

**Establishing or Enhancing Law  
Enforcement-Based Victim Services –  
*Effective Partnerships***

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## Introduction

Victim-centered responses and services are vital to the safety, stability, and healing of crime victims, as their use can ultimately reduce and prevent future victimization.<sup>1</sup> In 2018, to support the development of law enforcement-based victim services in the United States, to strengthen their capacity, and to support partnerships with community-based programs, the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) launched the [Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services & Technical Assistance Program \(LEV Program\)](#). Providing training and technical assistance for the LEV Program, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) aims to enhance the capacity of law enforcement-based victim services by providing guidance on promising practices and policies to support victims' access to their legal rights and the services and responses they need.

This publication series seeks to enhance law enforcement-based victim services, and as a result, the overall field of victim advocacy. Community-based advocates reading these publications may need to account for statutory, legislative, and policy differences.<sup>2</sup>

## Prior Publications & Accompanying Webinars

The LEV Program guides agencies to provide high-quality services (coordinated, collaborative, culturally responsive, multidisciplinary, and trauma-informed) that address the broader needs and rights of all crime victims. The following publications can assist in these efforts.

- [Establishing or Enhancing Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services—What Are the Key Considerations?](#) and the accompanying [Key Considerations Checklist](#) provide provisional guidance to agencies establishing or enhancing services to victims. These two publications include an overview of foundational topics for law enforcement-based victim services. Future publications in this series will expand on each area of focus.
- [Victims' Rights Jurisdiction Profiles](#) provide state-specific information on the intersections of victims' rights and communication with victim services personnel.
- [Establishing or Enhancing Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Advocacy Parameters](#) discusses the structure of law enforcement-based victim services, personnel supervision, and service delivery.
- [Establishing or Enhancing Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Documentation Standards](#) discusses victim services documentation location, content, access, and legal intersections.
- [Establishing or Enhancing Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Using Technology to Communicate with Victims](#) discusses considerations when using virtual technology to communicate with victims.

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<sup>1</sup> Brian A. Reaves, [Police Response to Domestic Violence, 2006–2015](#) (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see the [Models of Service Provision](#) section of this publication.

## Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services—*Effective Partnerships*

To assist agencies in establishing or enhancing law enforcement-based victim services, the Template Package series provides sample victim services policies and forms that agencies can adapt to state, jurisdiction, and agency requirements. The template packages should be used in conjunction with the topic-specific resources listed above. The Template Package series includes—

- [\*Template Package I: Getting Started\*](#) provides job descriptions, interview questions, code of ethics, and foundational policies and protocols.
- [\*Template Package II: Next Steps\*](#) provides case response protocol templates, scenarios, and documentation samples.
- [\*Template Package III: Student Interns & Volunteers\*](#) provides templates for recruiting, screening and selection, training, supervision, and other agency considerations for student interns and volunteers.
- [\*Template Package IV: Pamphlets\*](#) includes sample crime-specific and topic-specific informational pamphlets agencies can customize and disseminate to victims of crime.
- [\*Template Package V: Training\*](#) includes customizable presentations and activity workbooks agencies can use for victim services personnel training.

IACP developed a [virtual training series](#) to supplement the publications. Each topic covered has content intended for sworn and program personnel. This model promotes a thorough understanding of the intricacies of victim services at all levels of a law enforcement agency.

### Definitions

Throughout this series, the following definitions will apply. They were selected through a review of documents in the field including those from existing law enforcement-based victim services programs:

- **Advocacy**—actions to support a cause, idea, policy, or position.
  - **Individual advocacy**—actions aimed at direct services for victims.
  - **Systemic advocacy**—actions to improve overall system responses and outcomes for all victims.
  - **Community-based advocacy**—actions by those who work for private, autonomous, often nonprofit organizations within the community.
  - **System-based advocacy**—actions by those employed by public agencies such as law enforcement, prosecutor’s office, or some other entity within the city, county, state, tribal, or federal government.
- **Agency**—refers to the police department, sheriff’s office, tribal police or public safety department, campus police department, district attorney’s office, state attorney’s office, or other governmental criminal justice entity that is employing victim services personnel.

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- **Centralized Victim Services Model**—a law enforcement-based victim services model in which all victim services personnel report to the same supervisor, regardless of crime type, jurisdiction area, or other assignment (e.g., victim services personnel serving co-victims of homicide and victims of sexual assault all report to the same supervisor).
- **Community-Based Organization**—a nongovernmental or nonprofit entity that may provide services to victims.
- **Crime Victim Compensation**—a state-based<sup>3</sup> reimbursement program for victims of crime, found in every U.S. state and territory, but with eligibility criteria and specific benefits that are unique to each state.
- **Culturally Responsive**<sup>4</sup>—refers to the ability of an individual or organization to understand, learn from, and interact effectively with people of different cultures, including drawing on culturally based values, traditions, spiritual beliefs, customs, languages, and behaviors to plan, implement, and evaluate programs and services. Related terms are “cultural accountability,” “cultural competency,” or “cultural humility.”
- **Decentralized Victim Services Model**—a law enforcement-based victim services model in which victim services personnel report to separate supervisors depending on crime type, jurisdiction area, or other assignment (e.g., victim services personnel serving co-victims of homicide report to a different supervisor than those serving victims of sexual assault).
- **Mandated Reporting**—obligations per state law about concerns of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of minors and older or vulnerable adults.
- **Procedural Justice**—an approach to resolving disputes and allocating resources that involves fair and consistent application of rules, inclusion of those impacted by decisions, and transparency of processes by which impartial and unbiased decisions are made.<sup>5</sup>
- **Professional Personnel**—non-sworn or civilian law enforcement agency personnel (e.g., victim services, front desk, crime scene, records, communications/dispatch).
- **Student Intern**—someone who serves in a law enforcement agency or community-based organization for a designated period with or without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation for services rendered and is affiliated with an institution of higher education.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> There are currently two states, [Arizona](#) and [Colorado](#), that administer victim compensation funds using a decentralized system.

<sup>4</sup> Center for Court Innovation, Casa de Esperanza, and the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, “[Cultural Responsiveness & the Courts](#),” in *Building a Culture of Justice: How Courts Are Improving Access and Understanding in Domestic Violence Cases*, Viewers’ Guide (New York: Center for Court Innovation, 2016); Marie-Elena Reyes and Ann Curry-Stevens, *Protocol for Culturally Responsive Organizations: Literature Review and Standards for Performance* (Portland, OR: Center to Advance Racial Equity, Portland State University 2014); Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center, “[American Indian and Alaska Native Populations](#),” web module, 45 min., in Specific Considerations for Providing Victim Services online training.

<sup>5</sup> Laura Kunard and Charlene Moe, *Procedural Justice for Law Enforcement: An Overview* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Law Enforcement Policy Center, *Concepts & Issues Paper: Volunteers* (Alexandria, VA: 2019).

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- **Trauma-Informed**—an approach involving educating victims, service providers, and the general community about the impact of trauma on the health and well-being of victims; attending to victims’ emotional and physical safety; and using resources, services, and support to increase the ability of victims to recover.<sup>7</sup> To fully develop a trauma-informed response, all disciplines must be involved in response efforts (dispatch, patrol, investigators, supervisors, nurses, advocates, prosecutors, legal services, victim services personnel, and others providing services to victims) and acknowledge the impact of historical, intergenerational, and personal trauma.
- **Tribe**—any American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Tribe, Band, Nation, or other organized group or community (including any Alaska Native Village or regional corporation as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act ([85 Stat. 688], 43 USC § 1601 et seq.) who are recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to AI/AN individuals.
- **Victim-Centered**—an approach placing the victim at the center of all decisions regarding victim recovery and involvement with the criminal justice system, focusing on victim’s choice, safety, and well-being and how the needs of the victim are everyone’s concern.<sup>8</sup>
- **Victims’ Rights**—language included in constitutions, statutes, rules, and policies that vary by federal, state, or tribal jurisdiction and define legal responsibilities related to victims of crime, affording them independent, participatory status in the criminal justice system.<sup>9</sup>
- **Victim Services Personnel**—personnel (paid or unpaid) designated to provide law enforcement-based program oversight, crisis intervention, criminal justice support, community referrals, and advocacy on behalf of crime victims, witnesses, survivors, and co-victims.
- **Victim Services Unit (VSU)**—the unit within the law enforcement agency that houses the victim services personnel.
- **Victim, Witness, Survivor, Co-victim**—any person (minor or adult) who directly experiences or is impacted by a crime or criminal activity.
  - **Victim** is an individual who is an independent participant in the criminal case under federal or state victims’ rights laws or tribal victims’ rights codes, denotes a person’s legal status (unavailable to the general public), and defines the level and extent of participation that the individual is entitled to in the criminal matter.
  - **Witness** is an individual who has personal knowledge of information or actions that are relative to the incident being investigated.

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<sup>7</sup> National Institute of Justice (NIJ), [Notifying Sexual Assault Victims after Testing Evidence](#) (2016).

<sup>8</sup> NIJ, [Notifying Sexual Assault Victims after Testing Evidence](#).

<sup>9</sup> Office of Justice Programs, “[About Victims’ Rights](#),” Victim Law, U.S. Department of Justice; National Crime Victim Law Institute, “[Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Victims’ Rights Jurisdiction Profiles](#)” (2020); Paul G. Cassell and Margaret Garvin, “[Protecting Crime Victims in State Constitutions: The Example of the New Marsy’s Law for Florida](#),” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 110, no. 2 (2020): 99–139.

- **Survivor** is often used interchangeably with “victim” when conveying context related to resilience and healing.
- **Co-victim** is an individual who has lost a loved one to homicide, including family members, other relatives, and friends of the decedent.
- **Volunteer**—someone who performs a service for a law enforcement agency or community-based organization without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation for services rendered.<sup>10</sup>

### Partnerships

Victims are best served when there is strong collaboration within law enforcement agencies and with external service providers.<sup>11</sup> These partnerships are vital in upholding victims’ rights and ensuring the ongoing needs of victims, witnesses, survivors, and co-victims are properly addressed.

Effective partnerships also benefit both law enforcement agencies and community-based organizations. Partnerships provide opportunities for community-based organization personnel to tailor responses and services around practical knowledge of the criminal justice system. These personnel can be advocates for victims who participate in the criminal justice process. Law enforcement agencies benefit from specialized internal personnel and effective external partner networks that add value and legitimacy to their overall response to victims. For example, partnerships between law enforcement and culturally-specific community-based victim service providers (e.g., agencies serving victims who are American Indian/Alaskan Native, identify as LGBTQ+) can help ensure culturally informed responses to meet victim needs. With these partnerships as foundations, communities may benefit from increased crime reporting and enhanced victim choice through multiple points of entry for services and support.<sup>12</sup>

### Models of Service Provision

Multiple models of victim services provision exist. Becoming familiar with these different models can increase overall understanding of victim advocacy. They include—

- **Law enforcement-based victim services**—victim services personnel are employed by or contracted to serve a law enforcement agency (this can include student interns and volunteers) and service provision is for victims, witnesses, survivors, and co-victims of crime within the jurisdiction. These personnel are subject to rigorous background check processes and training, receive access to the agency’s record management system (RMS) and Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS), and are representatives of the law enforcement agency.
- **Hybrid community-based victim services**—victim services personnel are employed by a community-based organization that is engaged in a formal agreement (e.g., contract and/or memorandum of understanding or cooperative agreement) with a law enforcement agency to jointly dictate the role of victim services personnel in serving victims, witnesses, survivors, and co-

<sup>10</sup> IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, [Concepts & Issues Paper: Volunteers](#).

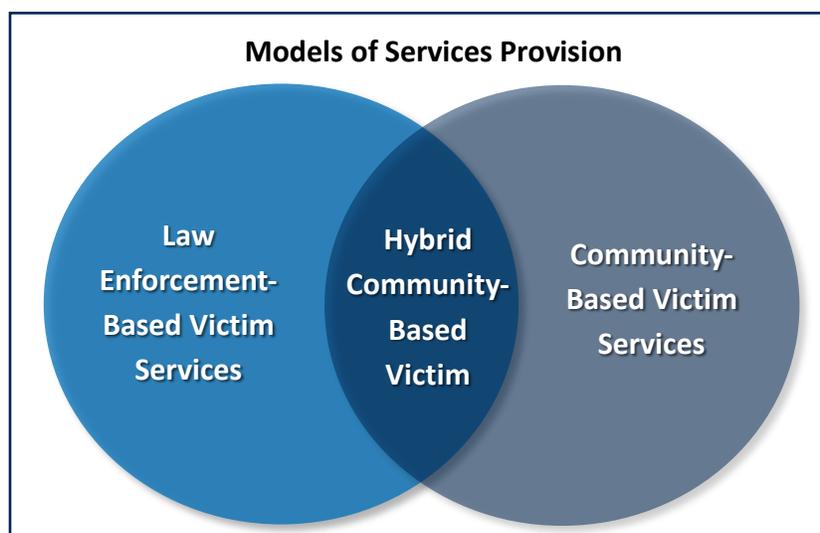
<sup>11</sup> Rich, Karen, and Patrick M. Seffrin, “Police Officers’ Collaboration with Rape Victim Advocates: Barriers and Facilitators,” *Violence and Victims* 28, no. 4 (August 2013): 681-696.

<sup>12</sup> Office for Victims of Crime, [“Extend Your Reach Through Partnerships”](#) in *2020 NCVRW Resource Guide*.

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victims of crime who are engaged with the law enforcement agency. These personnel may have access to RMS and CJIS after a proper background check is cleared but are not representatives of the law enforcement agency.

- **Community-based victim services**—victim advocates are employed by a community-based organization and the community-based organization may or may not have an agreement (e.g., memorandum of understanding or cooperative agreement) with a law enforcement agency dictating partnership contributions. These advocates do not have access to RMS or CJIS and are not representatives of the law enforcement agency.



Agencies must understand the differences between models of service provision and how these distinctions may impact partnerships. Consider the following:

- **Law enforcement-based victim services**—Internal partnerships between victim services and other agency personnel are usually straightforward since all are considered system-based. Victim services personnel should have equal access to case information as their sworn colleagues whenever possible. This facilitates collaboration. Victim services personnel can also be effective in identifying and building external partnerships that benefit victims, the victim services unit, and the larger agency.
- **Hybrid community-based victim services**—Partnerships within the law enforcement agency must be clearly defined, specifically as it relates to information sharing, confidentiality, and privacy requirements. Hybrid community-based victim services personnel housed within law enforcement agencies are bound by the parameters of their employing organization and the contract between the two entities. Mutual understanding of the roles of each partner is essential. External partnerships must also be clearly defined, specifically as it relates to the role of hybrid community-based victim services personnel in developing these partnerships. For example, it must be determined whether hybrid community-based victim services personnel will be responsible for developing partnerships for their employing organization, the law enforcement

agency in which they work, or both (and under what circumstances). Hybrid community-based victim services personnel must also accurately identify themselves and their organizational affiliation when engaging in partnership development, both internally and externally.

- **Community-based victim services**—Due to the nature of these relationships, partnerships between law enforcement agencies and organizations providing community-based victim services will be considered external partnerships. External partnerships with community-based organizations must follow clear information sharing parameters and abide by confidentiality and privacy requirements of the partner entities.

### Getting Started

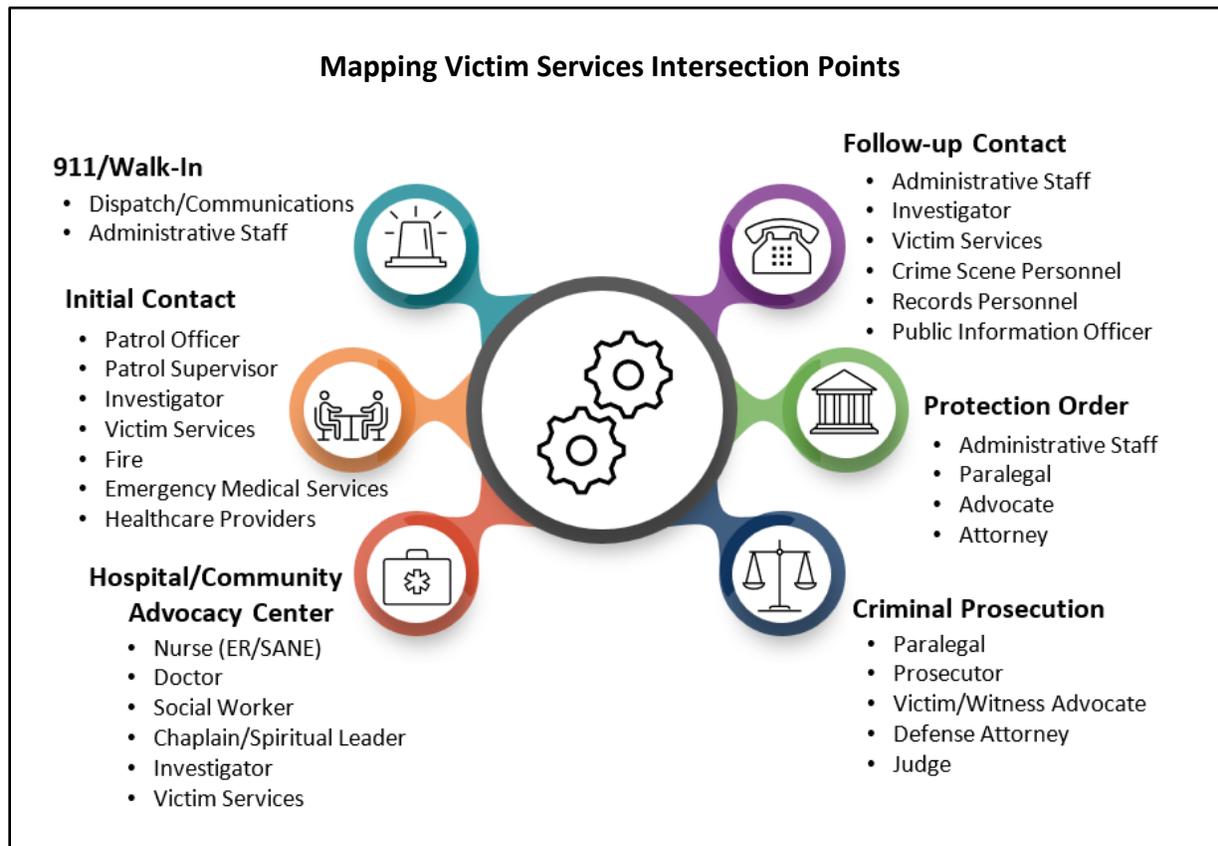
Review of organizational structure and practices, community composition, and availability of existing resources and services can help agencies assess existing partnerships and identify new opportunities. Agencies are encouraged to structure partnership goals around victims' rights. Determining how partnerships can support victims' access to their rights in the criminal justice system and opportunities to exercise these rights keeps victims' needs at the forefront of decision-making. Identifying federal, tribal, and state victims' rights can assist in identifying potential barriers and avenues to victims' access within the criminal justice system.<sup>13</sup>

Agencies should routinely review existing partnerships and associated agreements (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding) to ensure goals are still relevant, victim-centered, culturally specific, and trauma-informed, and the right personnel are involved. For example, some partnerships require an agency decision-maker (e.g., member of the command staff or supervisor) to participate, while other partnerships are best supported by personnel with the most direct contact with victims and community members (e.g., patrol officers, investigators, victim services personnel). For many partnerships, involving both agency decision-makers and direct contact personnel is beneficial and strengthens the working relationships.

New partnership opportunities can be identified by mapping victim intersection points (see Figure 1). For example, an agency may choose to track a victim's path from the time of the 911 call through the following 30 days. Internal intersection points may include front desk personnel, records personnel, investigators, victim services personnel, and evidence personnel. External intersection points may include personnel at hospitals, courts, community spiritual leaders, or community-based organizations. Mapping intersection points helps agencies focus attention on strengthening existing partnerships and addressing gaps in services by establishing new partnerships. Agencies are encouraged to seek out opportunities that may challenge the agency to collaborate in new ways to cultivate a robust network of support for victims. Victims' needs may change throughout the course of their participation in the criminal justice system, and partnerships should reflect this broad spectrum and maximize access for victims.

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<sup>13</sup> For more information about state-specific victims' rights, see [Victims' Rights Jurisdiction Profiles](#).



## Internal Partnerships

Strong internal partnerships focused on providing procedural justice to victims can reduce distress and may support ongoing engagement with the criminal justice system.<sup>14</sup> Response to crime victims' needs should be a priority for all personnel within the agency. To further promote this shared goal, victim services personnel are encouraged to establish internal partnerships at multiple levels (e.g., patrol, investigators, supervisors, and command staff) and across disciplines (e.g., records, crime scene, SWAT, and communications personnel).<sup>15</sup> This diversity of input can help create buy-in, strengthen relationships, and ensure the voices of both formal agency leaders and personnel with direct contact with victims are included in discussions and decision-making. Opportunities for mentoring and development of informal leaders can also occur.

Personnel from different disciplines should engage in dialogue regarding their specific roles, how best to work together to meet victims' needs, and how to address any challenges that may arise. Cross-training, especially when co-facilitated by representatives from each discipline, should be a priority. This not only

<sup>14</sup> Barkworth, Julie, and Kristina Murphy, "System Contact and Procedural Justice Policing: Improving Quality of Life Outcomes for Victims of Crime." *International Review of Victimology* 22, no. 2 (May 2016): 105–22. doi:10.1177/0269758015627044.; Laxminarayan, Malini, "Procedural Justice and Psychological Effects of Criminal Proceedings: The Moderating Effect of Offense Type," *Social Justice Research* 25, no. 4 (December 2012): 390-405.

<sup>15</sup> For more information, see [Roles and Opportunities—Internal Partnerships](#).

provides opportunities for this dialogue, but it also encourages joint learning, effective communication practices, and coproduced solutions.

Common characteristics of successful **internal partnerships** include—

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| <b>Understanding each other’s work</b>                         | Partners engage in discussions about agency expectations related to specific roles in victim response.                        |
| <b>Setting and meeting expectations</b>                        | Partners identify how each can contribute to agency goals.  |
| <b>Communicating clearly and regularly</b>                     | Partners communicate effectively within the agency and address issues as they arise.  |
| <b>Sharing information</b>                                     | Partners clearly understand the benefits and parameters of information sharing within the agency.                             |
| <b>Engaging in joint training and networking opportunities</b> | Partners within the agency train together to clarify their specific roles in victim response, share ideas, and problem-solve. |
| <b>Reciprocating efforts</b>                                   | Partners recognize one another as peer professionals and share responsibility for the success of agency initiatives.          |
| <b>Formalizing partnership agreements</b>                      | Partners formalize internal partnerships through agency policies. <sup>16</sup>   |

Strong internal partnerships call for all parties to give input and understand the parameters of the relationship. Partnerships should be mutually beneficial, centered around victims’ rights and needs, and may include—

### Agency Executives

Police chiefs and sheriffs speak on behalf of their agencies. Clear messaging from top leadership emphasizing the importance of providing high-quality services to victims is crucial. Agency executives can convey this message internally by clearly identifying the desired outcomes of victim services programs, supporting internal partnerships both verbally and through policy, supporting victim-centered, trauma-informed training for all personnel, and investing in data collection and analysis necessary to monitor progress. They can also advocate for resources needed to enhance and expand victim services programs and lead strategic partnership efforts.<sup>17</sup>

### Command Staff and Mid-Level Management

Command staff and mid-level supervisors are responsible for conveying messages from the chief or sheriff throughout the agency. They, too, must emphasize that high-quality services to victims are a priority and assist other agency leaders in translating this message into action steps. These personnel can help identify the skills and knowledge necessary to better meet victims’ needs, participate in training opportunities to

<sup>16</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police and Office for Victims of Crime, [Partnering](#), Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims (ELERV) Strategy, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> IACP, [Supporting Culture Change through Internal Communication with Officers and Civilian Staff](#) (Alexandria, VA: 2020).

strengthen these skills, and model the skills in daily practice and leadership opportunities. They can influence hiring decisions, allocate resources for training, and implement policies necessary to effectively serve victims.

### **First-Line Supervisors**

First-line supervisors across the agency have an essential role in ensuring personnel who have contact with victims have adequate training and are consistently engaging in victim-centered, trauma-informed practices. This may include requests for records, evidence collection and return, interviewing practices, and documentation. Modeling effective victim response skills, providing personnel with opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in this area, and giving immediate feedback to those they supervise can support this goal. They can also recognize those who excel in providing services to victims and reinforce the agency's goals in this area. They can support internal partnerships by structuring opportunities for personnel of different disciplines to work and train together. They can also take an active role in collecting data to track personnel progress and skill development and identify gaps in training.

### **Trainers**

Trainers lay the foundation for personnel to learn agency expectations and skills needed to effectively serve victims. These personnel include academy trainers and those responsible for leading onboarding and in-service training. They should work with agency leaders, supervisors, officers, and victim services personnel to determine the specific skills and knowledge necessary for optimal victim response and develop curriculum around evidence-based practices. They should partner with victim services personnel to co-facilitate training that includes scenario-based learning opportunities requiring application of information and skills taught. They can further reinforce the high priority the agency places on serving victims by incorporating victim response discussions and skills development into all training. For example, during officer training on use of body-worn cameras, trainers can include discussions about victim privacy and access to footage. They can also maintain updated information about new research and promising practices supporting victim engagement and share this information with their colleagues.

### **Field Training Officers (FTOs)**

Field training officers (FTOs) serve as role models for their trainees, and this partnership is often one of the most important in an officer's introduction to the policing profession. In many cases, field training provides new officers with their first real opportunity to practice skills learned in the academy.<sup>18</sup> FTOs are uniquely positioned to model effective victim response skills and to convey that serving victims is a top priority through their words and actions. FTOs can provide trainees with real-time feedback, coaching, and recommendations for ways to improve interactions with victims. They can also facilitate peer learning opportunities with multiple internal units, including victim services. Tasked with evaluating new officers' knowledge and skills, FTOs can also provide agency leadership with valuable information about individual officers' progress and make recommendations for additional training when needed. They can also provide

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<sup>18</sup> Ronald H. Warners, "[The Field Training Experience: Perspectives of Field Training Officers and Trainees](#)," *Police Chief* 77 (November 2010): 58–64.

input on training curriculum at the academy and FTO levels based on observations and experiences with new officers.

### First Responders Including Officers and Investigators

Officers and investigators play key roles in effective victim response. First responding officers are critical in establishing victim trust and engagement. They can help victims understand their rights, the roles of officers and investigators, what to expect from the criminal justice system, and how to access support services in the community. They can partner with victim services personnel to receive regular updates about services available through the agency's victim services and community-based organizations. They can provide valuable feedback to agency leadership about the usefulness of tools, methods, and strategies for effective victim response. They can also participate in cross-training with personnel from other disciplines to better understand victim intersection points in the criminal justice process and help prepare victims for next steps.

### Communications Personnel

Communications personnel are often the first people victims speak to when calling for police assistance. They can engage in victim-centered, trauma-informed practices when interacting with victims by phone and can effectively set the stage for victim engagement with the agency. They can provide insight to agency leadership about their observations of victims' needs and offer input on ways to address these needs. They can also partner with victim services personnel to maintain updated contact information for community-based organizations and offer these referrals to victims during non-emergency calls. Their participation in cross-training with other personnel can support collaboration and a more thorough understanding of their role and practices.

### Crime Scene Investigators

Like first responders, crime scene investigators often interact with victims during high-stress events. Crime scene investigators can help victims understand evidence collection processes on scenes and during follow-up investigative activities. They can provide direct answers to victim questions and partner with victim services personnel to develop written information for victims. They can also co-develop policies and practices to support victims during potentially traumatic investigative activities such as having injuries photographed or during death investigations. Crime scene investigators can provide training to agency

*“The role of law enforcement-based victim services can be really challenging at times. Through learning how to finesse our communication styles and focusing on our shared goals, we have been able to transition from being viewed as outsiders to being members of the team. Strong internal partnerships rely on everyone focusing on building bridges instead of burning them down.*

*Victim services personnel need to be very strategic about nurturing partnerships when advocating from within law enforcement agencies. Outcomes for victims depend on us having strong internal partnerships – there's no chance we could do this alone.”*

Wendy Isom  
Victim Advocate Program  
Coordinator  
Salt Lake City Police Department  
Salt Lake City, UT

personnel about their role, common on-scene processes, and general timelines for evidence collection and testing. They can also collaborate with investigators and victim services personnel to ensure victims are kept informed about evidence testing processes (e.g., fingerprints, DNA, toxicology), timelines, and expected outcomes during investigations.

### **Public Information Officers (PIOs)/Specialists**

Public Information Officers (PIOs)/Specialists are key partners in effective victim response. They can lead efforts to protect victim privacy while still providing accurate and timely information to the media and the public.<sup>19</sup> They can also provide input when developing agency websites, publications, and other public messages. PIOs/Specialists can partner with agency trainers to ensure all personnel understand their role and the agency's approach to media relations. Victim services personnel can also benefit from collaboration with PIOs/Specialists to develop resources for victims about their rights and agency policies around the release of information to the media and ways to manage publicity related to their cases.

The message and language used by the agency flows through the PIOs/Specialists and into the community. Using victim-centered language is critical in communicating agency culture, both internally and externally. PIOs/Specialists can also support outreach and community awareness of available resources and services.<sup>20</sup>

### **Records and Information Systems Personnel**

Coordination between victim services personnel and records and information systems personnel is essential to maintaining high-quality services to victims. Records and information systems personnel can ensure victims have appropriate access to information about their cases and can easily request and receive copies of case records according to agency policy. These personnel can also assist victim services personnel in identifying important performance measures to track, including number and types of services provided, number and types of referrals made to external organizations, and the total number of victims served. They can support victim services personnel and other internal and external partners (e.g., research partners) to develop ways to collect information about victims' perceptions of the agency's response and help analyze the information collected. This information can be used to identify gaps in services, track progress over time, comply with grant reporting requirements, and support expanding services.

### **Planners and Analysts**

Larger agencies may have planners and analysts on staff. They can work with agency leaders to define victim response progress indicators and outcome measures. They can assist victim services personnel in developing overall program goals, tracking interim data, and analyzing outcome measures. They can work with records and information systems personnel to establish effective data collection systems and ensure the needed technology is in place. They can also help interpret and incorporate data into agency policies, practices, and decision-making processes. Planners can also assist agency leadership in strategic planning

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<sup>19</sup> Major Cities Chiefs Association, [Key Leadership Strategies to Enhance Communication](#) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services, September 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Darrel W. Stephens, Julia Hill, and Sheldon Greenberg, [Strategic Communication Practices: A Toolkit for Police Executives](#) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services, September 2011).

by identifying new funding sources for victim services and developing competitive grant applications and data-driven support to incorporate these important services into the agency budget.

### **Other Professional Personnel**

Other professional personnel often have direct contact with victims. For example, front desk personnel and administrative assistants often interact with victims when they come to agency buildings for interviews, to request records, or to meet with victim services personnel. Crime Prevention Specialists, Diversity Coordinators, and Outreach Specialists may interact with victims in the course of their work. These personnel can play an essential role in helping victims navigate agency processes, and their interactions with victims can support victims' continued engagement. Agencies should include other professional personnel in cross-training on victim-centered, trauma-informed responses and how to apply these principles to their roles within the agency. These personnel can also assist agency leadership in identifying processes that can be streamlined, gathering information about frequent questions and potential barriers they observe, and participating in problem-solving around these issues.

### **Victim Services Personnel**

Some law enforcement agencies use a decentralized victim services model where victim services personnel are assigned to specific units (e.g., domestic violence unit, child abuse unit, patrol) and report to different supervisors. When using this model, agencies must ensure consistent service delivery and standards. Ongoing internal partnerships among all victim services personnel and their respective supervisors will be required to ensure effective cross-team communication, consistent personnel expectations, and reliable services to all victims.

### **Special Considerations for University-Based Victim Services**

Internal partnerships may differ for university-based victim services personnel depending on how their role is defined. For example, chiefs of university police departments may share authority on some issues with university leaders, and media relations are often handled through the educational institution. In addition, most universities do not have their own training academies and must rely on regional or state academies to train their officers (at the academy level and to provide required in-service training). Due to the structure of many university-based police departments, specialized personnel such as investigators, crime scene personnel, and communications personnel may also be external to the police agency. It is also likely that personnel in records/information systems, planners, analysts, and some administrative personnel are centralized in larger departments within the university system. While these partnerships may be considered external in these instances, strong collaboration can still exist and is encouraged.

### **Formalizing Internal Partnerships**

Establishing policies and practices for cross-discipline work with victims can further support sustainable internal partnerships. Agencies are encouraged to formalize internal partnerships by developing policies

that outline the roles and responsibilities of personnel from each discipline.<sup>21</sup> Personnel from multiple ranks in each discipline should be involved in this process to ensure policies are developed through a multidisciplinary lens. Formalizing internal partnerships helps standardize approaches and provides consistency for victims. Consider the following examples:

- Personnel from the newly established Victim Services Unit at a state bureau of criminal investigations identified a need for consistency around the return of property to families of homicide victims (e.g., clothing, jewelry, personal identification items). Victim services personnel worked with evidence technicians to identify an unused room near the front of the building where property could be returned. The supervisors of both units developed a policy to outline personnel roles and responsibilities in the evidence return process, and input was gathered from personnel from each unit. The supervisors also co-facilitated a joint training for all personnel from both units that covered trauma-informed practices for interacting with co-victims of homicide.
- During a strategic planning meeting with the chief and command personnel at a tribal police department, the goal of expanding the role of the Victim Services Unit to include on-call field response was identified. The victim services supervisor recommended they begin with developing a plan for joint response between victim service personnel, patrol officers, and investigators to provide death notifications in the agency’s jurisdiction while respecting local customs and beliefs. The victim services supervisor, patrol captain, and major crimes lieutenant were tasked with developing a policy for this joint response. Personnel from each unit provided input during planning meetings. Co-facilitated training on the new policy was provided during Victim Services Unit meetings, roll calls for each patrol shift, and major crimes briefings.
- During a routine Sex Crimes Unit meeting at a mid-size sheriff’s office, investigators asked if victims could be given the option of having a Victim Services Unit staff member accompany them during investigative interviews and evidence collection (e.g., photographing injuries) for added support. Through joint efforts, a policy was developed among the sex crimes investigators, victim services personnel, and front desk personnel to ensure victims could meet first with victim services personnel to review criminal justice system and investigative processes, then meet jointly with the investigator and victim services personnel to review accompaniment options. The new policy included plans for after-hours interviews and ways additional support persons selected by the victim could be included. The policy was approved by agency leadership, and cross-training occurred.

### External Partnerships

Victims, witnesses, survivors, and co-victims of crime often have varied and extensive needs. Connecting victims to services designed to promote long-term healing and that are separate from the criminal justice system is important.<sup>22</sup> Strong external partnerships can ensure victims are quickly connected with the

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<sup>21</sup> For sample foundational victim services policies and protocols, see [Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services - Template Package I: Getting Started](#).

<sup>22</sup> For more information, see [Roles and Opportunities—External Partnerships](#).

## Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services—Effective Partnerships

services they need, and such partnerships may increase the likelihood of victims reporting crime to police in the future.<sup>23</sup> These partnerships also contribute to seamless service delivery and access for victims.

Developing strong external partnerships and effectively using available resources in the community are of the utmost importance for law enforcement agencies.<sup>24</sup> This may require changes to established practices and granting access to the agency in new ways. External partnerships can help expand the capacity of personnel as many local organizations are designed to support long-term victim healing. These partnerships are especially helpful for agencies in geographically isolated jurisdictions with limited community resources.<sup>25</sup> Expanded remote access to service providers and regional response teams can also result from creative engagement and problem-solving with external partners.

Joint contact and partner learning opportunities can help improve victim services. The foundation of successful partnerships is the mutual goal of assisting victims—not one partner assisting the other. Transparent, consistent communication that addresses common assumptions and challenges is important. All personnel responsible for contact with victims must understand the distinctions between community and legal definitions of victimization-related terms (e.g., sexual assault), address assumptions about agency policies, and share information about promising practices for effective victim response.

Common characteristics of successful **external partnerships** include—

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Understanding each other's work</b>                         | Partners identify the span of responsibility for each other's roles in serving victims.  |
| <b>Setting and meeting expectations</b>                        | Partners identify tasks and responsibilities of each partner and indicators of partnering success.   |
| <b>Communicating clearly and regularly</b>                     | Partners maintain open lines of two-way communication to encourage consistent, timely updates and collaborative problem-solving.                         |
| <b>Sharing information</b>                                     | Partners establish clear information sharing parameters that address confidentiality, privacy, and access to partner entity information.                 |
| <b>Engaging in joint training and networking opportunities</b> | Partners train together to support ongoing education, recognize the importance of each partner's role in serving victims, and share ideas and resources. |
| <b>Reciprocating efforts</b>                                   | Partners value balanced input, differing points of view, and shared responsibility for coproduced solutions.   |
| <b>Formalizing partnership agreements</b>                      | Partners formalize external partnerships through memorandums of understanding (MOUs) or other formal agreements between entities. <sup>26</sup>          |

<sup>23</sup> Smith Stover, Carla, "Police—Advocacy Partnerships in Response to Domestic Violence," *Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations* 12, no. 2 (November 2012): 183–198. doi:10.1080/15332586.2012.717031.

<sup>24</sup> Michael S. McCampbell, *The Collaboration Toolkit for Law Enforcement: Effective Strategies to Partner with the Community* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services, September 2011).

<sup>25</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police, *Policing in Small, Rural, and Tribal Communities*, Practices in Modern Policing (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police and Office for Victims of Crime, *Partnering*, Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims (ELERV) Strategy, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2020).

Strong external partnerships require all parties to provide input and understand the parameters of the relationship. Communication must be consistent and maintained at multiple levels in both organizations. Mutually beneficial partnerships should be centered around victims' rights and needs and may include—

### **Community-Based Organizations**

Private, autonomous, often nonprofit organizations in the community frequently provide valuable services to victims, including direct financial, psychological, and/or emotional support and services that extend beyond interactions with policing agencies or the larger criminal justice system.<sup>27</sup> While some victims may readily use services of both law enforcement and nonprofit organizations, other victims may initially connect with only one or the other.

Community-based organizations often provide essential services and connections to populations within the larger community that have experienced historical challenges around contact with police. Some of those same populations continue to voice concerns around equitable access to and response from police within their communities. Forming solid partnerships with organizations offering population- and culturally specific services<sup>28</sup> (e.g., deaf/hard-of-hearing, individuals with limited English proficiency, LGBTQ+, indigenous and people of color, rural residents, older or vulnerable adults, individuals with disabilities, immigrants, refugees) can be essential in understanding community needs.

Partner learning exchange opportunities that include cross-education on policies, practices, and legal obligations related to confidentiality, privacy, and information sharing can be beneficial. Personnel can observe and learn from each other during routine daily activities (e.g., patrol/records/communication personnel and shelter/counseling/advocacy personnel). Personnel can participate in cross-training and collaborate on joint training opportunities. Strong partnerships can result in cross-referrals when unmet victim needs are identified and can help support victims during and beyond the criminal justice case.

### **Faith-Based or Spiritual Organizations**

Faith or spiritual communities can serve as vital resources for crime victims who need support, comfort, and material assistance. Agencies can offer valuable connections for victims (when requested and desired) by partnering with organizations representing the faiths and spiritual beliefs present in the community. Agencies can support victim choice by providing accurate information about expected participation in faith or spiritual practices connected to services received (e.g., attendance at ceremonies or prayer meetings as a requirement for shelter placement). Leaders and other representatives of faith or spiritual communities can also be effective partners and credible messengers for information about law enforcement processes, services available to victims, and new initiatives. Agencies can engage with representatives of faith or spiritual communities to better understand the spectrum of faith or spiritual traditions practiced and to ensure services are delivered from a position of cultural sensitivity.

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<sup>27</sup> Michael S. McCampbell, [The Collaboration Toolkit for Community Organizations: Effective Strategies to Partner with Law Enforcement](#) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services, Rev. 2014).

<sup>28</sup> See the [National Resource Center for Reaching Victims](#), [Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence](#), and [Tribal Resource Tool](#) for more resources to better serve culturally specific communities.

### Private/For-Profit Community Organizations and Businesses

Privately owned, for-profit community organizations and businesses may have contact with victims. For example, co-victims of homicide may interact with biohazard cleaning companies when using their services following criminal events. Additionally, employees at locksmith and home security businesses may interact with victims as safety plans are implemented. Although serving victims is not the primary purpose of community organizations and businesses, they can convey valuable information within the community and assist law enforcement in bringing awareness to new initiatives.

### Health Care Organizations and Providers

Health care organizations and providers often span both public and private sectors in communities and can include medical, dental, behavioral health, and substance use treatment and care.<sup>29</sup> These organizations and providers often provide direct health care services to victims and play a vital role in ensuring victims receive appropriate and timely support. Partner learning exchange opportunities with health care organizations and providers (e.g., Indian Health Services, hospital emergency departments, community health clinics) that include cross-education on policies, multidisciplinary coordinated response practices, victims' rights, and trauma-informed responses can be beneficial.

### Child/Adult Welfare Agencies

Social services programs provided by state and/or local governments that serve children and older or vulnerable adults are essential partners. Personnel working in these programs investigate reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of these populations, assess individual needs, develop service plans, and report suspected criminal conduct to law enforcement. Agencies are encouraged to review state laws to determine mandated reporting responsibilities of all agency personnel.<sup>30</sup>

Partnerships can help form multidisciplinary coordinated responses and ensure regular cross-training on related policies and practices. These partnerships can also help agencies establish information sharing practices and maintain information about current services, accessibility, and eligibility requirements. This can translate into joint advocacy on behalf of victims.<sup>31</sup>

### Schools and Institutions of Higher Education

Public, tribal, and private school systems and institutions of higher education often develop relationships of mutual trust and respect with children, young adults, their parents or guardians, faculty and staff, and other community members. Through partnerships, agencies can prioritize effective communication

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<sup>29</sup> Robert V. Wolf and Center for Court Innovation, [Law Enforcement and Public Health: Sharing Resources and Strategies to Make Communities Safer](#) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services, February 2012); Bureau of Justice Assistance, ["Police-Mental Health Collaboration \(PMHC\) Toolkit"](#); Sean E Goodison et al., [Law Enforcement Efforts to Fight the Opioid Crisis: Convening Police Leaders, Multidisciplinary Partners, and Researchers to Identify Promising Practices and to Inform a Research Agenda](#) (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019).

<sup>30</sup> For more information, see the Mandated Reporting Protocol in [Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services—Template Package I: Getting Started](#).

<sup>31</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway, [What Is Child Welfare? A Guide for Law Enforcement](#) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau: 2018); IACP and Yale Child Study Center, [Enhancing Police Responses to Children Exposed to Violence: A Toolkit for Law Enforcement](#) (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2017).

between policing agencies, schools, school resource officers, school boards, campus student conduct offices (e.g., Title IX Offices<sup>32</sup>), and victim support services.<sup>33</sup> These partnerships can also help ensure compliance with Clery Act requirements through reporting crimes that occur on college and university campuses, making timely notification of crimes, making current crime information and yearly crime statistics available to the public, and implementing safety programs for all campus community members.<sup>34</sup>

Agencies can leverage partnerships with institutions of higher education to incorporate community research or service-learning opportunities and student internship programs. Partnerships with universities or colleges that have their own law enforcement agencies and/or associated victim services programs may be beneficial.

### **Legal Advocacy Organizations**

Organizations that concentrate on legislative and policy initiatives to reinforce victims' rights exist at the national, state, and local levels. Partnerships with victims' rights policy organizations can be mutually beneficial to the victim services personnel and the organization. With appropriate due diligence, agencies can effectively partner with these organizations to inform policy makers about new research, innovative practices, and crucial needs in the victim services field. For example, victim services personnel can participate in committees that focus on legislative priorities. They can inform committee members about emerging trends in the field, potential impacts of new legislation, and intersections with victims' rights. Legal advocacy organizations may be key partners to ensure adequate funding from public and private sources is allocated to meet the needs of victims. Likewise, victims' rights policy initiatives often provide training and information about legislative updates and case law interpretation. These partnerships can help victim services personnel stay updated on newly established, litigated, and interpreted victims' rights laws and initiatives.

### **Legal Service Providers**

Partnerships with organizations and legal service providers who focus on direct representation and services to victims are also important. This may include attorneys, organizations, and legal clinics that concentrate on victims' rights, civil legal matters (e.g., divorce, custody, protection orders), or immigration assistance. These partnerships can enhance overall services to victims.

### **Research Partners**

Developing partnerships with researchers can help agencies evaluate existing agency culture, data, and policies, inform current practices and services, and provide objective information that can be shared with key stakeholders. These partnerships may be developed through local/regional colleges and universities or research organizations. Researchers can be instrumental in developing surveys, conducting focus groups, co-facilitating community forums, tracking progress and impact of new initiatives, and providing

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<sup>32</sup> Title IX and the Clery Act are applicable to college and university school systems within the United States.

<sup>33</sup> IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, [School-Police Partnerships](#) (Alexandria, VA: 2020); National Center for Campus Public Safety (NCCPS), ["Building Partnerships among Law Enforcement Agencies, Colleges and Universities: Developing a Memorandum of Understanding to Prevent and Respond Effectively to Sexual Assaults at Colleges and Universities,"](#) sample MOU.

<sup>34</sup> NCCPS, ["Building Partnerships among Law Enforcement Agencies, Colleges and Universities."](#)

input on agency personnel training. Research partners often add value to applications for grant funding and can also contribute to agency leadership confidence in decision-making processes.

Both entities can benefit from research partnerships. Agencies gain the perspective and experience of professionals who are trained to collect and interpret data and apply findings of scientific literature. This can enhance credibility for agencies within their communities and among stakeholders. Researchers benefit through access to data and operational knowledge of policing practices.<sup>35</sup> Targeted research and a reliable body of knowledge around effective victim response can result from these partnerships.

### **Crime Victim Compensation Programs**

Reimbursement programs for victims of crime are essential partners. Most states require law enforcement agencies to provide victims with information about and referrals to these programs.<sup>36</sup> Through cross-training on eligibility requirements and associated benefits, agency personnel can gain a clear understanding of their role in linking victims to services that may support long-term recovery. Similarly, personnel from crime victim compensation programs can benefit from information about law enforcement processes, including access to incident reports that may expedite eligibility decisions and victims' access to benefits. Developing policies and procedures for communication can further expedite access to benefits.

### **Other Criminal Justice Agencies**

Partnerships with other criminal justice agencies responsible for prosecuting, sentencing, and supervising offenders provide essential avenues for information that may benefit victims as cases proceed through the system. Partnerships with prosecuting attorney's offices, pre-trial service agencies, probation and parole agencies, and correctional institutions can be beneficial.<sup>37</sup> Each of these entities may be instrumental in ensuring victims' rights are consistently upheld and may have their own victim advocates. In addition to partnerships with the larger agencies, identifying key personnel and their respective roles (e.g., specialized prosecutors, officers, case managers, victim services personnel) within each agency is encouraged. Agencies can also ensure victims are provided with timely and accurate status reports on cases including the custodial status of offenders through these partnerships. These partnerships can support consistent approaches and seamless transitions for meeting victims' needs throughout each phase of the criminal justice process.

### **Other Law Enforcement Agencies**

Partnerships with other law enforcement agencies and victim services personnel within each agency can be vital (e.g., municipal, county, tribal, state, and federal agencies). These partnerships can support robust crisis response plans for mass casualty events or incidents requiring multi-agency response. Seamless

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<sup>35</sup> IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, [Concepts & Issues Paper: Law Enforcement-Researcher Collaborative Partnerships](#) (Alexandria, VA: 2017).

<sup>36</sup> For additional information, see [Law Enforcement's Role in Victim Compensation](#).

<sup>37</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police and Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, [Working Toward Safety and Justice Through Police and Prosecutor Partnerships](#) (Washington, DC: Safety and Justice Challenge, 2019).

coordination through clear expectations reduces confusion around roles and responsibilities, avoids duplication of actions by multiple responders, and can reduce the negative impact of trauma for victims.

In addition to single episode events, agencies can partner with other law enforcement agencies to enhance victim services response. For example, one agency may serve as a lead agency that hires victim services personnel, while other law enforcement agencies contribute a portion of the associated costs in exchange for limited access to those personnel and the services they provide (e.g., services to a specific victimization category, shared on-call response coverage). This type of partnership can be beneficial for small agencies and those in rural jurisdictions and can help demonstrate fiscal responsibility while ensuring comprehensive services across multiple jurisdictions.

### **Community-wide Initiatives**

Community-wide initiatives may include coordinated system responses to specific victimization categories (e.g., Sexual Assault Response Team,<sup>38</sup> Human Trafficking Task Force). Review processes aimed at improved system outcomes may also result from these partnerships (e.g., fatality review teams). These partnerships may also be instrumental in maximizing training, networking, and resource sharing opportunities for entities who serve similar populations (e.g., Victim Services Coalitions, Domestic Violence Coalitions).

### **Funding Administrators**

Budget decisions that directly impact agencies' abilities to provide services to victims are approved, administered, and influenced by many entities (e.g., mayors, city council, county commissioners, state and federal government offices, university presidents). Agencies should become familiar with and abide by established policies for engaging with local officials.

Leaders within local and state organizations responsible for grant and private foundation funding can also serve as valuable partners when agencies are pursuing strategic expansion and program sustainability. For example, Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding administered at the state level may require applicants to participate in a training session on grant eligibility and reporting parameters, commit to using volunteers in program operations, contribute a dedicated percentage of matching funds to the amount requested, and/or provide services to identified victimization categories.

Partnerships with grant and private foundation funders as well as those responsible for local government funding are essential to efforts to transition victim services programs from grant funding to agency budget incorporation. Agencies can demonstrate proven and promising practices for victim services delivery, effective utilization of awarded funding through updates on promised outcomes, and advocate for necessary financial support of victim response efforts through these partnerships. Agencies can capitalize on these partnerships to stay informed of funding opportunities, requirements, timelines, and decisions.

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<sup>38</sup> Christopher Mallios and Jenifer Markowitz, "[Benefits of a Coordinated Community Response to Sexual Violence](#)," *Strategies in Brief* 7 (December 2011).

### Media

Agencies that have positive relationships with media professionals (e.g., television, print, online, and social media representatives) are likely to benefit from balanced coverage of their response efforts. Media coverage can highlight victims' rights, services, and available support for those impacted by crime. These partnerships are also excellent opportunities to disseminate accurate information around victimization, criminal justice processes, and agency policies and initiatives.<sup>39</sup> Media representatives can also be guided on sensitively conveying this information in a manner that affords dignity, respect, and privacy to those impacted.

Written media relations policies are essential. Policies should include expectations and procedures for interacting with media representatives and specific guidelines for releasing information.<sup>40</sup>

### Community Members

Agencies are encouraged to embrace community members not only as the recipients of police services, but as essential partners in maintaining public safety. Adopting a collaborative model where policing takes place *with* communities instead of simply *in* them can lead to community members feeling more *protected* and more *protective* of people in their communities and the values their communities represent.<sup>41</sup>

Community members can advocate for adequate resources to meet victims' needs and often volunteer their time to support agency initiatives. They can serve as liaisons with other community members and organizations to carry messages about law enforcement processes and services available to victims.

### Victims, Witnesses, Survivors, and Co-Victims

Victims, survivors, witnesses, and co-victims are individuals directly impacted by crimes and who may access services provided by law enforcement agencies. When engaged as partners, they are the best possible source for feedback about their expectations of law enforcement and the larger criminal justice system. Acting on voiced concerns and needs of victims, witnesses, survivors, and co-victims can help identify gaps in response efforts and lead to practical suggestions for addressing those gaps.<sup>42</sup>

Agencies can also cultivate these partnerships after the conclusion of victims' participation in the criminal justice system. This may include inviting victims to participate in listening sessions/focus groups, co-facilitate agency training, and policy review.<sup>43</sup> When inviting victims, survivors, witnesses, and co-victims to participate or provide feedback, agencies should—

- ensure criminal cases and appeals are resolved before extending invitations to participate;

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<sup>39</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police, [Communicating to Build Trust](#) (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, [Considerations Document: Media Relations](#) (Alexandria, VA: 2019).

<sup>41</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police, [Community Engagement and Dialogue](#) (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2020); International Association of Chiefs of Police, [Community Member Feedback as an Effective Tool for Building and Maintaining Trust](#) (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2020); International Association of Chiefs of Police, [Options for Community Engagement and Dialogue](#) (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2020).

<sup>42</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police and Office for Victims of Crime, [Performance Monitoring](#), *Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims (ELERV) Strategy*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2020).

<sup>43</sup> International Association of Chiefs of Police, [Options for Community Engagement and Dialogue](#) (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2020).

- review length of time since victimization, engagement in support services, and assessment of each person’s readiness to talk openly about their experiences;
- ensure all expectations are clearly communicated; and
- ensure appropriate support is available before, during, and after feedback and participation.

### Special Considerations for University-Based Victim Services

External partnerships may differ for university-based victim services personnel depending on how their role is defined. For example, university police departments may have personnel at multiple campus locations within the larger university system and consider them as internal partners. In addition, most universities have research components within several departments of the university system that may be viewed as internal partners. Depending upon the structure of university-based police departments, specialized personnel such as investigators may be either internal or external partners. In either case, strong collaboration can still exist and is encouraged.

### Formalizing External Partnerships

Strong partnerships are maintained when all parties have input and understand the parameters of the relationship. Formalizing external partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding, Cooperative Agreements, and other official agreements is encouraged.<sup>44</sup> Documenting shared values and mutual goals can address what each entity will contribute, parameters for information sharing, and other key aspects of the working relationship. Formalizing partnerships also encourages coordinated response in meeting victims’ needs. These agreements are not intended to be detailed procedural documents but may expand into more complex agreements as partnerships develop. Agreements should be reviewed by agency legal counsel.

Partnership agreements should be reviewed periodically and involve discussions about what is working well, changes to agency structure and resources, and how to address areas of concern to make the partnership more effective. This may involve revising original agreements and updating signatures. Continued focus and effort will ensure that partnerships endure beyond personnel and administrative changes and become woven into daily practice.<sup>45</sup>

External partnerships can vary in complexity and span across multiple staffing levels. Consider the following examples:

*“Partnerships are relationships. When establishing external relationships, the process of developing written agreements can help establish roles, clarify purpose, and even repair relationships that have experienced historic mistrust. The ability to merge efforts and resources through common goals leads to a culturally specific, braided support network for victims.”*

Stanley L. Pryor  
Executive Director  
Unified Solutions Tribal Community  
Development Group, Inc.  
Mesa, AZ

<sup>44</sup> For sample agreement language, see [Partnership Agreement Framework and Sample Language](#).

<sup>45</sup> For more information, see [Partnering](#).

## Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services—*Effective Partnerships*

- When revising the Cooperative Agreement with all member organizations, the Sexual Assault Response Team leadership agreed on a goal of expanding participation. Core representatives included personnel from the prosecuting attorney’s office, local law enforcement agencies, state crime laboratory, community-based organizations, and sexual assault nurse examiners. All agreed that participation by law enforcement supervisors, investigators, officers, and victim services personnel will enhance the multidisciplinary team.
- During a routine Persons Crime Unit meeting, investigators expressed a desire to identify a comfortable interview room large enough to allow victim services personnel to accompany victims during interviews and evidence collection. Through joint efforts, the sergeant and victim services supervisor identified a storage room that could be converted to fit this need and developed a list of needed items for the room. Contact was made with multiple local businesses who agreed to donate furniture, artwork, paint, rugs, toys, and games. Meetings were held with agency legal counsel to ensure compliance with receipt of these donations.
- An agency with newly hired victim services personnel identified the need to establish clear mandated reporting requirements and practices when abuse or neglect of a child or older or vulnerable adult is suspected. Arrangements were made with the regional Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) office for victim services personnel and their supervisor to receive training. DFPS representatives also agreed to review the new policy and expressed interest in receiving training from agency personnel on child and elder abuse investigation practices.

### Closing

Ensuring victims’ rights are upheld and needs are met requires robust internal and external partnerships. The overall wellness of these partnerships relies on ongoing assessment of existing partnerships (e.g., reviewing and updating MOUs) and identification of new partnership opportunities. This is necessary as community demographics and needs, agencies and organizations addressing long-term support for victims, and agency victim services programs will likely change over time. Ensuring victims’ needs remain the priority and foundation for shared goals of all internal and external partnerships is essential. Opportunities that shape shared objectives, form collective strategies, and reinforce common purposes can enhance overall services to victims. These opportunities organically build trust, confidence, respect, and diversity of thought around meeting victims’ needs.



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