

Helping Those Who Help Others:

**Key Findings From a Comprehensive Needs
Assessment of the Crime Victims Field**

June 2020

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The National
RESOURCE CENTER
for REACHING VICTIMS

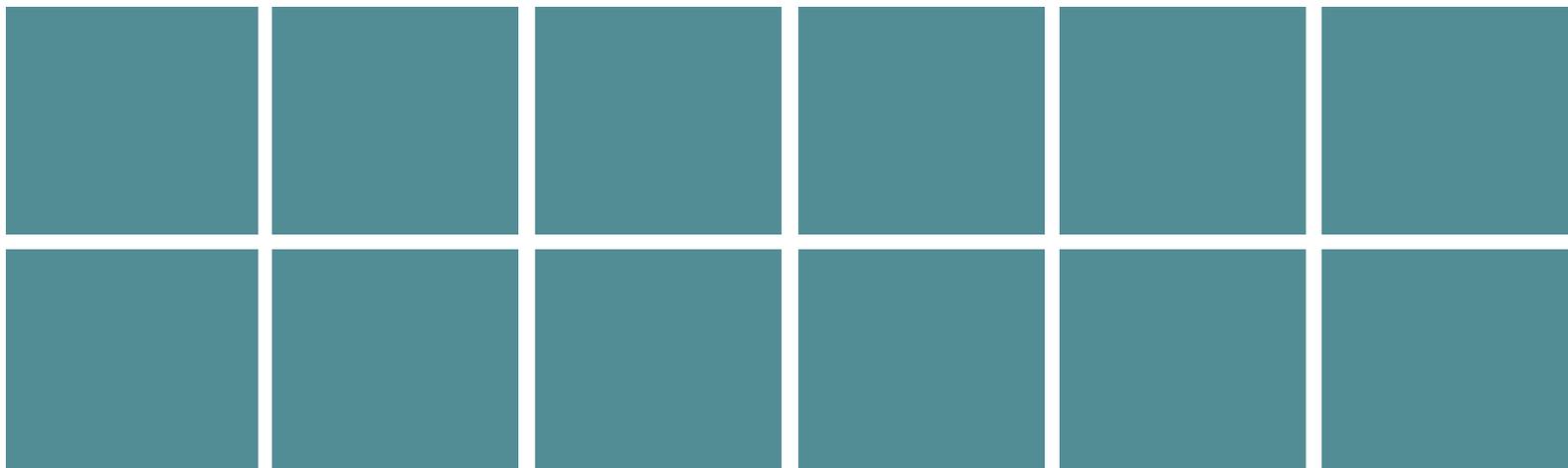


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Introduction & Overview of the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims

Every year, millions of people in the United States become victims of crime. Yet according to the National Crime Victimization Survey, only about 13 percent of victims of serious violence report receiving victim services. That number drops to 5 percent for crimes that go unreported to the police.ⁱ Despite the existence of victim services in every state and the Office for Victims of Crime's (OVC's) vision that all crime victims should have immediate access to a seamless continuum of evidence-based services that aid with their recovery, too many victims do not get the services they need to heal. The unprecedented increase in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding for victim services between 2015 and 2018 presented an equally unprecedented opportunity to reach more survivors and close the service gaps that far too many people experience. One of the field's challenges is how to build on the momentum created through these opportunities and continue to expand services to reach all survivors of crime. The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (NRC; the resource center) has the extraordinary honor of supporting OVC's mission and expand the reach of victim services. The NRC shares OVC's vision that all victim services be accessible, culturally relevant, and trauma-informed—and that the overwhelming majority of crime survivors will access and benefit from these services.

About the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims

Funded by the federal Office for Victims of Crime, the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (NRC) is a one-stop shop for victim service providers, culturally specific organizations, justice system professionals, and policymakers to get information and expert guidance to enhance their capacity to identify, reach, and serve all victims, especially those from communities that are underrepresented in healing services and avenues to justice. The NRC is working to increase the number of victims who receive healing supports by understanding who is underrepresented and why some people access services while others don't; designing and implementing best practices for connecting people to the services they need; and empowering and equipping organizations to provide the most useful and effective services possible to crime victims. The NRC is a collaboration among Caminar Latino, Casa de Esperanza, Common Justice, FORGE, the National Children's Advocacy Center, the National Center for Victims of Crime, the National Clearinghouse on Abuse Later in Life, Women of Color Network, Inc., and the Vera Institute of Justice. The NRC's vision is that victim services are accessible, culturally appropriate and relevant, and trauma-informed, and that the overwhelming majority of victims access and benefit from these services.

To better understand the reasons why some victims are not receiving services and what resources and tools the field needs to reach more people, the NRC undertook a comprehensive assessment of the crime victims field and related fields. From July 2017 through March 2018, the NRC completed the following activities:

- **conducted 103 informational interviews with victim service providers, advocates with relevant lived experience, and other experts in the crime victims field**
- **completed more than 15 informational interviews with VOCA administrators**
- **conducted 45 listening sessions with stakeholder groups representing the voices and needs of various groups of victims who have been historically underrepresented**
- **carried out five listening sessions with VOCA administrators**
- **distributed a survey to the crime victims field and allied professionals and received more than 1,500 responses**
- **reviewed more than 500 practice documents related to the victimization experiences and needs of survivors who often do not access services**

- **conducted a communications audit of the victim services field to understand the strengths and weaknesses of current outreach and service strategies. This included an analysis of more than 75 brochures and other outreach materials from crime victim service programs from across the country, a survey of 35 leaders from the crime victims field, and in-depth interviews with 15 experts in serving crime survivors from underserved communities.**

This report summarizes the findings and cross-cutting themes that the NRC gleaned from these activities and outlines its strategies to support the crime victims field's goal of reaching more people and closing service gaps.

**– Nancy Smith
Director**

Summary of Key Findings and Cross-Cutting Themes from the Needs Assessment

1

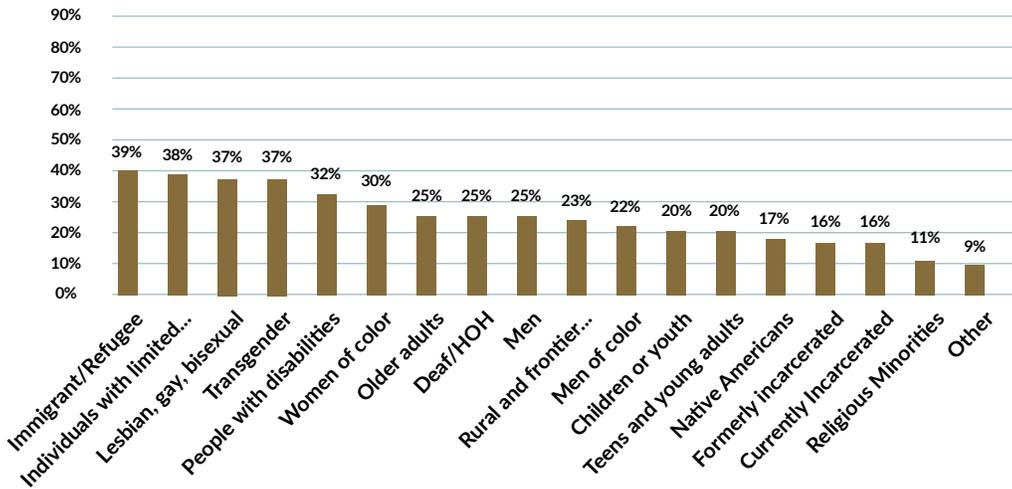
Victim service providers are increasingly aware that they are not reaching all victims and have a desire for information and guidance on how to identify and reach more people.

Overwhelmingly, the vast majority of service providers, VOCA administrators, advocates, and allied professionals consulted for the needs assessment indicated an awareness that victim services are not reaching all of the people in the United States who are harmed by violence. For example, two-thirds of survey respondents (62.7 percent) indicated that their program/organization had identified victims from certain communities that they have underserved. One survey respondent shared the following statement about whether their program is seeing the victims it is intended to serve:

“While our county is fairly homogeneous, we know that we are not serving as many people of color, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ community, elderly, as we would like...We know that there are many stigmas and prejudices for different minority populations; we attempt to alleviate those, but we could always learn more in order to do better.”

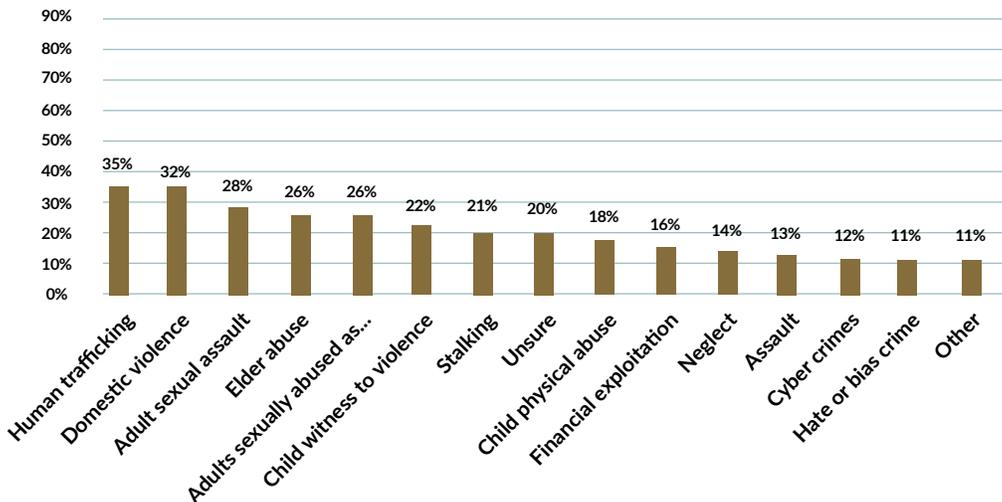
The top five communities identified by survey respondents' programs/organizations as underserved were: immigrants/refugees; people with limited English proficiency (LEP); lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people; people with disabilities; and women of color. Figure 1 details the communities that survey respondents' programs/organizations have identified as underserved.

Figure 1. Communities Victim Service Providers Identified as Underserved (n=759)



Needs assessment participants also indicated that victims of certain types of crime tend to come through their doors more than others do. Almost half (49.9 percent) of survey respondents said that their program/organization has identified victims of specific crime types that they have underserved. The top five crime types that respondents identified as underserved by their programs were human trafficking, domestic violence, adult sexual assault, elder abuse, and children who witness violence. Figure 2 details the types of crime that survey respondents' programs/organizations identified as underserved.

Figure 2. Crime Types Victim Service Providers Identified as Underserved (n=832)



Some survey respondents speculated that underreporting of crime was partially to blame for some victims not seeking services, noting a host of reasons why people may be reluctant to report. Young people or children may fear that they will be dismissed or not taken seriously, for example. People with disabilities and older adults may fear losing their independence if reporting victimization triggers mandatory reporting requirements that could jeopardize their living situation. Deaf and LEP victims may experience communication and cultural barriers to reporting. Women of color and others from historically marginalized communities may also fear encountering systems and services that are not culturally attuned to them. Other groups—like LGBTQ people, those with a history of incarceration, and men of color—may be reluctant to report for fear of being perceived as somehow “bringing their victimization upon themselves.”

People who participated in the assessment expressed commitment to reaching more victims, but acknowledged challenges in identifying and reaching those who are not accessing services, with many interviewees and survey respondents saying a version of “You don’t know what you don’t know.” Another reason cited for uneven or inadequate service delivery, on the other hand, was that providers may not recognize what they don’t know when it comes to survivors from these hard-to-reach communities. A few advocates noted that it is fairly common to hear mainstream service providers say, “We serve all victims; identity doesn’t matter.” Although this sentiment may indicate good intentions, it fails to acknowledge how past (and sometimes current) marginalization requires active shifts in policy, language, and practices to make sure that providers can serve all victims in a welcoming, culturally competent way.

2

Many survivors harbor fears and mistrust of mainstream victim service programs and the criminal justice system, making it harder for them to seek help.

Throughout the listening sessions, informational interviews, and survey responses, NRC staff heard that many crime victims have had past negative interactions with systems and institutions (such as law enforcement, child and family services, and adult protective services) that make them wary of mainstream victim service programs and the criminal justice process. One attorney who routinely works with crime victims to provide civil-legal help summed up the mistrust survivors with a history of incarceration often experience:

“We’re a mostly white agency, and governmental. Many people hurt/harmed by crime will never feel comfortable approaching us for help.”

—Survey respondent

“[One] issue is a lack of trust, and that lack of trust is completely rational because most of my clients have had lengthy interactions with systems that say they’re there to help, but they don’t—or in some cases, they make their lives worse. [Obtaining] high quality services is a barrier. Our clients encounter a revolving door of underpaid professionals and are very often being seen by students who are overseen by professionals. . . . Most of the people doing this work look nothing like our clients. Most of our [clients] are poor people who are black, and most of our therapists are white.”

The reality that crime victims often don’t interact with service providers from their communities came up repeatedly. For example, culturally specific service providers who work with men of color shared concerns about the lack of diversity among mainstream providers, emphasizing how that can have a chilling effect on victims from these communities seeking help.

Others who work with children, older adults, people with disabilities, and immigrants cited a similar reluctance to seek help, based on their clients' past negative interactions with systems and their fears that they will lose more than they will gain by accessing services. Victims who have disabilities or are older adults may fear that accessing services will trigger mandatory reporting requirements to adult protective service agencies that will jeopardize their autonomy and independence, particularly if they have experienced violence at the hands of a caregiver, personal assistant, or family member.

“Elders who are being abused by family members are much less likely to reach out, either because they do not know about the services or they do not want to complain about their family for fear of alienation, retaliation, or loss of independence.”

– Survey Respondent

3

Mainstream service programs often have difficulty building relationships with culturally specific populations in their communities, which limits the success of any outreach efforts to engage these victims.

The mistrust experienced by victims discussed in Finding 2 may stem in part from the failure of mainstream service programs to develop strong, trustworthy relationships with communities of color and other culturally specific groups living in the community (such as immigrants, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, and Deaf people). The lack of cultural, linguistic, and racial diversity among mainstream providers may help explain why outreach and engagement efforts often fall flat. In other words, people of color and people from other culturally specific communities are not often working for mainstream victim service programs.

“We haven’t had a specific plan or made it an agency priority to do intentional outreach to a variety of marginalized populations, nor have we made it a part of our work culture before to have intentional long-term trainings for our staff who provide direct services.”

– Crime Victim Advocate

The people who work for these programs tend to lack familiarity with the trusted leaders and organizations within those communities, making it more difficult to build relationships with those leaders and organizations. Several survey respondents candidly shared that they worked for agencies that had been established in ways or in earlier eras that focused resources on white middle-class people without disabilities. They understood that there was greater need beyond this narrow demographic, but were not sure how to reach more diverse communities. Providers who work with more diverse communities shared their frustrations that when mainstream programs do identify and contact them, it is often to invite them to a onetime meeting or

conference call, and this typically leaves these providers feeling “tokenized.” They indicated that more sustained, intentional efforts to engage them would build more trust and make them feel like they “had a seat at the table” rather than simply being “on the menu,” to paraphrase one provider who works with Latino survivors of trauma.

As discussed under Finding 1, it was also fairly common for NRC staff to hear how mainstream providers’ refrain that “we treat everyone the same” contributes to a lack of awareness that more work, skill-building, and new strategies are required to reach more communities. Quite a few providers serving culturally specific groups told NRC staff that mainstream providers need a better understanding that “one size does not fit all” when it comes to serving crime victims. For example, a victim services model that relies on referrals from law enforcement may be effective for people from communities that typically respond well to law enforcement, but may be less effective for survivors from immigrant communities and communities of color. Similarly, programs that operate during traditional business hours in locations outside of the communities most harmed by violence may work for people who have flexible schedules and reliable transportation but may feel less accessible and welcoming to others. Providers who work with men of color, for instance, suggested that mainstream service providers could potentially make inroads with the community they serve if they went directly into the communities, offered additional service hours, or both.

Many participants suggested that the language and terminology mainstream providers use is partly to blame for why they struggle to reach and engage victims from communities that have traditionally had less access to services. Overwhelmingly, providers who work with formerly incarcerated crime victims told NRC staff that the term “victim” does not resonate with

their clients. As one service provider said, “In 20 years, I have never met someone who wasn’t a crime victim, but they don’t identify that way. The words we use are not the words our clients use.” These providers suggested that mainstream programs might have success reaching more survivors if they broadened their definitions of victimization to include “people harmed by violence,” “anyone affected by violence,” or “survivors of trauma or harm.”

“There’s a disconnect between how we ‘market’ our services—many of these groups are not going to respond to what looks like ‘mainstream’ services.”

—Survey Respondent

Other providers who work with men of color noted different concerns related to language. They told NRC staff that the language used by many traditional victim service providers can be overly clinical and alienating, and suggested that a more plain-spoken approach would help build trust. Finally, through the communications audit, NRC staff learned that the materials mainstream programs use to describe and promote their services often focus more on the impacts of harm and violence rather than describing the benefits of healing. If programs use language that does not resonate with the victims they are trying to reach, comes across to them as uncomfortably clinical and dense, and is not convincing about the benefits of the services, it is probably not surprising that they are not seeking help from these programs.

4

When crime victims from underserved communities try to access healing services, they often face barriers. If they successfully overcome those barriers, they typically end up with services that are not culturally competent or trauma-informed.

Across all needs-assessment activities, NRC staff repeatedly heard that victim services are hard to access for many populations and for many reasons. They said that if these victims do gain access, they are routinely offered services that do not feel culturally relevant and lack understanding of how trauma can impact every aspect of their lives and ability to function in the world. This makes sense given that the barriers themselves point to all the ways in which services are not culturally competent or trauma-informed. In other words, if the services were culturally competent and trauma-informed, these barriers would not exist in the same ways that they do now. Unfortunately, the same barriers and challenges affect how many victims experience the criminal justice process, including interactions with law enforcement and system advocates. Some of the factors that contribute to these challenges are discussed below.

Barriers to services

Through interviews and listening sessions with key stakeholders in the crime victims field and related fields, NRC staff were told about a number of physical, linguistic, cultural, programmatic, and attitudinal barriers to accessing services that have resulted in systemic inequity in how victim services are accessed. The lists below include many of those barriers, but are not intended to be exhaustive.

Physical barriers to accessing services include the following:

- **a lack of transportation to services, regardless of whether a person is in an urban or rural location**
- **a lack of options for services for people living in rural areas**

- a lack of physically accessible services for victims with physical disabilities (such as offices accessible by ramp or elevator)

Linguistic and cultural barriers to accessing services include these:

- a lack of services staffed by bilingual and bicultural advocates
- a lack of culturally responsive services, including shelters
- a lack of institutionalized language access plans in place
- a lack of access to spoken and sign language
- a lack of understanding of generational values that may affect how older victims view themselves and receive services

Finally, attitudinal and programmatic barriers include the following:

- the perception of men of color and victims with a history of incarceration that they are viewed as “perpetrators of violence” and not “victims of violence,” something that impacts access to services and to victim compensation funds
- the perception that children and teens are “the property” of their parents or guardians and that intervention or support must begin with one of these adults

- the perception that children and teens cannot be trusted because of their age
- a lack of services designed with men in mind
- a lack of services that feel welcoming and accessible to transgender, gender-nonconforming, and nonbinary people (such as women-only shelters)
- a lack of age-appropriate services for young victims and older victims
- the perception of older victims that they will be viewed as “frail/unsavvy” to make their own decisions or use technology
- the onerous and difficult applications for victims compensation, a process that makes it hard for many crime victims to access this fund
- the false assumptions that people with intellectual, cognitive, or psychiatric disabilities lack credibility because of their disability
- an inability to modify services and make them accessible to people with a diverse array of disabilities, particularly intellectual, cognitive, and psychiatric disabilities

Respondents to the field survey also described many of these barriers to serving victims. On the survey, people were asked to tell us how much they agreed or disagreed with specific barriers contributing to their program or organization underserving victims. The responses to this question follow here:

Figure 3. Critical Reasons Why Certain Groups/Communities Are Underserved	Percentage of Respondents Who Agree or Strongly Agree
Lack of public awareness of services available	65%
Lack of Trust	61%
Physical Barriers	61%
Cultural Barriers	53%
Lack of services to meet the need	52%
Language/communication barriers	50%
Lack of staff knowledge on how to serve victims from underserved communities/groups	49%
Eligibility restrictions	45%
Lack of collaboration with culturally specific organizations	43%
Lack of staff knowledge on how to identify and engage victims from underserved communities/groups	39%
Lack of staff knowledge about community resources for underserved communities/groups	38%
Programmatic barriers	35%
Staff bias/attitudinal barriers	24%

Lack of service options that meet the wide range of peoples' needs

Many of the people consulted for the needs assessment highlighted the huge difference between “accessing victim services” and survivors actually “getting their needs met.” This typically boiled down to most programs not being trauma-informed or culturally competent to meet the needs of all victims. Many respondents described a gap in the field’s ability to provide what victims—or their families—identified as their most pressing needs. As these respondents described, many victims are simply offered basic support and are not truly served and comprehensively supported in their healing. To paraphrase one respondent who works with children and teens, “We offer what we have, not necessarily what is needed.”

Many echoed the concern that victims are not receiving the support they need to overcome their trauma in a holistic, healthy way. Some survey respondents noted that when people do come forward for services, they are usually met with piecemeal, cursory, and/or transactional services that only scratch the surface of what they need. One person acknowledged that victims from some communities probably find “little payoff for actually seeking help,” particularly among those who are too often viewed as criminals themselves (such as sex trafficking victims charged for prostitution and domestic violence survivors who are charged criminally for defending themselves against their abusers).

5

Service providers with relevant lived experience, grassroots community programs, and culturally specific organizations often have the knowledge and expertise to serve victims who may be wary of mainstream programs, but do not always label their services as “victim services”—and typically operate on tiny budgets and lack access to funders and decision makers.

Many people told the NRC that local communities may have grassroots organizations, motivated volunteers, and other community members on the ground who work to disrupt neighborhood violence or help people in the aftermath of trauma. But these people and organizations are not usually considered victim service providers, nor do they receive funding to support such services. For example, advocates and service providers working with formerly incarcerated people and men of color noted that healing services for these populations may encompass a range of nontraditional services or peer-based programs that may not fit neatly into defined “victim service” categories that federal agencies and private foundations use to make funding decisions. In one instance, a formerly incarcerated advocate and survivor of prison rape told NRC staff that kickboxing classes ended up being one of the most affordable and effective avenues for her healing. Others talked about how fruitful “outside the box” approaches to services can be for reaching specific populations that may not trust traditional services: several advocates talked about successfully engaging young men of color in barbershops, on basketball courts, or in community centers. They said that meeting young men in their communities and talking with them informally without using a lot of clinical language helped the young men be more open to “services.” Providers who serve Native American survivors emphasized that the tradition of storytelling rooted in shared culture may not sound like a formal “victim service” but is an effective way to promote trust and healing.

Providers and advocates with relevant lived experience described these and other examples of important healing work taking place with very little financial support or meaningful connection to broader state or federal initiatives aimed at reforming systems (such as the criminal justice system) or improving services. As discussed earlier, quite a few grassroots advocates—almost always people of color or members of historically marginalized

groups—relayed stories of having state coalitions or national-level organizations from the crime victims field engage them for their expertise on serving victims from culturally specific communities or other pressing issues, but rarely receiving fair compensation for their services or gaining a true “seat at the table” in the field when it comes to policy decisions.

Others talked more broadly about barriers to funding sources for culturally specific and grassroots organizations. VOCA administrators, for example, acknowledged that a number of organizations have the ability to serve hard-to-reach victim populations, but said they often lack the internal capacity to navigate the complicated requirements for receiving federal funding. Several VOCA administrators said their offices either had considered simplifying the application process or were trying to figure out ways to revise their application review process so that they place less emphasis on “polish.” For instance, one administrator said her office is now less likely to exclude an application with typos or grammatical errors, recognizing that the application may have been written by someone with limited English proficiency who does excellent culturally specific work.

Another issue raised by victim service providers who specialize in serving culturally specific communities is the number of conditions that limit how grant funding can be used. They noted that if more flexible or unrestricted funding could be used to support operational costs and outreach to communities, it would enable them to build capacity and serve more victims. A number of survey respondents echoed these sentiments and pointed to how available funding shapes the services they can provide. One person summed it up this way: “We are needing to fit survivors of trauma into particular categories dictated by our funding (e.g., domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, [or] child abuse). That limits our ability to serve all community members who have experienced trauma and are in need of supportive services (e.g., victims of community violence, for example, [or] people experiencing grief and loss).”

6

The absence of effective partnerships between mainstream programs and culturally specific service providers helps explain why many victims remain unserved.

As discussed under previous findings, mainstream programs—which are often well funded, well established, and broadly supported—struggle to reach and engage victims from a number of culturally specific communities. Grassroots and culturally specific organizations, which seem to know how to reach and engage victims in these communities, lack access to stable funding sources and powerful decision makers. NRC staff also learned, critically, that these two groups are not really working together to improve access to services, and this essentially means they are unwittingly helping to reinforce all of the service barriers discussed throughout this report.

Indeed, lack of effective partnerships was a recurring theme. To reach more people harmed by violence, many spoke of the potential benefits of partnerships between mainstream victim service programs and culturally specific or community-specific (such as people with disabilities or formerly incarcerated people) service providers. For example, NRC staff heard that mainstream victim service programs and jail/prison reentry programs could benefit from greater connection and collaboration. These participants noted that grassroots and directly impacted advocates could gain valuable training and knowledge from their mainstream allies on how to be effective agents of change. They also pointed out that mainstream programs could benefit from learning directly from grassroots partners about why so few people from certain communities access their services. Some participants noted similar potential benefits if mainstream victim service programs were to partner with other organizations, like those serving people with disabilities (such as Centers for Independent Living, Arcs, or community mental health centers), LGBTQ communities (such as LGBTQ community centers or anti-violence projects) and/or older adults (such as area agencies on aging, elder law attorneys, and Adult Protective Services). Overall, many people expressed a wish to see more collaboration

among mainstream victim service programs and organizations that serve specific cultural groups or communities, citing the potential to reach more people in the community by empowering grassroots advocates and cultivating greater cultural sensitivity and competency among mainstream providers.

Still, quite a few people offered reasons that these partnerships are not in place, despite the potential for positive outcomes. Some noted a lack of models for good partnerships, citing how siloed victim service programs are from many other community-based organizations, including those that serve people reentering the community after a period of incarceration, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ youth and adults. Others suggested that mainstream providers do not know how to create equitable relationships that feel worthwhile to their potential partners. Providers who serve children and teens suggested that the dearth of effective partnerships was in part due to potential partners lacking basic communication methods to negotiate agreements and reach common ground on goals and objectives. They described how providers may fit under the umbrella of “victim services” but have very different priorities (such as helping individual victims get their needs met, focusing on a family safety plan, or focusing on justice-related goals). They suggested that these providers may find it difficult to forge partnerships if they perceive conflicting or competing priorities as intractable problems. And some noted that the lack of diversity among mainstream providers may inhibit efforts to build partnerships. For example, an organization with no bilingual or bicultural staff may have trouble creating a partnership with a culturally specific program that serves people with LEP, immigrants, and/or refugees.

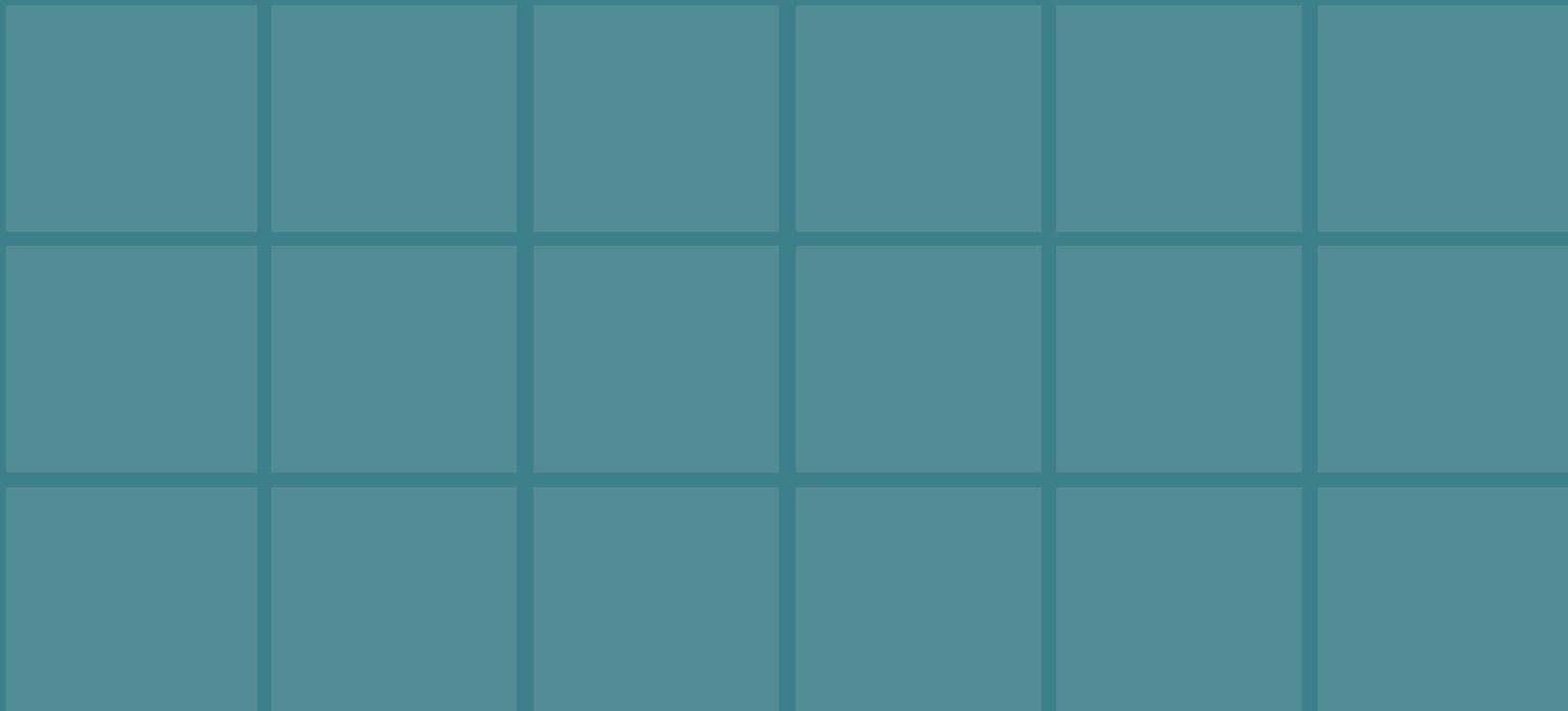
7

VOCA administrators face challenges in identifying populations of victims not being adequately served and finding programs that can serve those people.

Similar to Finding 1, a number of VOCA administrators interviewed for the needs assessment expressed concern that VOCA dollars are not reaching all victims—but also said they are not always sure how to find and fund programs that can serve more people. They candidly shared that they simply do not have the skills and tools to assess unmet needs and don't know what organizations are available to help assess and meet those needs. Some believe that the demand for services in many communities is higher than the capacity to meet those needs. Another administrator reported that staff composition in VOCA administration offices is not always diverse enough to reflect the communities that need to be served. Given this reality, this person recommended more training for VOCA administrators on how to engage and serve people from traditionally hard-to-reach communities.

Survey respondents echoed and confirmed what the NRC heard from the VOCA administrators themselves. Namely, they perceived that VOCA administrators often lack staff and other resources to assess unmet needs, conduct adequate outreach to underrepresented communities, and identify programs that can meet the needs of victims in those communities. Others thought VOCA administrators lack cultural awareness of certain victim populations, and that this may lead to exclusionary funding decisions. For example, some service providers shared their belief that VOCA administrators do not seem to understand the needs of older victims, and that can lead to this population being overlooked in funding decisions.

Closing the Gaps



“I don’t think our agency’s clients completely represent the whole picture of who lives in our 17-county region and I think we have to make a concerted effort through training (ourselves), creating a diverse staff, and [having] an intentional and intersectional community outreach plan in order to make our services more accessible to all the people in our service area. I also believe we have to make our organization feel safe to all groups of people so they feel comfortable seeking services with us.”

—Survey respondent

Throughout the assessment, representatives from the NRC asked advocates, law enforcement officers, policymakers, and survivors to share successful strategies for reaching more victims than they have either implemented or observed. Drawing on those successes, assessment participants described what is needed to reach more crime victims, especially those from underserved communities. The responses to this question were quite consistent among the diverse group of people who participated in the assessment. They recommended these actions:

- **Expand the framework and strategies used within the crime victims field to reach, engage, and support victims to better account for the ways in which the person’s culture affects how they will reach out, the type of support they will need, and the approaches that will best meet their needs.**
- **Expand services and justice options to meet the diverse holistic needs of victims.**

- Provide culturally specific victim service programs that:
 - are sufficiently funded
 - have bicultural and bilingual staff
 - are connected to the organizations and activities within the broader crime victims field
 - have a voice in policy and practice discussions and decisions in the crime victims field

- Provide more general victim service programs and criminal justice-based interventions that:
 - have an awareness of who is underserved and why
 - have staff and volunteers who reflect the communities being served
 - cultivate cultural attunement and an intersectional approach among staff and volunteers
 - implement strategic community engagement plans and activities—specific to each group that is underserved—that focus on building trust and demonstrating transparency

- Create strong, meaningful, and equitable collaborations among organizations that serve victims and those that are most connected to the groups of survivors underserved by victim services.

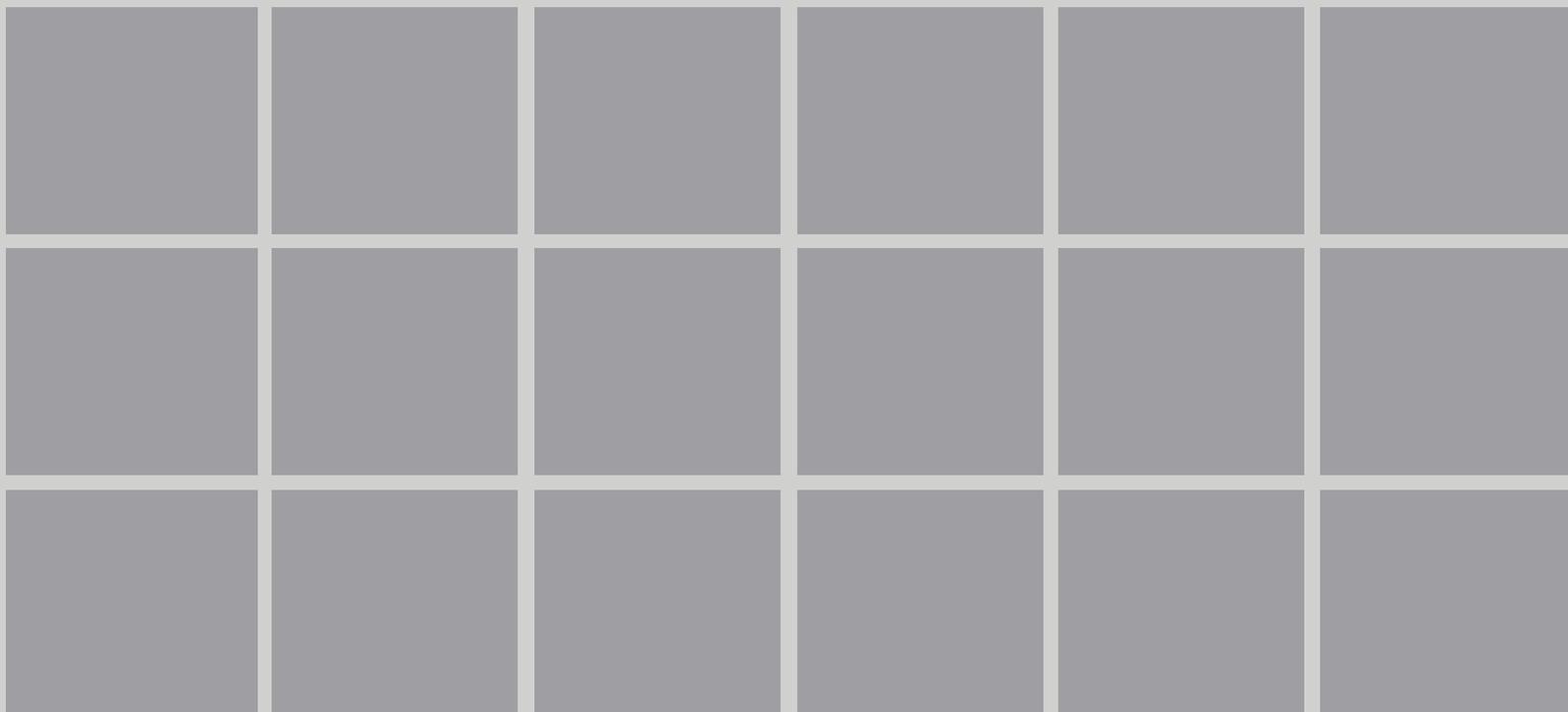
- Promote greater public awareness of services and justice options available to crime victims through more tailored and refined campaigns and outreach initiatives.

“We hire staff from the populations we serve. This leads to increased level of comfort, understanding, communication, and acceptance from these clients.”

—Survey respondent

To support the crime victims field in removing barriers and implementing these strategies, assessment participants requested training, skill-building opportunities, organizational development support, practical resources, and funding.

The NRC's Strategies for Supporting the Crime Victims Field in Reaching More People



To enhance access to victim services and close service gaps that keep too many people from getting the healing care and support they need, the NRC is using a number of broad strategies that raise awareness about different victim populations, enhance the capacity of the crime victims field to serve more people, and hone the skills of providers to reach more survivors with culturally attuned trauma-informed services.

These strategies include having a presence at national conferences in the crime victims and related fields, conducting regional in-person trainings, providing a series of virtual trainings, conducting site visits and consultations, and issuing mini-grants to support innovation in service delivery. The NRC is also implementing a number of initiatives designed to increase the equity and accessibility of services provided to crime victims.

These strategies encompass wide-ranging multipronged approaches aimed at chipping away the systemic inequities of the victim services field that keep so many people from seeking help. The NRC, itself a model of collaboration and partnership among mainstream and culturally specific organizations, believes these approaches will lead to a transformation of the victim services field that is both supportive of service providers and the tools they need to be effective; and culturally attuned and responsive to the trauma needs of victims. The NRC envisions the following long-term outcomes once this transformation is complete:

- **increased support of victim service providers for a new vision of victim services that is inclusive, effective, and achievable**
- **increased awareness of the availability of victim services among members of communities that too often have had less access to healing services and avenues to justice**

- **more successful outreach by local victim service agencies to these hard-to-reach communities**
- **more people who are victims of crime from culturally specific populations receiving services from VOCA-funded and other victim service providers**
- **improved services provided by culturally competent and trauma-informed victim service providers**

Along the way, the NRC will continuously monitor its efforts and activities to ensure that partners and collaborators are charting the right course toward transformation and asking the right questions to help increase awareness of victim needs, remove barriers to services, improve cultural competency and trauma responsiveness of providers, increase collaboration among service agencies, and enhance the knowledge and capacity of funders and decision makers.

Endnotes

EndNotes

- i. Rachel E. Morgan and Grace Kena, *Criminal Victimization, 2016: Revised* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018, NCJ 252121), 27, www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv16.pdf.
- ii. For more on OVC's commitment to services for all U.S. crime victims, see Office for Victims of Crime, *Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services, Final Report* (Washington, DC: Office of Justice Programs, OVC, 2013), https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/vision21/pdfs/Vision21_Report.pdf.
- iii. Rachel E. Morgan and Jennifer L. Truman, *Criminal Victimization, 2017, Bulletin* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018, NCJ 252472), 8, www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv17.pdf.

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Credits

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An electronic version of this report is posted at reachingvictims.org/resource/nareport/.

The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims is a clearinghouse for victim service providers, culturally specific organizations, criminal justice professionals, and policymakers to get information and expert guidance to enhance their capacity to identify, reach, and serve all victims, especially those from communities that are underrepresented in healing services and avenues to justice. For more information about the NRC, visit the NRC's website at <http://reachingvictims.org>. For questions about this report, please contact reachingvictims@vera.org.

The Vera Institute of Justice's Center on Victimization and Safety convenes the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims. The Center on Victimization and Safety works with communities around the country to create healing services and justice options that reach, appeal to, and benefit all survivors. Our work focuses on communities of people who are at elevated risk of harm but often marginalized from the organizations and systems designed to support victims.

For more information on the Center on Victimization and Safety, please contact cvs@vera.org.

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The NRC’s vision is that victim services are accessible, culturally appropriate and relevant, and trauma-informed—and that the overwhelming majority of victims access and benefit from these services.

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