Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims (ELERV) Strategy

SECOND EDITION

PERFORMANCE MONITORING
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INTRODUCTION

Measuring the progress of any new initiative is vital. Culture change is a process that does not always follow a steady path toward agencywide incorporation. Strategically capturing data and monitoring internal and external performance measures can help build a roadmap for implementation. It can also help identify gaps and opportunities for improvements to meet the needs of those served. Robust data collection can support future funding and personnel, show progress, and build community trust.

Performance monitoring can be internal and external to the agency.

Internal performance monitoring assesses internal factors that may impact response to victims. This can include personnel perceptions, training, and skill development. It may address questions like

- How do personnel perceive their role in victim response?
- How do personnel view the agency’s response to victims?
- What skills do personnel need to meet victims’ needs?
- Do personnel believe they have adequate training and resources to meet victims’ needs?

External performance monitoring assesses external factors that may impact response to victims. This can include crime victims’ and community members’ perceptions of law enforcement response, crime reporting rates across the community, and the quality of partnerships between law enforcement and community agencies. It may address questions like

- What do crime victims expect from law enforcement personnel?
- How do crime victims perceive the agency’s response to their needs?
- How does the community view the agency’s response to victims?
- Are there populations in the community that are less likely to report crimes to law enforcement? What is preventing them from making reports?
- How do system partners, community partners, and other community-based service providers view the agency’s response to victims?
GETTING STARTED

Law enforcement agencies have increased their use of intelligence-led policing and data-driven problem-solving over the last decade. However, collecting data can still feel intrusive and unfamiliar. It can also be difficult for agencies to critically review their own practices and culture. Their proximity and inherent subjectivity may make this challenging. Taking a closer look at the inner workings of the agency can lead to productive conversations and culture change. Involving victim services personnel (agency employed or community based) to help interpret victimization dynamics and other key concepts can be beneficial.

Allow for doors to be open within your department so opportunities for partnership and community collaborations can develop. Seek information and input from the community and internally and be willing to accept constructive criticism. Most of the input you receive will not be a surprise if you are really giving your department an honest evaluation.

Saginaw Police Department

DATA COLLECTION

Law enforcement agencies can collect data (baseline and follow-up) in many ways. Baseline data helps agencies understand how victims’ needs are currently met. Follow-up data helps agencies understand if and how victim response has been impacted by implementation efforts. Many agencies may feel comfortable with completing independent data collection. However, including a research partner can be beneficial.

Opportunities to give both positive and negative feedback are important. Creating opportunities for people to make suggestions and comments can help build trust and create buy-in. Gathering both quantitative (statistics and trends) and qualitative (opinions and ideas for action) data is essential. For example, quantitative data shows how many officers attended training on victim response. Qualitative data can address officers’ impressions of how useful the training material will be on the job. It can also help identify barriers they may face when using the information in their work with victims.

ELERV RESOURCES

Strengths and Considerations for Key Methods of Data Collection
EXISTING RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS

Developing a comprehensive baseline picture of victimization in the agency’s jurisdiction is a place to start. This will show how victims’ needs are currently addressed by the agency, other system agencies (e.g., prosecutors’ offices and courts), and community-based victim services providers (e.g., counseling, crisis support, housing, and basic needs providers). Without this information, establishing goals and measuring progress will be difficult.

Identify existing information. For example, U.S. Census data can show trends in community demographics (e.g., population, age, income, education level, employment status). Agency records can also be informative. Records showing resource allocation, written policies and procedures, and crime statistics can add to the baseline picture. Available victim-related data may include the number of crime victim compensation claims filed and how many victims access services. Case resolution information (e.g., convictions, dismissals) is also important. Other data sources might include newspapers, data reports, existing memoranda of understanding, training materials, and community reports.

SURVEYS

Surveys can be conducted in many ways (e.g., online, mail, phone). The target population should be considered when developing surveys. Ensure the selected modality accommodates participant access needs. For example, people without internet access cannot participate in an online survey. This could cause the survey results to be unrepresentative of the community and make the data less useful. Surveys should also be available in languages used by the target population (e.g., spoken, sign language, braille).

Surveys can be a cost-effective tool to gather information from multiple stakeholders (e.g., internal agency personnel, crime victims, community members, community partners). Demographics, attitudes, victimization impact, access to victim services, and other key factors can be captured. Survey anonymity may encourage participant openness and honesty. Conducting follow-up surveys can help monitor progress and identify ongoing needs. Some agencies may feel comfortable developing survey questions independently. Involving a research partner in this task can be beneficial.
INTERNAL AGENCY PERSONNEL SURVEYS

Understanding agency culture is important when implementing the ELERV Strategy. Agency personnel will be enacting the initiative. Understanding their perceptions of the agency’s role and their individual roles in victim response is essential. Everyone (sworn and professional) has a role to play in enhancing victim response. All personnel should be given opportunities to provide input and feedback. Anonymous surveys are recommended to encourage open and honest participation. Agencies can conduct surveys independently, through a third party, or with a research partner. These options can help personnel feel comfortable sharing ideas, especially if the ideas may be unpopular. Comprehensive information from multiple sources supports successful ELERV Strategy implementation.

ELERV RESOURCES

Sample Internal Agency Personnel Baseline Survey
Sample Internal Agency Personnel Follow-Up Survey

VICTIM SURVEYS

Gaining feedback from crime victims is critical. Victim feedback can help agencies understand what victims need and want from the criminal justice system. It can help agencies assess whether their victim response is effective and identify areas for improvement. It can also help identify how victims define success or “justice.” The act of asking for their feedback sends an important message to victims that they are important. For example, many law enforcement agencies have historically focused on offender arrest and prosecution as markers of success. However, research suggests that victims who feel supported, heard, and included throughout the criminal justice process are more likely to feel that the criminal justice system served them effectively, regardless of case outcomes.¹

Conducting outreach to victims should be done in a trauma-informed, victim-centered, and safety-conscious way. Asking people about their victimization may cause them to experience psychological trauma. The amount of time that has passed since victimization should be considered before asking victims to participate in surveys. For example, although each victim’s experience is unique and there is no timeline for recovery, victims of violent crime may benefit from a longer time lapse compared to victims of nonviolent crime.

¹ National Crime Victim Law Institute, Polyvictims: Victims’ Rights Enforcement as a Tool to Mitigate “Secondary Victimization” in the Criminal Justice System (March 2013).
Continued contact with law enforcement may put some victims in danger (e.g., intimate partner violence cases). Victim safety should be considered before attempting to contact a victim by phone, email, or mail. Take steps to maximize victim safety (e.g., require officers taking initial reports to ask victims for a safe way to contact them and document this in the case record). Include these steps in agency policies and protocols. Victim services personnel (agency employed or community based) should be available before, during, and after contact to assist victims if they need support or additional resources. Agencies are encouraged to include resource information with the surveys.

**COMMUNITY PARTNER SURVEYS**

Community victim services providers are key stakeholders in effective victim response. They often collaborate with law enforcement to meet victims’ needs during the criminal justice process and beyond. They can also share information about victims’ feedback on the effectiveness of the agency’s efforts. Agencies should complete an inventory of victim services providers in the community as part of their baseline data collection. Providers can be identified through victim intersection points. For example, a victim of strangulation may interact with emergency medical services (EMS), nurses, doctors, hospital social workers or chaplains, emergency shelter personnel, protection order court personnel, and prosecutors all within the first 72 hours of the crime. These partners can provide information about their roles in victim response. Their perceptions of law enforcement’s victim response can also be captured. They can help identify duplication or gaps in services and collaboration opportunities.

**COMMUNITY MEMBER SURVEYS**

Community feedback is also important. Not all crime victims report their victimization to law enforcement. Identifying and understanding barriers that prevent reporting can be valuable. Law enforcement can gain a broader understanding of the impact of victimization by including questions about unreported incidents in surveys. Community members may also see and hear things law enforcement does not. They may give insight and suggest solutions that have not been considered before.

Community feedback may include:

- Attitudes toward law enforcement
- Perceptions of vulnerability to crime
- Perceptions of community safety
- Knowledge of the role of law enforcement

**ELERV RESOURCES**

Sample Follow-Up Victim Survey

Sample Community Partner Baseline Survey
Sample Community Partner Follow-Up Survey
Gathering data may bring to light long-held, incorrect assumptions. If not addressed, these assumptions can impede implementation. Two agency teams had historically challenging community-police relationships before launching the ELERV Strategy. Their research partners conducted surveys and focus groups with internal agency personnel, community members, and crime victims. Participants were asked about the relationship between the community and law enforcement. Enlightening information emerged.

For example, a cyclical pattern was observed at one agency. Internal agency personnel did not believe the community wanted to work with them. The community felt officers were callous, and their engagement with law enforcement decreased. This reinforced the agency personnel’s belief that the community was not interested in working with them.

At first glance, the data suggested the agency personnel were right. Victims and community members identified barriers to community-police relationships (e.g., lack of transparency, limited knowledge about victim services, prior negative interactions, lack of trust). However, survey participants also expressed deep respect and gratitude for the agency and officers serving the community. The fragmented community-police relationships and appreciation for the agency’s efforts were both acknowledged. This helped to bridge the divide.

When asked how to improve the relationship between law enforcement and the community, participants expressed a desire for more, not less, law enforcement involvement and presence in the community. They wanted law enforcement to engage with them on a personal level, get to know them outside of policing situations, and listen to their input. This information helped the agency understand their community better and break down a perceived barrier to progress.
SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis can be used to gather information from a large group of stakeholders. This facilitated process helps identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the relationships among the participants. Agencies should complete a SWOT analysis with community partners and stakeholders early in ELERV Strategy implementation. This activity can produce valuable information and strengthen relationships and trust. SWOT analysis can help examine agency culture and practices and relationships with external stakeholders. A skilled facilitator from outside the organization should be identified. The facilitator will keep the exercise on track, ensure all voices are heard, and encourage participants to share ideas. Giving participants an overview of the ELERV Strategy before the exercise is recommended. It establishes the SWOT analysis framework.

The SWOT analysis completed at the initial meeting with the community partners was a particularly effective way to start or build on relationships. We strongly recommend this type of exercise or focus group interaction with community partners early in the process.

Saginaw Research Partners

The SWOT analysis produced suggestions and weaknesses, and these turned into action plans. Ways to alleviate the issues were discussed, the necessary connections were made, and we began working toward the path of enhanced service delivery to victims.

Saginaw Police Department

ELERV RESOURCES

Sample ELERV SWOT Analysis Worksheet
ANALYZING DATA

Analyzing data can identify themes and patterns. This can be the foundation for goals and implementation planning. For example, a community partner survey may show most respondents disagreed with the statement “I have an adequate understanding of the law enforcement investigation process.” The agency may develop a goal to train community partners on this topic. Previously unknown needs can also be identified through data.

Simple data analysis can be completed independently by law enforcement agencies. A research partner can assist with more in-depth analysis. Research partners can also help identify how the data can be used to improve victim response.

EXAMPLE

One agency's research team conducted baseline focus groups with law enforcement academy cadets. The cadets were overall supportive of the agency’s commitment to victim-centered, trauma-informed practices. They believed part of their role was to be a resource for crime victims. They agreed that soft skills (e.g., active listening, empathetic communication) were as important as other skills learned in the academy.

The research team conducted follow-up focus groups within six months of the cadets’ academy graduation and the start of their patrol assignments. There was a marked change from the baseline focus group. Officers now believed soft-skills training had limited value. Several believed some victims bring their victimization on themselves.

These results were surprising and discouraging to the agency. However, opportunities to offer additional support and mentoring to new academy graduates were identified. The results also led the agency to take a closer look at its field training program. They reviewed how field training officers are identified, trained, and supported to fill these leadership roles.
Law enforcement agencies can benefit from working with a research partner when implementing the ELERV Strategy. Research partners can help examine the existing agency culture, policies, and practices. They can also obtain feedback from key stakeholders. Researchers’ expertise and objectivity in data collection can be beneficial.

Research partnerships may be developed through local colleges and universities or research organizations. Faculty members from multiple disciplines (e.g., criminal justice, sociology, political science, social work, psychology) may be available to assist with data collection and research. Some faculty members incorporate community research or service learning in their classes. Interns, research assistants, and students in advanced degree programs completing their theses or dissertations may also be available to assist.

Gathering input from individuals within the agency and those served is essential. A research partner can help incorporate a wider variety of voices into an agency’s decision-making processes. Including victim services personnel (agency employed or community based) in the research team can also help understand key concepts and victimization dynamics. This collaborative process can bring new opportunities to light.

We recommend that other agencies absolutely look into incorporating research into the agency’s practices. Furthermore, we would submit that an agency does need both quantitative and qualitative data sets. Quantitative data will tell you what kind of problem you have at your agency, and qualitative data will tell you why you have that problem.

Chattanooga Police Department

Research partners can
- Complete objective evaluations and give recommendations
- Document current policies and practice
- Explore questions about agency and community culture that may be difficult to assess internally
- Identify and collect existing data
- Identify additional data collection strategies
- Document ELERV Strategy implementation
- Obtain confidential internal and external stakeholder feedback
- Develop data tracking and analysis tools
- Identify other areas for research and evaluation

IACP RESOURCES

Researchers have training and expertise to work directly with human subjects. Examples of this type of research include focus groups and in-depth interviews with stakeholders. These methods may be useful to address key topics, explore areas of tension or discord, and expand on survey questions. Federal human subject regulations protect the privacy and confidentiality of persons who choose to participate in this type of research. Researchers must take additional steps when working with crime victims to minimize the risk of causing further harm. Victim services personnel (agency employed or community based) should be included in planning to ensure victim needs are considered during research. Researchers understand the requirements for working with human subjects and ensure research methods align with these standards. Many colleges and universities also have specific human subject requirements that involve institutional review board (IRB) approval. The IRB review process can be lengthy and should be factored into research activity timelines.


3 CVR, “Research Basics.”

**EVALUATION RESEARCH**

Evaluation research documents processes and implementation outcomes to determine their effectiveness. Evaluation research can include process evaluations that document and analyze implementation steps. Outcome evaluations can also be completed to determine whether a program or practice is achieving the intended goals.

**ACTION RESEARCH**

Action research is a joint effort between researchers and agency representatives to improve processes, products, or services. Steps include

- Identifying the problem(s)
- Collecting data
- Developing goals and action plans
- Implementing the action plans
- Interpreting the results

This collaborative and customizable method is ideal for law enforcement agencies working to enhance their response to crime victims. It combines scientific knowledge and analytic skills of researchers with on-the-ground knowledge.
and expertise of agency personnel. It takes a holistic look at problems and identifies evidence-based solutions.⁴

RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT

Agencies have an ethical responsibility to use the information gathered through data collection and research to improve their response to victims. Not doing so risks damaging relationships and losing credibility with those who participated in the process.

Agencies are encouraged to share the gathered information. This can be accomplished in several ways (e.g., in person, on the agency’s website, through social media). Some agencies may be reluctant to share information that does not show the agency in the best light. However, doing so can demonstrate transparency, increase support and buy-in, and strengthen partnerships. Agencies should include their preliminary plans to address the identified issues when presenting information to stakeholders. This step is important for building and maintaining trust.

EXAMPLE

One agency asked for community partner input before implementing the ELERV Strategy. Many community partners expressed frustration and skepticism. They were concerned that their input would not result in meaningful change. Community partners explained that the agency asked for their feedback on multiple occasions in the past. However, the agency did not share how their input was used. Community partners felt like their time had been wasted and their input was not taken seriously. They were reluctant to engage in a similar process again.

To address this potential barrier, the agency acknowledged past challenges and accepted responsibility. They committed to sharing information and established formal partnerships to further solidify the relationships. Most important, the agency followed through on these commitments. They held a community partner forum to review the data and the agency’s preliminary goals. They incorporated this process into agency performance monitoring protocols. This step was repeated each time significant data findings were available. This transparency and follow-through renewed collaborative efforts. It strengthened partnerships between the agency and its community partners.

⁴ Office for Victims of Crime, OVC Fact Sheet: Action Research.
INSTITUTIONALIZING PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Internal and external performance monitoring should be ongoing. External performance monitoring can be institutionalized by conducting stakeholder surveys on a continual basis (e.g., annually) and completing SWOT analyses with each new partnership. External performance monitoring data should also be included in routine agency audits and grant progress reports.

Internal performance monitoring can be institutionalized by regularly reviewing and revising (when needed) victim response policies and procedures. Supervisors should ensure personnel carry out victim response policy and practice changes. Victim response skills evaluations can also be incorporated. This can be completed during formal field training or personnel performance evaluations. It can also occur during informal observations by supervisors. Appropriate use of victim-centered language in reports, observed victim interviews and interactions, and body-worn camera footage can also be monitored by supervisors. These routine performance monitoring activities help ensure teaching opportunities are identified and addressed in real time.

IACP RESOURCES

REPORT REVIEW CHECKLISTS
Response to Domestic Violence
Response to Non-Lethal Strangulation
Response to Protection Order Violations
Response to Sexual Assault
Response to Stalking

Internal performance monitoring can also be institutionalized by adding victim-related questions and scenarios into hiring and promotional processes. This helps assess victim response skills and training needs of new hires and those seeking leadership roles. Community partners who serve crime victims should also be incorporated into interview panels whenever possible. This can ensure candidates are assessed by professionals with different skill sets. This collaboration can also strengthen partnerships.
Our sergeant’s promotional process is one area where performance monitoring really is evident. The promotional process of old looked at testing mainly the knowledge of candidates related to laws, process, and leadership qualities. While those components still exist in the test we use today, it has transformed to look at community expectations as well as testing the candidates on how they interact with victims and citizens in crisis. A mock scenario is given with little preparation and is conducted in front of a volunteer community panel. The community panel evaluates the sergeant candidates based on a set of criteria related to how the officers are expected to interact with victims of crime. This process, while expanding our partnership with the community, adds a missing component in the promotional process. It adds the human element into the equation and allows the community to quantify expectations of how our department treats victims. This allows sergeant candidates who truly understand their role as community caretakers to excel in the process and helps further promulgate the department’s expectations.

Within the last 12-month period after the new process was implemented, the department has had two sergeant promotional processes. Based on the scores from the first process, no candidate was promoted. While this was clearly a shock to the organization, it sent a message that expectations related to candidate performance were largely tied to community expectations and a victim-centered response. A subsequent process yielded two high-quality candidates who clearly exhibited what the agency was looking for related to interacting with the community and victims of crime.

Casper Police Department

Including victim response questions in promotional interviews demonstrates the value placed on this aspect of policing. It also requires those seeking leadership positions to prioritize this skill set. These strategies show the agency’s commitment to victim response and support long-term culture change.
Two thousand eighteen was the inaugural year for several key performance monitoring strategies designed to incentivize victim-centered services and to promote the continuation of a cultural shift that had begun within the agency—a shift that has resulted in staff recognizing the inherent value in being victim-centered, both in mission and practice. Specifically, during the assessment phase of the promotional process from officer to sergeant and sergeant to lieutenant, those under consideration must demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the victim services unit, access to victim support services, and elements of trauma-informed policing. This change truly ingrains a victim-centered approach into the very fabric of an agency. It is written into the very metrics of the agency and is the cornerstone for those wishing to promote into positions of leadership.

Chattanooga Police Department

CONCLUSION

Enhancing law enforcement response to victims is a continuous and evolving process. Thorough, data-driven analysis takes time and effort. The results can be invaluable for law enforcement agencies. Many data collection methods can be completed independently. Agencies can partner with researchers for more robust data analysis and formal research. Performance monitoring helps identify successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Recognizing successes can inspire agency personnel to continue the important work of serving victims. Engaging multiple stakeholders conveys the agency’s commitment to enhanced victim response. It can strengthen partnerships, build community trust, improve victims’ experiences, and support healing in the aftermath of crime.