered. At times, faculty members developed their own objectives for the sessions based on what they considered the most important information from the chapter or current research on the topic. They would then present these objectives as the learning objectives for the session and covered them instead of the Text learning objectives.

In order to determine whether faculty members discussed each of the learning objectives identified in the Text, evaluators rated each objective as either covered or not covered for that session. A rating of covered meant that the information in an objective was at least referenced though not necessarily addressed in full or discussed in the same context during class as it was discussed in the Text (e.g., objective may be referenced in a discussion of current research). An average of 72 percent of the objectives from the Text were covered in the corresponding faculty sessions, although the style, presentation, and attention to each objective were not consistent across sites. When faculty were able to draw upon their own expertise and their own research in the presentation of sessions it appeared to generate greater student interest and allowed for more variety than when this was not possible. One draw back to faculty relying on their own personal

expertise and research for their presentations was a tendency to “get off track” and not adequately cover the learning objectives prescribed for the session.

It is clear that while some faculty identified the key learning objectives to students and then covered those objectives in a systematic manner, this did not occur in at least one-third of the sessions. With the large amount of information presented to students during their week at the NVAA, it is important to identify to students the key objectives that they need to take away from the Academy. While a broad view of the victim services field is important and immensely valuable, it is reasonable to expect that with greater focus and emphasis students can learn specific factual information that is important to their work as victim service professionals.

Session Impact on Students’ Knowledge Gains

In order to determine the impact of the session from a student’s perspective, students evaluated each session on a variety of factors related to increased knowledge. In the student evaluations of each session, at least 90 percent of students either agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions:

- Contained an appropriate coverage of theoretical information regarding the topic presented
- Contained an appropriate coverage of practical information regarding the topic presented
- Addressed the stated learning objectives
- Had information that they would be able to use in the future.

Based on these responses, students believed that the sessions provided them with interesting information that that they would be able to use in their future endeavors. This is not a measure of specific knowledge gained but of students’ impressions regarding the clarity and comprehensiveness of the material presented as both of these characteristics have an impact on the benefits of the session for students. Clearly students benefited from the faculty sessions and appreciated the information that was being presented as both informative and useful in their work.

Pre-Post (Factual) Knowledge Assessment

In order to gather a more objective assessment of students’ knowledge gain while at the Academy, the evaluation process included a formal assessment of the factual knowledge that

each student retained during the week of the Academy. A detailed knowledge test, to be completed by students both before and after attending the Academy was developed on the basis of the learning objectives from the Text. Members of the evaluation team developed a set of questions that included one multiple-choice question per learning objective from the Text. Evaluation Advisory Group members and site coordinators then chose one question per chapter to create an item pool to be used in the creation of the knowledge assessment. The knowledge assessment was then tailored for each site to consist of one question for each chapter that was considered a core topic at that site. No questions were asked of students at a particular site about topics considered electives for that location. In order to get a clear picture of how students' factual knowledge improved during the Academy, the knowledge assessment was completed by students upon arrival and check-in at the Academy and then during a standardized time at the end of the Academy. This section will address whether the faculty members covered the learning objectives addressed by the knowledge assessment in the corresponding session and then present the results of the assessment of students' knowledge.

Precursors to Learning

Members of the evaluation team attended each core academy session to document whether the learning objective tested in the knowledge assessment for each core topic was covered in the corresponding session. On average, 40 percent of the learning objectives addressed in the knowledge assessment at each site were covered in the sessions corresponding to those topics at that site. Therefore, it is important to consider students' performance on the knowledge assessment in the context that students did not read the majority of the Text and were not presented with 60 percent of the learning objectives that the knowledge assessment tested.

Student Performance on the Knowledge Assessment

The knowledge assessment served as a standardized indicator of whether students learned specific learning objectives during their attendance at the Academy. The average score on the knowledge assessment increased significantly from 51 percent to 56 percent ($t(184) = -5.314$, $p < .001$) from the beginning to the end of the Academy, though it is important to note that the scores were varied, with some students increasing while others maintained their scores and others actually saw a decrease in their scores. In order to further examine the change in scores for students, scores on the pretest were divided into the following grades:

- 90–100% correct – 'A'
- 80–89% correct – 'B'
- 70–79% correct – 'C'

- 60–69% correct – ‘D’
- 0–59% correct – ‘F’

Approximately 60 percent of students improved from before the Academy to the end of the Academy with their scores increasing an average of 12 percent. As shown in Exhibit VII-3, when scores are broken down by a student’s grade on the pre-test, approximately 75 percent of students received a grade of ‘F’ on the pre-test. This is not surprising as the Academy is intended to be a foundation level course for those new to the field of victim services. Of those who received a grade of ‘F’ on the pre-knowledge assessment, 66 percent increased their score an average of 12 percent by post-test. For all students who increased their scores, approximately 43 percent increased by at least one grade level. These results indicate that students learned some factual information at the Academy despite some students not reading the Text or having the learning objectives completely reinforced during the sessions.

EXHIBIT VII-3			
CHANGES IN STUDENTS’ KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT SCORES (N = 185)			
Pre-Academy Knowledge Assessment Grade	Percent of Students (100 %)	Percent of Students for Each Pre-test Grade Who Improved From Pre- to Post-test	Average Increase in Score for Those Students Who Improved
A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
B	2.2%	25.0%	5.6%
C	7.7%	42.9%	8.3%
D	14.8%	42.3%	9.9%
F	75.4%	65.7%	12.2%

In addition to showing improvement in scores from the beginning to the end of the Academy, the knowledge assessment indicated certain areas where students may be missing out on learning important factual information. One question in the assessment asked students to choose whether laws regarding communications between victims and rape crisis advocates in law enforcement agencies state that the communications are confidential or not confidential, along with two other choices. After Academy attendance, 53 percent of students indicated that the communications between rape crisis advocates in law enforcement agencies and victims were confidential. In reality the law does not protect these conversations. This has important implications for the way advocates conduct themselves with victims. Another question that illustrates a lack of specific knowledge on an important topic related to victim services asks about the Attorney General Guidelines regarding restitution orders. While the correct answer to the question identified restitution orders as being something that must be enforced by all available means, over 25 percent of students cited that restitution orders must be given as part of an offender’s punishment regardless of the crime. The scores on these questions indicate a lack

of knowledge regarding important laws and statutes that have implications for the way victim service professionals conduct themselves when dealing with victims.

While it is important to look at scores on the knowledge assessment with the caveat that many students did not read the Text and many of the learning objectives addressed by the assessment were not covered in the sessions, the weak performance by students on the factual knowledge test indicates that it may be necessary to identify key learning objectives for students to expect to take away from the Academy, especially those related to improving knowledge of laws, policies, and other practices with important implications for how service providers work with victims.

Relationship Between Factual Knowledge Gain and Seeking Course Credit for Participation in the Academy

Approximately 20 percent of students indicated at the start of the Academy that one of their goals for attending was to obtain Academic credit. Students were able to obtain both undergraduate and graduate credit for attending the Academy. Those interested in undergraduate credit were required to pass a test covering the core topics in the curriculum at the end of the Academy. Those interested in obtaining graduate credit were required to write a paper on a particular topic related to victim assistance. It is important to understand the effect of the added incentive of obtaining academic credit and the increased study that may have accompanied that pursuit on factual knowledge assessment scores. Students who cited “complete academic course requirements” as a goal for their attendance at the academy had significantly higher scores on the knowledge assessment at the end of the Academy compared to those who did not identify this as a goal ($t(181) = -1.893, p < .01$). The mean score for those not interested in achieving credit on the knowledge assessment was 54 percent and the mean score for those interested was 59 percent. Additionally, students with the goal of achieving course credit had significantly greater increases in their score from pre- to post-assessment ($t(181) = -2.052, p < .05$). The average increase for those not interested in achieving academic credit was 3 percent and the average increase for those interested was 8 percent. These results indicate that students’ who come into the academy with a goal toward obtaining academic credit are likely to take more factual knowledge away from the Academy than those who do not have this as a personal goal.

Factual Knowledge Gain Summary

Together, this assessment of the factual knowledge that students are gaining from their Academy experience shows that while students are acquiring some new knowledge, there is

substantial room for improvement. The data suggest that the Academy lacks consistent reinforcement of key pieces of information throughout the week, resulting in a lack of retention of the knowledge that is being taught. Students are not reading very much of the Text before the Academy, and then do not have time to read the Text once they arrive as the Text is extensive and they are busy with other activities. This results in few chapters being read in full and few pieces of information from the Text being retained, including the learning objectives. Furthermore, the learning objectives identified in the Text are numerous and are not being reinforced consistently during the Academy sessions taught by faculty. The Academy sessions are clear and provide useful information to students but it is important to identify the key information that students should know when they leave the Academy. As identified through the knowledge assessment, students need assistance in directing their learning to the fundamental knowledge necessary for victim service professionals. Narrowing the list of objectives for students to learn at the Academy would allow for an expansive overview of the victim services field, while at the same time ensuring that students learn the important information that will serve as a foundation for their work with victims.

3.2 Practical Knowledge Gains

The National Victim Assistance Academy is intended to teach more than just factual knowledge regarding laws and victimization to students. It is intended to provide practical knowledge that students can apply in their everyday work with victims. The practical knowledge that students acquire at the Academy was assessed through student ratings on a set of questions addressing practical knowledge, student reports on acquiring and using resources at the end of the Academy and six months after the Academy, and supervisor reports on knowledge change six months after the Academy.

Knowledge to Practice

Not only is it important for students to learn factual information at the Academy, it is important for them to be able to use that information in a practical setting. The Academy evaluation assessed students' perceptions of their ability to apply their knowledge in a practical setting. Using a five point scale with '1' indicating 'strongly disagree' and '5' indicating 'strongly agree,' students rated their agreement with 12 statements about their ability to apply their knowledge to specific practices in victim services at the start and end of the Academy. As shown in Exhibit VII-4, students' perceptions of their ability to apply what they know about victim services to their work increased significantly, with at least 88 percent of students either agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement by the end of the Academy.

The largest mean increases in perception of ability to apply their knowledge were for two key purposes of the Academy: 1) knowing where to get information on new and effective ways to serve victims; and 2) understanding the theory and research behind the victim services profession. These answers show that the Academy is providing students with a solid foundation on the victim services field as well as with practical knowledge of where students can find important resources for helping them in their service of victims. The Academy clearly has an effect on students' confidence in their knowledge and skills, which is an important foundation for later behavior change.

EXHIBIT VII-4			
CHANGES IN PARTICIPANTS' PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE			
Statement	Average Pre-Academy Rating	Average Post-Academy rating	Percentage Increase in Students Who Agree or Strongly Agree
I have the skills need to effectively listen to victims when they discuss their experiences with me	4.4	4.61*	5.1%
I have the skills needed to identify someone as a victim of crime	4.18	4.60**	12.2%
I have the skills needed to effectively evaluate victims' needs for services	4.06	4.46**	11.9%
I know what other sources of help there are for victims in my community	4.05	4.49**	16.7%
I understand ways my organization and other providers can work effectively together to assist victims	4.01	4.55**	17.9%
I am comfortable referring victims for services to meet their needs	4.25	4.61**	9.8%
I am able to help victims access services from other providers	4.02	4.56**	16.8%
I am comfortable informing victims of their rights in the justice process	3.94	4.46**	25.2%
I have the information needed to help victims move through the justice process	3.82	4.35**	20.4%
I understand the theory and research that provide the foundation for the work that I do with victims	3.66	4.35**	32.6%
When someone proposes new ways to serve victims, I can get information I need to determine if these ways are likely to improve victim services	3.64	4.44**	34.5%

*p<.01, **p<.001

Application of Practical Knowledge Following the Academy

In addition to asking students during the Academy about the practical knowledge they were acquiring, it was important to assess students' use of the knowledge in their positions as victim service professionals. Students are better able to identify the knowledge that has proven to be very practical to them once they are back in the environment of serving victims on a daily basis. To address this issue, the evaluation included follow-on interviews with students and a sample of supervisors to assess the type of knowledge that students have found to be useful in their everyday work.

Of the 105 participants interviewed 5 to 6 months following the Academy, 99 percent reported gaining new knowledge as a result of attending the Academy and 46 percent reported gaining new skills. It is not surprising that less than half of the participants reported gaining new skills. The Academy was not originally designed as a skill-based training and for the most part did not emphasize learning new skills, but instead focused more on providing students with a basic knowledge of the victim services field. In order to better understand the new knowledge that has proven practical in helping students perform in the victim services field, students were asked to identify the knowledge and information that they learned at the Academy that they have found useful to them in their work. Most useful to students was:

- Information about specific types of crime and specific tips on dealing with victims
- Information sharing across agencies to gather sources for referrals and ideas for improving/expanding services
- Information regarding the history of the victims' movement, the basic system, and why the victims' field exists as it is
- Information regarding national and state perspectives on victim services including specific Federal and state laws
- Resources including the Academy Text, Federal resources, CD with the PowerPoint presentations, and having a network of people to call upon as a resource.

Primarily, students considered information directly related to their job to be most useful, especially information about resources that they can use in their everyday work and the variety of information regarding specific types of victimization consolidated for easy access. Some of the most useful information was about resources that they can call upon when necessary and information regarding the basic history and structure of the victims field, including laws and Federal programs. The broad information about the history and structure of the field and specific types of victimization helped students understand victim services on a national level and gain a

better understanding of what other victim service professionals deal with. That information combined with the networking and resources provided, helped students in their everyday work by giving them a broad sense of the national perspective and an understanding of how to access the myriad of resources available.

In addition to identifying the most useful information that they gathered at the Academy, students discussed the types of information that they found not as useful. When talking about the information that they acquired at the Academy that was not useful, most students agreed that none of the information is irrelevant. However, students reported that the information regarding specialized topic areas that they may not specifically deal with everyday (e.g., financial crime) was not useful to them beyond giving them an overarching national perspective. Additionally, students talked about certain topics being repetitive or redundant with knowledge that they already knew and that outdated statistics or information was unhelpful. Student comments indicate that while students appreciate the broad perspective that they gain from attending all of the Academy topics, it would be more useful to them if they could attend sessions on the basic history and structure of the victims' rights discipline and then focus their attentions on the specialized topics that they will be using in their work. This would allow them to learn more about the specific topics that they need to specialize in while still getting the broad national perspective and resources that are a hallmark of Academy attendance.

The NVAA provided students with a solid foundation of knowledge regarding resources, helped students network, and provided students with information regarding specific laws, polices, and practices that have helped students in their work.

4. CHANGES IN STUDENT ATTITUDES

In addition to learning information that can help victim service professionals improve their services, the Academy experience gave students a national perspective on the victim services field and provided an opportunity to interact with others in a field that can be very isolating due to limited funding and the nature of the work. The evaluation of the Academy included an assessment of changes in student attitudes as a result of attending the Academy.

The 105 students interviewed approximately 5 to 6 months after the Academy were asked about their attitude towards a variety of entities and how those attitudes had changed since completing the Academy. Specifically, students' attitude change towards victims, the victims' field, and Federal, state, and local agencies was assessed.

4.1 Attitudes Toward Victims

While most students (90%) were already compassionate and understanding towards victims, students reported that the Academy gave them a better insight into what each victim experiences. Approximately 48.6 percent of interviewed students reported a change in their attitude toward victims. Students reported that since attending the Academy they are better able to understand and have a deeper appreciation for the victim's problems, emotional responses, and the ordeal of going through the justice process. Furthermore, they stated that they have a better understanding of the extent of victims' needs, and they have learned not to take the actions and words of victims personally. They are more committed to supporting victims who need help and realize that even victims who refuse services may still want or need assistance. Students are more confident in dealing with victims as a result of their increased knowledge regarding laws and the victim services field and can better serve victims because of their increased knowledge of available resources. As one student reported, *"It helped me realize that I had more to offer than I thought. I was inspired by others' ideas and came up with new ideas for my program."* Even students who have been in the field for a while came away from the Academy more committed and with a deeper appreciation of their work. Some students were beginning to feel burned out and hardened by their experiences. Their experience at the Academy helped resensitize them to the victim's needs. Overall, students reported a noticeable attitude change towards victims, especially in terms of how the Academy helped reinforce their commitment and increased their understanding and patience.

4.2 Attitudes Toward the Victim Services Field

Students also reported changes in their attitudes toward the victim services field as a whole. More than 60 percent of interviewed students (64.8%) indicated that they had changed their attitude toward the victim services field as a result of participating in the Academy. Many reported that they now know it is an actual professional field instead of just a job or a group of people going after a cause. The organization of the field and the knowledge of what is happening throughout the nation impressed students, as many did not realize the size of the field and the breadth of what is offered across the country. Students felt it was helpful to know that there are concrete efforts going on to professionalize the field and are more confident that victim services will be an integral part of the justice system one day. Students reported that they are less narrow-minded now and are more willing to seek out resources beyond their own localities. They have changed their attitude towards other professionals and have more respect for their co-workers and other victim service providers, including prosecutors and law enforcement personnel who work with victims. The knowledge that they are not alone helps them feel more

confident. The Academy has become an important part of helping those coming into the field realize the professional aspects of victim services, and it helps increase students' commitment to remain in the field and contribute as much as they can.

4.3 Attitudes Toward Federal, State, and Local Agencies

Changes in attitude towards other agencies varied with 55.2 percent of students reporting changes in attitude towards Federal agencies and 28.6 percent reporting changes in attitude towards state and local agencies. When talking about change in attitude toward Federal agencies, students primarily discussed their increased awareness of the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), the services OVC provides, and the resources that are available. Even those students who knew about OVC and its services felt that their experience at the Academy helped them learn how to access those services, and helped them to feel more comfortable calling and asking for assistance. Other Federal agencies that students felt they had more knowledge about included the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the State Department, and the Military. Of those students reporting a change in attitude, most (75%) did not know that these agencies offered any victim services and are now more aware of the services available as well as how to access them for victims. This information suggests that the resources offered by many Federal agencies are underused at the local level due to lack of awareness and understanding.

In terms of state agencies, students primarily gained a better understanding and appreciation for the efforts of the victims' compensation board and learned that there is wide variety in the emphasis placed on victim services at the state level. Some students came away from the Academy with a very uplifted attitude towards the services in their state, while others realized how far their state needed to go. They also learned about the resources that each state agency might have and gained a better understanding of which agencies (e.g., law enforcement) do not have the resources to effectively serve victims up front.

Students reported changes in attitude toward local organizations, networking and talking with other types of service providers and other organizations (e.g., law enforcement, shelters). Students gained an appreciation for the constraints everyone works under while also coming to the realization that everyone is working toward the same goal with different resources, different requirements, and different methods. They felt that they were now more willing to contact other organizations when appropriate and they felt more confident in working with other service providers.

The Academy helped students learn about resources and services available at the local, state, and Federal levels and helped students gain an appreciation for the constraints every agency must work within. Although this was a good opportunity for students to benefit from this type of education, student responses also illustrated an acute need within the victim services field for more awareness regarding available resources and networking opportunities. It helps professionals in the field break down barriers and work together when they have a face to go with an organization's name, and when everyone realizes that they are working towards a common goal.

5. CHANGES IN STUDENT BEHAVIORS

In addition to increasing knowledge and changing student attitudes, the Academy is also intended to improve the behavior of students thereby improving students' job performance and the quality of victim services in the field. In order to assess changes in behavior, students were asked at the end of the Academy to identify three things that they planned to do or change as a result of their Academy attendance. Although this is not an actual measure of a behavior change, intention to change is a prerequisite for many types of behavior change. During the follow-on interviews, students were asked to report on any changes that had occurred since the Academy, specifically changes related to promotions, increased networking, and completion of tasks or action steps that they identified at the end of the Academy.

5.1 Intentions for Behavior Change

At the end of the Academy, students were enthusiastic, confident, and inspired to make change. In order to understand students' intentions for change once they returned to their organizations, students specified three things that they intend to do as a result of attending the Academy. As shown in Exhibit VII-5 the types of actions that students intend to take as a result of attending the academy included:

- Increased collaboration with other students, victim advocates, other organizations and agencies, and with OVC
- Improved victim services through improved sensitivity and empathy, adding programs to referral lists, and increasing efforts at seeking restitution for victims
- Increased advocacy efforts through raising public awareness, working for changes in compensation, advancing ethical standards, and lobbying for victim rights and services

- Enhanced training and programs through adding topics, starting new targeted programs for the undeserved, extending current services, developing protocols, and enhancing curriculums
- Increased number of trainings they conduct including more specific and specialized topics, an increased range of recipients, and mini-academies for their localities or home countries
- Increased personal education through self-directed research, formal education, utilization of OVC materials, and attendance at trainings and other seminars
- Increased personal use of resources including OVC, the Academy Text, and the Internet
- Increased efforts to find funding.

The most common action that students intended to take was to collaborate with others (51.1%). This shows how the networking opportunities and education at the Academy has improved students' confidence in their ability to collaborate and provided them with a better perspective on the efforts of other organizations. Additionally, more than 20 percent of students said that they would attempt to improve services for victims, procure additional education in the victim services field, and improve trainings and programs that already exist.

EXHIBIT VII-5 STUDENT ACTIONS AS A RESULT OF ATTENDING THE ACADEMY	
Action to be Taken as a Result of Attending the Academy	Percentage of Students Intending to Take This Action
Collaborate	51.1%
Improve Services	37.1%
Additional Education	24.2%
Training/Program Enhancement	22.0%
Conduct Training	19.9%
Use OVC/Other Resources	16.7%
Advocate	10.2%
Obtain Funding	7.5%

It appears that Academy students have broad and expansive intentions for making change in their organizations and in the field. The primary intention of students was to collaborate with others. This alone would help students learn more, connect students in different localities, help students identify resources, and help students provide mutual support to each other when times get difficult. Additionally, collaboration would help streamline victim services in different localities

and help ensure that victims are provided with better and less stressful services. Students also intended to pursue more education, provide education on victim issues to others, and increase their advocacy efforts. All of these intentions, in addition to students' direct intentions to improve services, can help students take action and make victim services better.

5.2 Actual Behavior Change Following the Academy

During follow-on interviews, students indicated a variety of changes in their behavior after the Academy. Not only did many of them pursue the actions they intended, but they made changes to programs serving victims and increased their networking efforts. Several participants were able to obtain promotions as a result of their newly acquired knowledge and experience from the Academy.

Networking with Others

Approximately 83 percent of students indicated at the end of the NVAA that they planned to stay in touch with some of the other students that they met while at the Academy. Of the 105 students interviewed approximately 5 to 6 months after the Academy, 68.6 percent reported that they have stayed in touch with other students. Students tended to make their own contacts with other students (61.0%) as well as to receive contacts from others (57.1%). Students contacted or received contact from an average of three other individuals during the time since the Academy.

Students reported that contact with other students has helped them share information on an ongoing basis, continue friendships, and provide social and professional support. As a result of being in contact with others, students report that they now keep in touch on a regular basis and have expanded programs and provide better services to victims. Students have been able to make referrals to other states and localities, find information on specific guidelines and services, and help locate resources for victim services in the community. For those that have not kept in touch with others, students report that they have been too busy or just have not had a need to contact others. What is important, however, is that they recognize that there are others they can turn to if they have questions or problems, and that they report a willingness to do so if necessary. Overall, students increased their contacts and sources for information and they utilized the services and knowledge of others that they met at the Academy to improve services for victims.

Job Performance and Promotions

One of the most overt changes that might occur as a result of attending the Academy is a change in position within the organization. This change may occur as a result of a change in supervisor or as a result of a promotion. Approximately 81.9 percent of students reported that they had the same supervisor at the time of the follow-on interview as they did prior to and during the Academy. This suggests that most supervisors who invested in their supervisee's attendance are likely to benefit from any improvements in performance. Additionally, 15.2 percent of interviewed students reported receiving a promotion since their Academy attendance and 13.3 percent of those attribute that promotion directly to their Academy attendance. Students believe that the Academy helped them by increasing their knowledge, improving their job performance, and improving their capacity to network and improve existing programs.

Program Expansion and Improvement

In addition to expanding students' knowledge and skills, increasing networking with others, and helping students advance in their careers, the Academy experience is designed to help students implement direct changes in programs, policies and practices through program expansion and improvement.

Approximately 11.4 percent of students indicated that they helped establish new policies as a result of attending the Academy. Some of the changes included changes in their confidentiality policies, victim notification procedures, policies for interacting with the courts, and their follow-up contact with victims to ensure victims are receiving services. While only 11.4 percent of students were able to affect policy, more than twice as many students (25.7%) were able to change practices. These changes in practice occurred in a number of areas including staff interactions, client interactions, and interactions with collateral agencies such as other service providers or the courts. One student simply indicated that she was taking a more personal approach in dealing with victims, as she now believed that victims required empathy in their interactions because of the trauma of being a crime victim. Additionally, approximately half (50.4%) of the students indicated that they made a program improvement as a result of attending the Academy such as changes in reference or resource material, on site trainings, and enhancing day to day operations. Finally, in addition to program improvement, a number of students (26.6%) expanded their programs by adding referral programs, putting in applications for grants or funding, hiring new staff, acquiring videos from NVAA and incorporating them into their training module, or teaching a cultural diversity class to employees.

As the above data indicate, approximately half of all students contacted at follow-up made changes as a result of attending the Academy. It is clear from student comments that some changes may have been less common because those involved more time and effort. A change in policy, for example would involve input from a number of other people as well as some form of approval from others. Since only 12 percent of the Academy participants represented positions of management, it is not surprising that policy change was not a common occurrence. Additionally, the lower proportion of students who implemented a policy change may have been due to the fact that some proposed changes were in the process of being made or negotiated but not yet completed. A program or practice improvement, such as adding an additional brochure to a list of resources, or using a different term when speaking with clients is more readily accomplished. It is clear that many students intended to affect their programs and that some had more success than others.

5.3 Intentions Translated into Action

In order to determine whether student intentions manifested themselves in actual change, the evaluation included an assessment of whether the three tasks that each student listed as things they planned to do as a result of the Academy had actually occurred. Students were presented with the actions that they intended to take as a result of attending the Academy and were asked to indicate if the actions were completed, started but incomplete, attempted but unable to complete, or not pursued. Approximately half of the respondents (50.4%) indicated that they had started or were in the process of taking the first action that they had identified at the end of the Academy. It appears that students are taking their ideas seriously and are making a concerted effort to complete each of the tasks that they identified (see Exhibit VII-6 for specific results).

Students' completion of the tasks that they identified varied widely based on the type of task with over 35 percent of students indicating that had used resources or pursued education and training and only 11 percent stating that they had improved a program or advocated effectively for victim services. However, while only 11 percent of students had completed these tasks, over 60 percent of students were in the process of improving services or advocating. This makes sense given that these tasks can sometimes take a long time to implement and often are seen as ongoing efforts without a true end.

EXHIBIT VII-6		
PERCENTAGE OF INTENDED ACTIVITIES COMPLETED BY STUDENTS		
Action to be Taken as a Result of Attending the Academy	Percentage Intending this Action (N=112)	Percentage of Respondents Completing this Action
Collaborate	54.2%	22.9% (N=48)
Improve Service	40.9%	11.8% (N=34)
Additional Education	28.5%	34.6% (N=26)
Training/Program Enhancement	24.7%	31.8% (N=22)
Conduct Training	23.8%	30.0% (N=20)
Use OVC/Other Resources	16.1%	35.7% (N=14)
Advocate	13.3%	11.1% (N=9)
Other	12.3%	20.0% (N=10)
Obtain Funding	9.5%	22.2% (N=9)

Barriers to Completing Tasks

The most common barriers to completing tasks were time and monetary constraints. Several students found that they did not have the time or sufficient financial resources to complete the tasks that they intended. Other barriers that were sometimes beyond students' control included administrative changes, incompatible policies, personal circumstances, or professional relationships. The fact that these tasks are not complete indicates barriers in the field. One way to reduce these barriers is to educate students on the importance of certain activities, such as finding funding, and to assist students in finding ways to work within bureaucratic and monetary constraints in a field where the budget is already stretched too thin. This information does indicate that the Academy's influence can only reach so far in a short amount of time. It takes time, commitment and systemic change to make some of these visions a reality.

6. SUPERVISOR ASSESSMENTS OF THE IMPACT OF THE ACADEMY ON ORGANIZATIONAL RESULTS

In addition to students' self-report of changes occurring as a result of their participation in the NVAA, the evaluation team contacted a sample of student supervisors to understand how participation at the NVAA affected the agencies and organizations where the students work.

Supervisors reported that their supervisees gained knowledge regarding available resources at the national, state, and local level. The Academy provided concrete information on resources available from agencies like the Office for Victims of Crime, the Department of Justice, and the National Association for Crime Compensation. Additionally, supervisors felt the

opportunities for the students to speak with other victim service providers from their state and learn about resources through networking and sharing experiences was invaluable.

Approximately 90 percent of the supervisors reported that as a result of attending the NVAA, their supervisees:

- Have a better understanding of the importance of having resources and contacts they can call upon when needed
- Have more information about the availability of resources for the victim services field and how to access those resources
- Are more proactive in seeking out assistance from other professionals (e.g., calling local agencies to determine what services they provide).

In general, the greater awareness of resources has enabled students' agencies to take a broader approach to planning. The agencies can utilize new ideas and do not have to reinvent the wheel when planning new policies or initiatives.

Supervisors also recognized other advantages to having sent staff to the Academy. Approximately 80 – 90 percent of the supervisors reported that participants demonstrated an increased:

- Awareness and a broader view of the victim services field
- Understanding of the unique needs of crime victims and the various types of crime victimization
- Understanding of victim issues, laws, and the appropriate methods of handling and working with various types of victims
- Knowledge regarding how to collaborate with other agencies and the ability to appreciate the work of other professions that work with victim service providers
- Confidence and effectiveness in their work as a result of new knowledge and skills
- Understanding and better perspective of the victim services field as a professional discipline instead of just a job.

Some supervisors stated that attendance at the Academy helped their supervisees lose some of the prejudices they may have possessed toward specific types of victims and other agencies and gave them a better understanding of the different perspectives of those who work in the victim services profession. One supervisor had the following to say about the person he/she supervised:

“She lacked knowledge and compassion when processing domestic violence cases and was doing victim blaming in certain situations. She got an eye opening at the Academy regarding the cycle of domestic violence. That was worth the trip. There was a slight change in her attitude. I don’t hear those comments anymore. She was impressed with the information and understands better.”

Together these increases have made the students more understanding of how their profession works, more knowledgeable regarding laws and polices, and more effective in their service for victims. Additionally, the Academy appeared to increase students’ enthusiasm and appreciation for their work and provided them with a deeper appreciation for victims’ needs. Supervisors expressed very favorable views about the effects that the Academy has had on the knowledge and expertise of their supervisees and more often than not reported that they would recommend other staff working with victim services to attend the Academy. These changes in attitude are an important part of Academy attendance, and an indication of Academy effects on participants.

VIII. IMPACT OF THE ACADEMY ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

The NVAA provides a unique opportunity for victim service practitioners to collaborate with university/college faculty to implement a comprehensive training program located on the campus of an institution of higher learning. It is assumed that this collaboration has beneficial impacts for the educational achievement of training participants and for the institutions themselves. For example, the partnership with an institution of higher learning enables the NVAA to offer students the opportunity to earn academic credits for attendance. Additionally, the practitioner and academia collaboration gives participants exposure to the more academic or theoretical foundations of victim services and provides the necessary link for students between theory and practice. For the institutions of higher learning involved with the NVAA, it is anticipated that their affiliation with the NVAA may ultimately lead to the development of new academic courses, programs, and degrees in victimology and victim services. For this evaluation, it was important to ascertain the extent to which the NVAA had these and other relevant impacts on students and institutions of higher learning.

1. EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

At the start of the Academy, 37 students (approximately 20%) indicated that obtaining academic course credit was a primary goal for their attending the Academy. Following the Academy, information was obtained from students and each institution sponsoring one of the three Academies, to determine the level of academic achievement that occurred as a result of attending the Academy.

Three hours of academic credit, for undergraduate or graduate credit, was available for successful completion of the 40-hour NVAA course and fulfillment of all requisite conditions (e.g., pre- and post- exam, research paper). For those students interested in pursuing the NVAA for credit, an additional fee of \$120 was required to cover administrative costs in processing the course credits by the universities. The academic credits are transferable worldwide. The course credits were available in the following disciplines: criminology from California State University-Fresno, and social work/human services or criminal justice studies from Washburn University. The students earning academic credit for their participation in the 2002 NVAA are summarized in Exhibit VIII-1. Approximately 70 percent, or 26 of the 37 participants who indicated they were taking the Academy for course credit were successful in achieving this goal for themselves.

EXHIBIT VIII-1		
STUDENTS RECEIVING ACADEMIC CREDIT		
Discipline	Undergraduate	Graduate
Criminal Justice	15	6
Human Services	3	0
Social Work	0	2
Total	18	8

In addition to the students receiving academic credit, the follow-on interviews with students revealed that 21 students had pursued additional education or credit in the field of victim services/victimology since attending the NVAA. These students report having received additional certifications (e.g., Association of Traumatic Stress Specialist), or taking victim-related undergraduate or graduate courses (e.g., an on-line course from Washburn University). The Academy not only provides students with a foundation-level education in victimology and victim services, it offers opportunities for educational advancement, either during the Academy or following the Academy.

2. BENEFIT TO INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING (AFFILIATED AND NON-AFFILIATED)

An important component of the NVAA evaluation was to determine the extent to which the NVAA model has been adapted and integrated into institutions of higher learning and to identify changes that have occurred to both NVAA affiliated and non-affiliated universities across the country. Follow-on interviews with NVAA faculty provided some answers to these questions.

Of the NVAA faculty interviewed, eight faculty represented active faculty at various universities/colleges across the country. Faculty were asked whether they had seen changes in their institutions or other institutions as a result of the NVAA presence. The results were as follows:

- The majority (87.5%) reported a greater awareness and attention to issues surrounding victims
- Half of the faculty had observed an enhancement in victim-related training offered by universities/colleges

- The majority (87.5%) reported the expansion of victim-related education at different institutions of higher learning.

Faculty noted that the best “advertisements” for awareness of victims’ issues at their university were the word of mouth comments from former NVAA students. Faculty also felt that holding the event on the university campuses leads to more awareness among administration, faculty, and students about the emergence of victimology as an academic discipline. Additionally, specific university-affiliated victim awareness events had occurred as a result of the NVAA. One example was a collaborative partnership between the university and community on an anti-violence and hate crime initiative.

Four of the NVAA faculty interviewed who are full time academicians believed that as a result of the NVAA the quality of victim-related training and education had improved. Other faculty were hesitant to make a direct link between the improved quality of victim-related university education and the NVAA. These faculty believed the NVAA might have had an influence on these changes, but recognized that the universities had been acting independently to improve the quality of victim-related training and education.

Another change attributed to the NVAA by seven of the faculty interviewed was the development of new training programs and sharing of new information. According to the faculty, NVAA students were taking back to their communities and organizations new training programs for victim service providers based on what they had learned from the NVAA.

A Web search of institutions of higher learning found, that in addition to the universities that hosted the 2002 NVAA, there were other academic programs at a number of universities focused on victimology and victim services. Some examples include Weber State University, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York, George Mason University, University of North Texas, and the Yale University Child Study Center, most of which were identified by faculty during their interviews. In addition, several universities that have been associated with the NVAA including the University of New Haven, Center for the Study of Crime Victims’ Rights, Resources, and Remedies, Sam Houston State University, and American University also offer victim service-related courses and programs.

The final source of information regarding the impact of the NVAA on institutions of higher learning came from a focus group with the program coordinators of the OVC-funded State Victim Assistance Academies in Colorado, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Utah. The coordinators indicated that the NVAA model had helped university victimology programs to move into the “real world” by incorporating more victim assistance practitioners in the program

and creating an important dialogue between victim assistance practitioners and university students. The NVAA model also encourages universities to offer certificates or degrees in victim-related areas. This greater recognition of this emerging discipline can allow even smaller institutions of higher learning to establish an important academic niche and a competitive edge in recruiting new faculty and students.

3. IMPACT ON FACULTY TEACHING

Faculty also were asked about the impact of the NVAA on their own teaching. When asked if they used the NVAA materials in their own academic teaching, six NVAA faculty members with regular teaching positions reported using or having used the NVAA materials in their own courses. Some of the materials developed for use in the NVAA that are now available for use in academic programs include:

- The Academy Text
- Academy workbooks, including *Leadership in Victim Services*, *NVAA Instructor's Manual*, and *The Ultimate Educator: Achieving Maximum Adult Learning through Training and Instruction*
- Videos, including *Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Crime Victims* and *The News Media's Coverage of Crime and Victimization*.

Faculty recognized the value of both the faculty and student materials as resources for use in academic and professional development programs for victim services and allied professionals.

Additionally, many of the NVAA faculty interviewed (66%), were aware of other academic programs or courses that used the NVAA materials or had adapted them for their use. Faculty noted universities that had either hosted an NVAA or a State Victim Assistance Academy (SVAA) as examples of settings where the materials had been incorporated into academic programs. Also, several faculty had been directly involved in the adaptation of the NVAA materials for use at SVAAAs or other academic settings.

Although the faculty felt the NVAA materials were a valuable resource for helping victim-related programs at colleges and universities expand or enhance their programs, they did offer several reasons why this practice remains somewhat limited nationwide, especially among non-affiliated institutions. First, many academic professors who do not teach at the NVAA are simply not aware that the NVAA materials exist and therefore have not assessed the materials to use with their students. University professors do not regularly receive mailings or information

about the availability of the NVAA materials, or about how to adapt them to other settings. Second, the content and format of the NVAA materials are geared for a professional training rather than traditional academic institutions. Faculty also noted that OVC has not given clear permission to instructors about the use of NVAA materials in the classroom setting (e.g., can anyone adapt the materials for their own use?). Finally, for certain topics in the Academy Text, such as domestic violence, academic Textbooks are available for professors to use in their courses that provide more depth than the overview that is contained in the Academy Text.

According to faculty, the potential impact of the NVAA on institutions of higher learning, and the victims' field in general, is great. Including more colleges and universities as NVAA sites and increasing the influence of colleges and universities in the planning and implementation of future academies, can provide a basis for change in the number and quality of programs offered by institutions of higher learning in victimology and related disciplines.

IX. IMPACT OF THE ACADEMY ON THE VICTIM’S FIELD

The previous chapters focused on the impact of the NVAA on students and institutions of higher learning. This section addresses the impact of the Academy on the field as a whole, especially with respect to professionalizing the field of victim services. A primary goal of the NVAA is to bring together a body of qualified people to further their training in a specialized study. This specialized study has benefited the victim services community in two primary ways. First, it has promoted the notion that professionalizing the field is necessary to legitimize the work of the victim service provider. Second, the NVAA has been the basis for the development of State Victim Assistance Academies that localize the training that is being done on the national level by the NVAA.

1. PROFESSIONALIZING THE FIELD

Victim service providers enter the field of victim services from a wide range of disciplines and experiences. While some providers are former victims, others are social workers, law enforcement officials, academics, attorneys, or compassionate individuals whose life calling is to help people suffering from traumatic experiences. Because of the varying types of people that are drawn to the victim services field, identification and recognition of the provider as a true professional is perhaps more important than in other disciplines.

The word “profession” denotes a formalized body of study whose students receive a degree, license, or certification to acknowledge their level of expertise in a particular field. While some students believe that the victim service field has not achieved the status of a bona fide profession, others believe that a service provider’s work experience equates them to the level of a professional. Students look to the NVAA as a leader in the movement to bring the victim service field to the realm of a legitimate profession. Approximately 42 percent of the NVAA students report that the Academy helps to achieve the goal of professionalizing the field. In their own words, students express how this goal is being achieved:

- “Having a multi-state, formalized, legitimate training in the field is necessary for bringing more validation, and creating a standard of operation for people in the field who are inventing their own responses and techniques in assisting victims.”
- “Most victim service providers do not have credentials or a degree in this field, therefore, the Academy is helpful in validating the profession.”
- “The NVAA advances the field by presenting information and providing a foundation for the field. It is important to be working from a common body of knowledge.”

- “The Academy legitimizes the field because it is a formal training that aims to educate students on the principles of the victim services field.”
- “Having an Academy that validates and professionalizes the field opens doors for us as victim advocates. The NVAA works hard to make the victim service field a recognized and legitimate part of the justice system.”

Students and their supervisors recognize the need for continued advancement in formalizing and standardizing the field and report that an important role of the NVAA is to support this development.

2. ENHANCING TRAINING AT THE STATE-LEVEL THROUGH THE STATE VICTIM ASSISTANCE ACADEMIES (SVAA)

Another impact the NVAA has had on the field of victim services is in the development of State Victim Assistance Academies (SVAA). OVC currently funds 10 SVAAAs. In 1990, OVC awarded SVAA grants to Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Utah, Colorado, and Texas. In 2002, SVAA grants were awarded to Arizona, Maine, Maryland, Missouri and Oregon. These new SVAA sites will hold their first State Academies in 2004. State Academies also have been created independently from the SVAAAs in Wisconsin, Michigan, New Mexico, and Vermont. Focus groups and interviews were conducted with eight representatives of State Academies (OVC funded and independent) to determine the extent to which the NVAA model influenced the development and operation of the State Academies.

The influence of the NVAA model on the State Academies was evident in several ways. Half of the program coordinators indicated that some of the instructors for their State Academies had previously attended or taught at the NVAA. Additionally, a number of program coordinators relied on the expertise of faculty affiliated with the NVAA during the planning stage of the SVAA. Some Academies actually sent their faculty to the NVAA to “shadow” the NVAA faculty. This helped them to better understand how the academy happens and to experience first hand what the learning environment of an Academy looked like and felt like. Other support for establishing their State Academies came from VALOR and OVC. Program coordinators specifically mentioned the value of the cost breakdown for the NVAA in helping them establish a realistic budget for their Academies and access to additional training and resources available from VALOR and OVC as factors contributing to the success of their Academies.

In addition to using NVAA faculty as a resource in establishing their State Academies, all program coordinators reported using the NVAA materials, especially the Academy Text, when developing their Academies. Some states used the topics covered in the Academy Text to create a needs assessment for providers that ultimately informed the content of the State Academy.

Others relied heavily on the information in the Academy Text when creating their own curriculum. The access to the NVAA Text in an electronic format (i.e., downloadable from the web) was a real asset for the program coordinators. Additionally, the format of the Academy was adopted by most of the SVAAAs. Their Academies were often offered on a university campus setting, consisted of a blend of academic content, networking opportunities, and recreation, and typically occurred over the course of a week. Still other State Academies took advantage of the information students' learned from the NVAA and were able to extend students' knowledge beyond the more general principles taught at the NVAA through the SVAA training.

The Independent Academies also recognized the value of the NVAA model for their Academies. They said the Text was an invaluable resource on which they were able to build their own curriculum. For the most part, Independent Academies modified the content of the NVAA curriculum with state-specific information (e.g., laws, procedures, agencies, cases, etc.). The Text provided the comprehensive foundation information that the State Academy faculty could use to develop more practical or skill-based training.

A number of the State Academies describe themselves as a “miniature version” of the NVAA, or as State Academies that build on what is being done at the national level for the victims' field. The tone and setting of both the NVAA and the State Academies is that of an academic course. That is, the training is considered intensive and is to be taken seriously by those who attend. In follow-on interviews with NVAA students and a sample of their supervisors, the rigorous format was appreciated because it gave credibility to the experience.

Overall, the NVAA appears to have had a positive impact on the field of victim services. As one SVAA coordinator reported,

“Philosophically, I think the essence of an academy is to bridge the gap between the theoretical and the practical—the why (theory) versus the how (practice). At the national level we need to disseminate what we are learning, then figure out what this means to practitioners. Practitioners do need to know not just the how, but also the why. The NVAA and SVAAAs can provide this information.”

The NVAA is looked to as the national leader for victim service education and training and perhaps this role puts it in the forefront for advancing the field of victim services to that of a recognized legitimate profession.

X. LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSION

There were many important lessons learned from the evaluation of the 2002 NVAA. Information from on-site observations by the evaluation team, participants' responses to questions at the end of the Academy, and interviews with faculty, students and supervisors approximately six months following the academy provide a wealth of information to answer "what worked" and "what didn't work" about the NVAA. Additionally, concrete recommendations emerged from the evaluation, many of which have already been presented in previous chapters. Key findings about factors contributing to success and areas needing improvement (i.e., recommendations for change) are presented in this chapter, followed by a general conclusion for the evaluation.

1. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ACADEMY SUCCESS

The key factors that appear to have contributed to the success of the Academy, both in terms of the impact on students, as well as the impact on institutions of higher learning and the victims' field at large can be organized into the following categories:

- Experienced faculty
- Valuable resources
- Networking opportunities
- Motivating experience.

Each of these is described in detail below.

1.1 Experience Facility

A key factor to the success of any education or training program is the experience and quality of the instructors. The NVAA faculty were viewed as qualified professionals with a wealth of information and experience in the victims' field. Participants appreciated faculty bringing their own experiences and research to the Academy sessions. This information expanded on the material in the Academy Text and helped participants better understand the information and connect the information to their job. Faculty were able to give information in a daunting Text "real world" application. Additionally, faculty were quite accessible to the participants during and after the academy. Although there were some limitations to the faculty's availability, given the hectic schedule of the academy, participants viewed the faculty as an accessible and valuable resource, both during and after the academy.

In addition to benefiting students, the NVAA faculty were an asset to the program coordinators during the planning and implementation of their State Academies. The NVAA

faculty shared their experiences with the State Academies, and in some cases served as faculty for the State Academies. This sharing of information and experiences made for an easier planning and implementation process. State Academies were not left to “reinvent the wheel” or to start from a blank slate, but were able to draw upon the expertise of the NVAA faculty, some of whom were also the developers of the original NVAA model and materials, in getting their Academies up and running.

1.2 Valuable Resources

Everyone involved in the NVAA from participants to their supervisors, were consistent in identifying the Academy as valuable resource. From contacts with faculty and other providers to the information contained in the Academy Text, the NVAA provided participants with a solid foundation of information and resources to use in their work with victims. Additionally, participants learned about other resources available to them as victim service providers through presentations by OVC and networking with other professionals. Approximately six months following the Academy, many participants and supervisors reported on the use of the Academy Text or interactions with NVAA faculty and students as resources that enabled them to secure funding, revamp programs, and incorporate policy change.

The information from the NVAA (Academy Text, instructor’s manual, videos) also was a valuable resources used by program coordinators in developing their State Academies. In a number of many cases, the NVAA Text served as the foundation for the State Academy training. This was also the case for agencies and organizations. Supervisors indicated that the information from the Academy Text had been useful in helping them develop education and training seminars for their employees.

1.3 Networking Opportunities

One of the most important features of the NVAA was the opportunity to network with other providers, especially during the mentoring group sessions. Through these networking opportunities, participants got to know other providers, gained a better understanding of the role of others working with victims, and gained a better understanding of the relationship between what they learn in class and what they do on the job. As several participants indicated, opportunities to network with others in the field are usually limited. Victim service providers are often overworked and have little time to reach out to other providers on a day-to-day basis. As a result, they are unfamiliar with the work of other providers and often hold incorrect perceptions of the role of other providers in working with victims. The networking at the Academy provided participants with a greater respect for other providers, especially law enforcement. But perhaps

more importantly, it helped participants realize they are not alone in their quest for justice for crime victims.

The long-term importance of the networking to the participants was evident by the number of participants who established networks at the Academy and their utilization of these networks following the Academy to access resources, discuss ideas, and brainstorm solutions to problems. In fact, participants wanted more opportunity to network with other providers and faculty during the Academy. Suggestions for improving networking included forming mentoring groups made up of multidisciplinary teams to ensure different perspectives were “brought to the table” and focus the mentoring session around a specific issue or problem (case study approach) that would enable participants to apply what they learned each day and work with other professionals to reach solutions. Additionally, at sites where there were planned “social” and “fun” activities, participants reported greater bonding with other students. This “free” time gave students an opportunity to interact with others on a more informal and social level and foster of relationships that began to emerge during the formal sessions and mentoring groups.

A number of participants indicated the mentoring groups would have been more successful had there been facilitation of the sessions. Some participants felt the mentoring sessions were dominated by a few participants. This limited the involvement of other students. For a mentoring group to have an impact on students, it is important for everyone to have an opportunity to express opinions and bring their experiences to the table without being treated as inferior to others. A skilled facilitator can keep these situations from occurring.

To help facilitate continued communication and networking following the Academy, several participants recommended OVC develop a listserv or discussion page on a web site where students can keep in contact with each other, share ideas, brainstorm solutions, etc. This would also serve as a potential forum for ongoing needs assessment of the field.

1.4 Motivating Experience

The NVAA had a lasting impression on most participants. For many, the Academy experience rejuvenated their interest in the victim services field and sparked new passion in their work with victims. It helped remind participants why they were in this field to begin with. For others, the energy of the Academy motivated them to want to learn more and to return to their agencies and bring about change. As the research on the effectiveness of training programs suggests, a necessary ingredient for change is motivation. If individuals are not motivated to change, it is very unlikely that they will. The NVAA cannot guarantee change but it is clear that it sets in motion the possibility for change.

2. FACTORS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT (Recommendations for Change)

The factors that appear to need improvement, enhancement, or in some cases noticeable change can be organized into the following categories:

- Purpose and structure of the Academy
- Academy Text
- Needs assessment of participants
- Role of institutions of higher learning.

Each of these is described in detail below.

2.1 Purpose of the Academy

Goals and Learning Objectives

It was clear from the start of the evaluation that the goals of the Academy were general, vague, and difficult to measure. Additionally, the overwhelming number of learning objectives for the NVAA made it difficult to identify the major anticipated outcomes for participants of the Academy. These observations were echoed by faculty and students. Many faculty were unclear on what were the most important learning objectives to teach. As mentioned previously, faculty noted there were too many learning objectives and inconsistency in the learning objectives across the Academy Text, instructor's manual, and sessions. Students also were unclear on what was the most important information for them to expect to take away from the Academy. As a result, in some cases, important information was lost, such as knowledge of key legislation that impacts how victim service providers work with victims. Information needs to be prioritized and then reinforced throughout the Academy. Specifically, information in areas related to improving how providers serve victims should be emphasized. Some examples include reinforcing information throughout the Text and the sessions on listening to victims' issues, assessing victims' needs, working with other agencies to better serve victims, and following up with victims to ensure needs are met. It is possible to have a narrower focus of the Academy while at the same time still offering a comprehensive, foundation-level course.

It is important that OVC revisit the goals/purpose of the Academy to ensure consistency with the needs of the target audience. For example, if learning new skills is to become a primary goal of the Academy then the specific skills need to be identified and corresponding information and skill-building exercises (e.g., role playing, case analysis) need to be incorporated into the Text and the sessions to ensure participants acquire these skills during the Academy.

Focus on Skill-Based Training

Currently, there is some debate among faculty and participants regarding whether the Academy is or should be a skills-based training or merely an informational Academy. A majority of faculty and participants indicated the need for more practical, “how to” or skills-based training. Examples included how to collaborate with other government and non-government victim service providers, how to communicate with victims, how to obtain compensation for victims, or how to guide victims through the justice process. It appears as though there is a need in the field for skills-based training, a need that could be met by the NVAA with some modification to the current curriculum. Not only is an emphasis on skill building important for better preparing victim service providers to work with victims, but several supervisors indicated the importance of being able to justify sending staff to the Academy. Because funding is scarce, agencies need to be able to demonstrate that by sending staff to the Academy, they are acquiring necessary skills to perform their jobs and in the long term, better skilled staff equates to better services for victims.

Target Audience for the Academy

In addition to determining the content of the Academy, OVC needs to determine the appropriate audience for the Academy. If it is to remain a foundation-level course, participation needs to be restricted to participants with 1 – 3 or 4 years of experience. Those with 5 or more years of experience tended to need more advanced training (greater coverage) of topics than what was possible given the current format of the Academy. In order to ensure enough participation of newcomers to the Academy, especially from grassroots, non-profit organizations, more scholarships are necessary. This was an issue raised by many supervisors. A shortage of funding appeared to be a key limitation to sending employees to the NVAA.

OVC needs to ask, What is the purpose of the Academy? What measurable outcomes do we want participants to walk away with? OVC must decide whether they want the Academy to cover many topics at a general level, cover some topics at a general level and others in more depth, or focus on providing in-depth information on specialized topics. Currently, the Academy can best be described as providing coverage of information that is “a mile wide and an inch.”

2.2 Academy Text

As has been presented in other sections of this report, there was consensus among faculty and participants that there was too much information in the Academy Text for participants (and even faculty) to read and comprehend the information prior to arriving at the Academy. One caveat to this is that the Text was received less than 2 weeks prior to the Academy by the

participants. If given more time, students might be able to get through more of the material. Currently, the learning gains of the participants are not maximized because for the most part, the material in the Text is not read prior to the Academy or during the Academy. This makes it difficult for faculty to expand upon information in the Text during the Academy sessions when participants do not have the foundation that comes from reading the Text. Almost half of the faculty indicated that the Academy Text was not a useful teaching tool. Reasons given included the Text was overwhelming, dense, and for some topics the information was outdated. Almost a quarter of the participants also recognized that some of the information in the Text, especially the statistics, was outdated. Based on input from faculty and students and an independent assessment of the Academy Text as part of the evaluation, there were several recommendations for revising the Academy Text for future use as both an instructor's tool and a resource guide for the field.

Most of the criticisms of the Text related to inconsistent formatting and organization of material; lack of appropriate headings; outdated citations, statistics, and information; overuse of bullets and semi-colons; redundancy; typographical and grammatical errors; inconsistent word, verb, and noun tense usage; and hard to locate information. These are all problems that can be corrected by a trained technical writer/editor. A technical writer/editor can reorganize the format of the Text to ensure consistency across chapters as well as make the editorial changes suggested by the reviewers. An editor could also ensure that the historical, Census, and research data and references are updated. An editor also could ensure that the organization, format, and presentation of information for each chapter and subchapter is consistent throughout the Text and that the document reads as if it were written by a single author. Additionally, the updates/supplements to date are tacked on to the Text and need to be integrated into the document to ensure appropriate flow, readability, etc. In addition to a thorough scrub of the Text by a professional editor, there may be the need to identify experts from the field to rewrite existing chapters or add new chapters (e.g., chapter on trafficking) to reflect state-of-the-art, cutting edge research and new promising and effective practices in the field of victim services (see Appendix B for specific recommendations by chapter).

As mentioned previously, the learning objectives for the Text need to be reviewed to ensure they are specifically designed to meet the knowledge and/or skill development needs of the intended audience. In reviewing the Text, in general, it was often difficult to identify the "why" of a chapter (purpose or goal). Chapters contained a great deal of theory but little practical information on how to apply the information in practice. When revisiting the learning objectives in the Text, it is important to ensure objectives are measurable. Certain Text objectives were ambiguous, vague, and unclear. Additionally, the learning objectives from the Text need to be consistent with the learning objectives in the instructor's manual and the learning objectives for the sessions. A core set of learning objectives should guide the Academy.

Other recommendations for improving the Academy Text included creating outlines or lesson plans for all chapters. This would ensure consistency and continuity across chapters and provide clearer direction for the reader and the faculty regarding the goals and objectives for the chapter, the key content to be presented, etc. Reviewers also recommended creating a glossary of key terms, quick reference lists or helpful hints for each chapter. These tools can ensure that the reader has a clear understanding of what the subject matter is, what critical terms mean, and the context in which the information is being presented. Finally, there was some concern by the reviewers that information presented in the NVAA Text needs to be reviewed to ensure rights to use copyrighted materials.

2.3 Needs Assessment of Participants

The first step to a successful training is to identify the needs of the potential audience. Although the original concept for the NVAA was based on input from the field, the needs of the field have changed since 1995 and it is important to keep a current pulse on these needs if one is to offer effective education and training programs. A number of faculty expressed the need to know more about the participants prior to the Academy. Having a better understanding of the audience and their needs can help the instructor tailor his/her presentation to best meet the expectations of the participants. As presented elsewhere, faculty had little information about the participants going into the Academy and were unable to devote much time during each session to identify the needs and expectations of participants due to time constraints.

As demonstrated by the evaluation, participants will put more time and energy into learning information relevant to their interest areas and goals. By identifying the needs of the participants prior to the Academy, those planning the Academy and implementing the sessions can make adjustments that will maximize learning. A simple example of how this would benefit the Academy relates to the scheduling of core and elective courses. If most of the students identify a particular area of interest, it would be important to make sure this topic is part of the core sessions or if taught as an elective, its timing does not conflict with the offering of another elective that addresses a priority interest area of most participants. As the Academy currently operates, participants are forced to take sessions in areas of little interest (and therefore learning gains are minimal) and are not given enough choices for the electives, most of which are priority areas for participants. Based on a needs assessment it might be necessary to eliminate some current Academy topics, enhance existing topics, or add new topics. This may apply to the Academy Text, the sessions, or both. For example, one topic to add or enhance would be information on how to train and educate others using the information learned from the Academy. This was a request of many participants and supervisors. This skill-based training would help ensure a more successful transfer of knowledge from students to others in the field.

2.4 Role of Institutions of Higher Learning

Faculty and supervisors identified a need to offer the NVAA at more colleges and universities across the country. With the addition of more university sites, the NVAA could train more students on an annual basis, while also reducing the number of participants for each site. Additionally, the NVAA could forge new relationships with diverse institutions, such as historically minority colleges, thus providing a variety of learning experiences and settings for more students. Not only was it important to faculty and supervisors to expand the offering of the NVAA at other institutions, but it was viewed as critical to engage the universities and colleges in the planning and implementation of the Academy. Some felt the colleges and universities that co-sponsor the NVAA need more influence over the curriculum development and implementation. Specifically, faculty felt the knowledge and expertise of academics related to research and teaching strategies was not adequately utilized in planning. There needs to be greater outreach to those with expertise in curriculum development, adult learning principles, and current research in the victims' field. The approaches can contribute to higher quality training experience, increased learning gains, and ultimately improved services for victims.

3. CONCLUSION

The goals of the NVAA were threefold:

- To develop and implement a comprehensive, research-based, foundation-level course of academic instruction that provides victim advocates with current and cutting-edge knowledge about victim assistance and the field of victimology
- To provide high quality, intensive education and training to victim services providers, advocates, and professionals from Federal, state, local and tribal settings
- To create a training model that can be adapted and integrated into institutions of higher learning and other venues (e.g., State Victim Assistance Academies).

The evaluation demonstrated that the Academy was partially successful in achieving the overall goals for the Academy. In general, the Academy did represent a comprehensive research-based foundation-level course of academic instruction that provided victim advocates with knowledge about victim assistance and the field of victimology. What the Academy did not do was offer current and cutting-edge information for a number of the topics covered in the Text and during the Academy sessions. Although these adjectives may have been appropriate for describing the Academy when it was developed in 1995, an overhaul of the Academy Text is necessary before OVC can claim these achievements for future Academies.

Regarding whether the Academy provided high quality, intensive education and training to victim services providers, advocates, and professionals from federal, state, local and tribal settings, it was very evident that the Academy was an intensive experience. As a foundation-level course geared toward individuals new to the victims' field, it is necessary to revisit the schedule of the Academy. Many faculty and participants indicated the days at the Academy were too long with not enough breaks throughout the day or downtime where participants and faculty could reflect on the information presented. The Academy covers a lot of information in a short period of time and in order for participants to internalize the wealth of data covered (a factor necessary for change), more time is needed for presentation of important information, reaction or discussion of the information among participants with and without faculty, and personal time to interpret how the information will be useful to the student in his/her work with victims. In addition to increasing the likelihood that participants will remember and use the information they learn at the academy in their jobs, these changes also will improve the overall quality of the training experience for students.

For the most part, the Academy did offer quality instruction to participants. Some suggestions for enhancing quality included using more interactive, adult learning strategies in the sessions to engage participants, bring in more direct service providers working in specific areas (e.g., child abuse, military system) to demonstrate the application of theory to "real world" settings, incorporating more skill-building exercises into the Academy (e.g., communication with victims, collaborating with law enforcement, advocating for a victim), and recruiting Academy participants new to the field of victim services, especially individuals from grassroots organizations working with underserved victims of crime (e.g., victims with disabilities, trafficking victims, Native American victims, rural victims, etc.).

Finally, information from faculty, supervisors, and program coordinators of State Academies (OVC-funded and Independent Academies) suggests that institutions of higher learning, agencies and organizations, and States as a whole have benefited from use of the NVAA as a model for educating and training victim service providers, advocates, and allied professionals. For some, the NVAA Text provided the general foundation-level information for university classroom instruction, training of new staff, or participants of State Academies. A NVAA Text as a "launching pad" into more in-depth coverage of many of the topics included in the Text. Still others adopted the approach of the Academy for their State Academies; offering weeklong courses on university or college campuses in their state.

In addition to achieving the overall goals of the Academy, the evaluation demonstrated that the Academy had a noticeable, and in some cases statistically significant, impact on the students who attend by increasing their knowledge, improving their attitudes, and providing them with the capacity to make change. Additionally, the Academy helped participants achieve both

personal and professional goals. The following were key outcomes reported by students involved with the NVAA:

- Increased networking with other professionals
- Greater understanding and sensitivity toward victims
- Improved programs/services for victims as a result of newly acquired knowledge, especially related to laws and legislation and available resources
- Increased use of national, state, and local resources
- Continued training and education on topics relevant to professions
- Increased recognition of victim services as a professional field.

The Academy was effective in providing students with a broad national perspective on the victim services field, helping professionals network with others, and educating professionals about the availability of resources to assist them in their work with victims.

As noted in the discussion of lessons learned and recommendations, however, several aspects of the Academy need to be reexamined when planning future Academies in order to ensure lasting impact on students. These include:

- Redefining the learning objectives to be addressed during the Academy (in the Text, presentations, and overall) to include fewer, measurable, realistic, and meaningful outcomes for students. Trying to cover too many learning objectives can result in cursory rather than real change for participants. Also, general or ill-defined objectives make it difficult for the participants to know what they can expect from the Academy and more importantly, whether from the outset the Academy is well-suited to meet their needs.
- Reexamining the purpose of the Academy, especially in light of new State Victim Academies, as a foundation-level course. To remain a foundation-level course, many of the recommendations presented above need to be realized (e.g., restricting participation to participants new to the victims' field, limiting the number of topics covered or lengthening the Academy to allow more time to digest the new information, etc.). It also is important to recognize the need for advanced training evidenced by the responses of faculty, students, and supervisors. This could be incorporated into the NVAA with "tracks" representing different levels of experience (novice to experienced) or separate training institutes.
- Engaging victim service providers, advocates, allied professionals, supervisors and directors of agencies and organizations with an emphasis on serving victims, academics, and State Academies in a needs assessment of the field. It has been eight

years since the Academy was conceptualized and during that time there has been remarkable progress and change in the victims' field. It is important for OVC to examine trends and reassess the current education and training needs of the field to determine what a future National Academy should look like (e.g., who will support the Academy, where will it take place, what will be the purpose of the Academy, who will attend, how will success be measured, etc.).

The NVAA has served the victims' field well over the years. It is evident that there continues to be a need for education and training of professionals working with victims at many levels, including the national-level. Although the Academy has attempted to adapt to the changing needs of the field and accommodate participants with varying backgrounds and experience in the victims' field, one Academy cannot be everything to everyone. The results of this evaluation can assist future planning and decision-making efforts in ensuring the educational and training needs of the victim services field are addressed in the best possible way.