Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services:

Template Package V – Training
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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. 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, protocols, and policies to support victims’ access to their legal rights and the services and responses they need.

The IACP is committed to shaping the future of the police profession. Through timely research, programming, and unparalleled training opportunities, the IACP is preparing current and emerging police leaders—and the agencies and communities they serve—to succeed in addressing the most pressing issues, threats, and challenges of the day.

LEV Publications & Accompanying Webinars

The LEV Program aims to guide 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.

- **Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Key Considerations** and the accompanying **Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Key Considerations Checklist** provide an overview of foundational topics for law enforcement-based victim services.

- **Victims’ Rights Jurisdiction Profiles** provide state-specific information on the intersections of victims’ rights and communication with victim services personnel.

- **Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Advocacy Parameters** discusses the structure of law enforcement-based victim services, personnel supervision, and service delivery.

- **Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Documentation Standards** discusses victim services documentation location, content, access, and legal intersections.

- **Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Effective Partnerships** discusses the benefits of partnerships and encourages agencies to consider both internal and external partners to strengthen community response to victims.

- **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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- **Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Agency Incorporation of Victim Services** discusses integrating victim services within the agency including models of services provision, strategic planning, unit structure, budget considerations, crisis response, and workplace culture change.

To supplement the publications, IACP developed a virtual training series, which is accessible through the LEV webpage. Each topic covered has content intended for program personnel, including sworn and professional staff. This model promotes a thorough understanding of the intricacies of victim services at all levels of a law enforcement agency.

**Explanation of Templates**

All victim services personnel—supervisors, direct services staff, student interns, and volunteers—benefit from comprehensive, specialized training. Whether victim services staff are hired with significant advocacy experience or no relevant experience, agencies are encouraged to establish consistent training for all victim services personnel. Robust training establishes a strong foundation for the role of victim services and promotes consistency of practice.

Developing training requires a significant amount of time and specialty. The purpose of this publication is to provide core content for victim services training. Materials have been developed through a review of documents from existing law enforcement-based victim services programs. While all material has been vetted by subject matter experts, they do not provide state-, tribe-, or agency-specific information. Agencies should carefully review all material and update content to ensure information is consistent with agency, statutory, and constitutional requirements within local jurisdictions.

Most of the training material includes customization recommendations. These recommendations appear in brackets and are italicized (e.g., [Insert Agency logo]). Please follow these recommendations and remove the bracketed information before disseminating.

Accessibility should be considered when preparing and conducting training. Providing printed PowerPoint slides for the training modules to victim services staff is recommended. Relevant resources and information should be provided, as appropriate.

This is the fifth document of the Template Package series. The following template packages have been published —

- **Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Template Package I - Getting Started** provides victim services personnel job descriptions, interview questions, code of ethics, and personnel standards and responsibilities.

- **Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Template Package II - Next Steps** provides case response protocol templates, scenarios, and documentation samples

- **Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Template Package III - Student Interns & Volunteers** provides templates for recruiting, screening and selection, training, supervision, and other agency considerations for student interns and volunteers.
• **Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Template Package IV - Pamphlets** includes sample crime-specific and topic-specific informational pamphlets for agencies to customize and disseminate to victims of crime.

**Definitions**

Throughout this document 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, 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.

- **Crime Victim Compensation** – a state-based² 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

- **Mandated Reporting** – obligations per state law about concerns of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of minors or older or vulnerable adults

- **Trauma-Informed** – approaches delivered with an understanding of the vulnerabilities and experiences of trauma survivors, including the prevalence and physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma. A trauma-informed approach recognizes signs of trauma in staff, victims, and others and responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings. Trauma-informed approaches place priority on restoring the survivor’s feelings of safety, choice, and control. Programs, services, agencies, and communities can be trauma-informed.³

- **Victim-Centered** – placing the crime victim’s priorities, needs, and interests at the center of the work with the victim; providing nonjudgmental assistance, with an emphasis on victim self-

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² There are currently two states, Arizona and Colorado, that administer victim compensation funds using a decentralized system.

determination, where appropriate, and assisting victims in making informed choices; ensuring that restoring victims’ feelings of safety and security are a priority and safeguarding against policies and practices that may inadvertently re-traumatize victims; ensuring that victims’ rights, voices, and perspectives are incorporated when developing and implementing system- and community-based efforts that impact crime victims.4

- **Victims’ Rights** – language included in constitutions, statutes, rules, and policies that vary by state and define legal responsibilities related to victims of crime, affording them independent, participatory status in the criminal justice system5

- **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
  
  o **Victim** is an individual who is an independent participant in the criminal case under federal or state victims’ rights laws, 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.
  
  o **Witness** is an individual who has personal knowledge of information or actions that are relative to the incident being investigated.
  
  o **Survivor** is often used interchangeably with “victim” when conveying context related to resilience and healing.
  
  o **Co-Victim** is an individual who has lost a loved one to homicide, including family members, other relatives, and friends of the decedent.

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Revised May 2023
Templates
TEMPLATE – Trainer Manual

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Trainer Manual template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services Personnel Training

Trainer Manual

Agencies can use this link (Trainer Manual) to download this document.
Revised May 2023
Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Template Package V

TEMPLATE – Victim Services Personnel Training Plan

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Victim Services Personnel Training Plan template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

**Victim Services Personnel Training Plan**

Each training module is designed to be accompanied with additional training components. The trainer is encouraged to identify agency policies and protocols that correspond with the module content before the training (recommendations for each module are provided below). OVC’s Victim Assistance Training (VAT) Online provides free foundational web-based training that can further supplement learning on these topics. After in-class training (module) and self-paced online learning (OVC VAT Online), in-person shadowing with colleagues is highly recommended to demonstrate these concepts in practice. A list of recommended peer and partner learning opportunities can be found on OVC’s Victim Services Personnel Callboarding Checklist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module 1: Victim Services Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This presentation includes role parameters, statutes, terminology, and agency practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended time</strong>: 120 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency Policies &amp; Protocols</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Agency] history, mission, values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Services History, mission, values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Services Personnel Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Response Plans (victim services role)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Supplemental Learning**

- OVC VAT Online
  - Advocacy
  - Types of Victim Services
- Peer & Partner Learning Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module 2: Critical Needs of Victims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Needs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This presentation includes critical needs of victims following victimization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended time</strong>: 45 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency Policies &amp; Protocols</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[module] history, mission, values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Supplemental Learning**

- OVC VAT Online
  - Assessing Victim Needs
  - Trauma-Informed Care
- Peer & Partner Learning Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module 3: Criminal Justice Systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This presentation includes an overview of the criminal justice systems, classification structure of crimes, investigation and court processes, and victim services personnel role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended time</strong>: 120 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victim Services Personnel Training Plan, [revision date]

Agencies can use this link ([Victim Services Personnel Training Plan](#)) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
**TEMPLATE – Victim Services Personnel Peer/Partner Learning Opportunity Feedback**

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Victim Services Personnel Peer/Partner Learning Opportunity Feedback template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim Services Personnel Peer/Partner Learning Opportunity Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Staff Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First &amp; Last Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluator Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities/Processes Observed:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victim Services Personnel Conduct</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrived on time: ☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressed appropriately: ☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, explain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following instructions: ☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, explain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicated professionally and appropriately with you and others: ☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, explain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reacted appropriately to crisis circumstances (if applicable): ☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, explain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively engaged with you and others (as appropriate):       ☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, explain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated active listening skills (as appropriate):       ☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, explain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return completed form to: [Insert name/address/email address]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agencies can use this link ([Victim Services Personnel Peer/Partner Learning Opportunity Feedback](#)) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
### Victim Services Personnel Training Evaluation

Complete this evaluation at the conclusion of the training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I was satisfied with the training.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information presented at the training is relevant to my job.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My knowledge on the training subject has increased.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable using the information presented at the training.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan to implement what I have learned in my job.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TEMPLATE – Activity Workbook: Scenario I – Death Investigation

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Activity Workbook template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Activity Workbook: Scenario I – Death Investigation) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Activity Workbook: Scenario II – Aggravated Assault

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Activity Workbook template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Activity Workbook: Scenario II – Aggravated Assault) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Activity Workbook: Scenario III – Intimate Partner Violence

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Activity Workbook template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Activity Workbook: Scenario III – Intimate Partner Violence) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Activity Workbook: Scenario IV – Child Abuse

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Activity Workbook template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Activity Workbook: Scenario IV – Child Abuse) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Activity Workbook: Scenario V – Elder Abuse

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Activity Workbook template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Activity Workbook: Scenario V – Elder Abuse) to download this document.
Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Module 1: Victim Services Role

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Module 1: Victim Services Role) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Module 2: Critical Needs of Victims

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Module 2: Critical Needs of Victims) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Module 3: Criminal Justice System

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Criminal Justice System

Agencies can use this link (Module 3: Criminal Justice System) to download this document.

Revised May 2023


**TEMPLATE – Module 4: Ethics in Victim Services**

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link ([Module 4: Ethics in Victim Services](#)) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Module 5: Crisis Intervention with Victims

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Module 5: Crisis Intervention with Victims) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Module 6: Field Response for Victim Services

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Module 6: Field Response for Victim Services) to download this document.
Revised May 2023

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Sworn Personnel Guide: Roles & Responsibilities of [Agency] Victim Services in Field Response template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Sworn Personnel Guide: Roles & Responsibilities of [Agency] Victim Services in Field Response) to download this document.
TEMPLATE – Module 7: Safety Planning with Victims

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link [Module 7: Safety Planning with Victims](#) to download this document.
Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Module 8: Crime Victim Compensation

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Module 8: Crime Victim Compensation) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Module 9: Resources & Referrals for Victims

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Module 9: Resources & Referrals for Victims) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
# TEMPLATE – Supportive Handoff Guidelines

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Supportive Handoff Guidelines template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

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## Supportive Handoff Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A supportive handoff is the transfer of information and responsibility during transitions in service provision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accountable Service Provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive handoffs support victims' needs that extend beyond individual professional roles. Consistent completion of supportive handoffs can:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reduce breakdowns in communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Decrease victims' burden to independently seek information and services from multiple professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase victims' understanding of next steps and professionals responsible for actions and assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Support victim-centered, trauma-informed work by providing personal connections that can address access barriers (e.g., physical, language, cultural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Support ethical and equitable services to victims</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Process

### Referrals

- Supportive handoffs can occur when:
  - Victims are referred to your agency or services by another professional
  - You are referring victims to agencies or services of other professionals

### Communication Methods

- Supportive handoffs occur in the presence of the victim and can occur through in-person meetings, conference calls, or virtual platforms.
- Including the victim and all providers ensures that everyone participating can hear what is being said and engage in communication to understand the next steps in service provision

### Release of Information

- Supportive handoffs require exchange of information to support ongoing service provision.
- This may include specific information related to criminal cases, past services received by victims, and victims' current circumstances (e.g., financial status, health history)
- Ensure use of signed release of information documents where required by statute and policy

### Information Exchange Format

- Use of a consistent communication structure can bridge gaps in communication styles between agencies and victims. When conducting a supportive handoff, it is suggested the following format is used to transfer information:
  - Situation – describe current circumstances prompting the transition in services
  - Background – provide relevant information for full understanding of victims' needs
  - Plan – describe actions and who is responsible
- Provide multiple opportunities for all parties to ask questions, clarify information, and confirm

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Agencies can use this link (Supportive Handoff Guidelines) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Module 10: Victim Services Actions

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Module 10: Victim Services Actions) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Module 11: Documentation in Victim Services

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Module 11: Documentation in Victim Services) to download this document.
Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Module 12: Professional Wellness in Victim Services

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this training module template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Agencies can use this link (Module 12: Professional Wellness in Victim Services) to download this document.

Revised May 2023
TEMPLATE – Boundaries in Victim Services

Templates in this series provide sample language and content to help assess, develop, and refine professional victim service standards. You should customize this Boundaries in Victim Services template to fit your agency in terms of format, language, and intent. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review this template to ensure information is consistent with local jurisdiction requirements.

Boundaries in Victim Services

Professional Boundaries are limits that reinforce assigned responsibilities and protect those served from exploitation. They help us maintain professional objectivity, protect privacy (ours and others’), and help reduce ethical dilemmas.

When performing your assigned responsibilities, you represent yourself, fellow victim services personnel, your employing agency, and the field of victim services. Follow the policies and practices of the agency and those identified as best practices in the field.

Most people express a desire to help others as one of the reasons for entering the victim services field; however, there is more to being a helper than simply wanting to help. We must be able to separate ourselves from the pain and trauma of those we serve yet remain compassionate and engaged. If we fail to set boundaries, we run the risk of causing the victim further harm. Effective training and professionalism can help prevent unintentional harm.

- Properly identify yourself and explain your role—this includes mandated reporting and parameters of confidentiality and privilege.
- Maintain a professional relationship with those you serve:
  - No social, business, friendship, dating, or sexual relationship with any person involved in reported incidents (victims, witnesses, survivors, co-victims, family members, friends, offenders)
  - Don’t provide your personal information (address, phone numbers, social media)
- To support empowerment and sense of control, act on behalf of those you serve only with their permission and when they are unable to act independently. Failure to do so can—
  - Create dependence and helplessness
  - Reinforce a message that they are not capable

- Limit the information you share about your work and those you serve:
  - If it’s not your story to tell, don’t tell it.
  - Share your feelings and reactions as a way to process events and self-reflect.
  - Never discuss names, addresses, locations, or descriptions of the circumstances that might identify those you serve or specific incidents.
- Consistently manage exposure to vicarious trauma. Failure to do so can—
  - Impact our relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances
  - Lead to compassion fatigue and burnout

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Agencies can use this link (Boundaries in Victim Services) to download this document.

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