

Vision 21 At A Glance

The goal of the Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services initiative, supported by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, is to expand the vision and impact of the crime victim assistance field. Beginning in 2010, and continuing over 18 months, Vision 21 projects examined the current framework of the victim assistance field in the United States and explored new and existing challenges facing the field. Through a review of the literature and a series of five stakeholder forums, the projects engaged with a broad spectrum of service providers, advocates, criminal justice professionals, allied practitioners, and policymakers to address crime victim issues through a lens broader than their everyday work. The *Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services Final Report* is the result of this collective examination—the first in 15 years—and seeks to transform the treatment of crime victims in this country.

What were the issue areas?

The role of the crime victims field in the overall response to crime and delinquency in the United States. Addressed what we know—and don't know—about crime victimization, underserved crime victims, enhancing partnerships to better address the conditions that precede crime and delinquency and their aftermath, and enforcement of victims' rights.

Building capacity in the crime victims field to better serve victims of crime. Addressed the capacity of organizations to serve victims by focusing on infrastructure issues, including the lack of data and research, access to technology, and the outdated statutory framework of the 1984 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) that impede service provision today.

Enduring challenges in the crime victims field. Addressed the barriers and issues that preclude effective service provision to victims that have been a traditional focus of the field.

Emerging challenges the crime victims field has yet to fully address. Addressed innovative responses to new issues and challenges, including changing demographics in the United States, the impact of globalization, advances in technology, cybercrime, environmental crimes, and the rise of crimes such as human trafficking and identity theft.

What are the major findings?

- Major challenges exist to the integration of research and evaluation findings into victim services practice and defining the scope and impact of victimization, especially in emerging crimes such as human trafficking and online financial and sexual exploitation.
- There is a lack of legal assistance to support crime victims with a wide range of legal issues that can arise following victimization, such as civil legal assistance, the enforcement of victims' rights in the criminal justice process, immigration relief for trafficking victims and battered women, and assistance with financial fraud or identity theft.
- Technology, globalization, and changing demographics are driving societal change, but the victim assistance field lacks the resources to develop a comprehensive and forward-thinking strategy for serving crime victims in the 21st century.
- Service providers struggle to maintain basic services for crime victims and lack the resources and capacity to extend assistance to crime victims from marginalized populations and to victims of new types of crime.



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Why Vision 21 Matters

It documents the need to expand the field's knowledge base about crime victimization and effective responses to:

- (1) Ensure that evidence-based programs are the standard of excellence for support to victims of all types of crime;
- (2) Provide programs with the knowledge and tools to document the impact and cost effectiveness of services; and
- (3) Expand fundamental understanding of who is affected by crime, how they are affected, how they seek help, and who reports victimization and why or why not?

It makes a compelling case that victim service programs and providers need resources to build a technology infrastructure that allows them to:

- (1) Provide more crime victims easier access to information and services;
- (2) Reduce administrative and reporting burdens associated with multiple funding streams and different standards of accountability;
- (3) Access low- or no-cost training and technical assistance based on evidence;
- (4) Use social media and other tools to increase public understanding and awareness of crime victim issues and broaden the potential base for fundraising; and
- (5) Provide online services across multiple programs and systems, reduce the burden on victims, and improve data collection to measure the impact of services.

It illuminates the need to "modernize" VOCA to support services and support for crime victims in the 21st century to:

- (1) Support increasingly complex assistance to victims that frequently extends far beyond crisis intervention and conventional boundaries of place and time;

- (2) Recognize that the current capacity of too many programs is inadequate to serve victims who endure multiple forms of victimization or who have comprehensive needs that extend beyond the realm of victim assistance;
- (3) Ensure that VOCA addresses and supports research, the use of technology, the need for collaborative and multijurisdictional responses, and formalized system linkages;
- (4) Authorize and provide funding for services at the national level for more cost-effective programs such as hotline and online services;
- (5) Acknowledge the need to integrate prevention and the promotion of innovative public safety programs that hold offenders accountable and reduce recidivism while promoting healing for victims; and
- (6) Institutionalize "wraparound" legal assistance to victims so they have expert support in dealing with the numerous legal issues that can arise from crimes committed against them.

It outlines the steps to align and leverage the efforts of crime victims, service providers, and advocates, ensuring the transformational change that the Vision 21 Final Report outlines to:

- (1) Conduct and integrate continuous strategic planning at the local, tribal, state, and national levels to leverage resources, institutionalize critical system linkages, and effect real progress in research, policy, programming, and capacity;
- (2) Develop a comprehensive body of empirical data to guide the efforts of policymakers, funders, and practitioners;
- (3) Pursue greater statutory, policy, and programmatic flexibility to address enduring and emerging crime victim issues; and
- (4) Build and institutionalize capacity through an infusion of technology, training, and innovation to ensure that the field is equipped to meet the demands of the 21st century.

