



NATIONAL CRIME VICTIM LAW INSTITUTE

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Let's hear from the networks about what they have learned and the importance of providing holistic victim services.

What do you want people to know about the importance of providing holistic legal services to victims?

- “Crime victims frequently experience co-existing and overlapping legal needs that arise in the wake of their victimization. Their needs can include a wide range of civil legal needs resulting from the crime including immigration, family law, financial, enforcing crime victim rights and other legal issues. When crime victims receive holistic legal services, they are able to more fully recover from their victimization and the quality of their services improves. For example, in a case involving an immigrant victim of domestic violence, the crime victim's immigration attorney and her family law attorney were able to work together to determine the best way that her family law and immigration law needs could be met. Without the availability of holistic legal services the intersection of victimization, institutionalized racism, limited resources in most rural communities, limited English proficiency and unfamiliarity with crime victim rights and the U.S. legal system create a justice gap for all crime victims seeking safety and protection in Alaska.”
 - Kari Robinson, JD, Deputy Director, Alaska Institute for Justice, Juneau, Alaska

- “While collecting data as part of our needs assessment, two things stood out for me – I hope people remember these when developing a network to provide holistic legal services to victims of crime. First, crime victims’ legal needs may not come to light until well after their victimization. Often crime victims’ priority will be dealing with the immediate necessities of life, which may be non-legal in nature. It is important to assist crime victims with these non-legal needs in order to truly provide holistic legal services. Crime victims won’t engage in the legal process, which they often characterize as ‘scary’ and ‘overwhelming’ if their other needs are not met. Second, it is important to remember that people who are victims of crime have been betrayed. In fact, many victims have experienced unimaginable betrayals by people they know and love. So do not expect crime victims to automatically trust you or the network. Building rapport with the victim and earning their trust are essential foundational steps in the process of providing holistic legal services. And don’t underestimate the power of that personal connection; having a reliable professional contact may help the victim remain engaged in the legal process and return to the network if additional legal issues arise.”
 - Remla Parthasarathy, Project Leader, Empire Justice Center, Crime Victims Legal Network Project, Rochester, NY

- “Our network wants people to know that there is no wrong door entry point for victims into our network and that we aim to cover all of the needs of victims and clients. In our networking endeavors, we plan to extend technology as permitted, services, and meeting the victim/client where they are in order to serve them in a holistic manner.”
 - Tiffany K. Williams, Legal Planning & Policy Development Specialist, Grants & Policy Division, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Atlanta, GA

- “Crimes such as domestic and sexual assault, child and elder abuse, assault, robbery and homicide leave victims with emotional and physical damage. Add in the need for an attorney to deal with a civil legal problem and a victim may be left feeling overwhelmed, confused, and frustrated by all the needs related to their victimization. Comprehensive, coordinated, and truly holistic legal services simply aren’t available in most places. These legal services are outside the expertise of victim advocates and law enforcement, and scarce resources cannot fund enough attorneys to meet these needs. Crime victims may be unaware of their civil legal rights as they moved through both civil and criminal court processes. In Montana, the largely rural and remote geography of the state adds to the difficulty of finding adequate resources in a timely manner for victims. A survivor contemplating the decision to leave her abuser can develop confidence to break free from violence and report the abuse if she knows she will have help obtaining a parenting plan that will ensure her children are safe, a child support order that will allow her to pay her children’s living expenses, and an order dividing the marital property fairly and providing her with economic security. Added help finding housing, food, and other resources can make all the difference – and help a survivor tremendously as they work to rebuild their lives. The development of Montana Victim Legal Assistance Network is bringing us one step closer to being able to fully meet the needs of crime victims as they move forward in the aftermath of crime.”
 - Mel Fisher, Vision 21 - Crime Victims Legal Assistance Network Project Coordinator, Montana Legal Services Association, Missoula, MT

Describe something that you have learned about forming partnerships to better provide holistic legal services to victims.

- “It is very important when building partnerships to provide venues for open discussions regarding the purpose of a project and expectations of partners. Transparency and honesty is key when building lasting relationships and buy-in for a project. At the end of the day, each organization is concerned about how the partnership will benefit their mission and the time commitment we asking for. It’s important to address these two concerns up front so a potential partner can properly assess if they can participate in the project appropriately.”
 - Jabeen Adawi, JD, Community-Based Legal Services Partner/Project Manager, Network for Victim Recovery of DC, Washington, D.C.

Describe a case that you have worked on in the last year that demonstrates the importance of providing holistic legal services to victims of crime.

- “Providing holistic legal services to victims of crime is vital. Here’s why: This client initially came to our agency in early 2014 seeking a T visa based on labor trafficking. However, after only a few months, she decided to close her case out of fear of retaliation. She was not connected to case management services. Her case was closed. Earlier this year, the same client contacted our agency and was connected with VLAN. Rosy Ortiz, Staff Attorney, met with the client who stated she wanted to move forward. After re-opening her legal case, she was referred to Maria Abbott Miller, Senior Case Manager, for counseling and case management services. The client is currently receiving counseling services and learning healthy coping tools to help her manage depressive and anxiety symptoms related to her trauma and current daily stressors. Moreover, the client has been connected with recreational activities and social support to help her decrease social isolation since she has limited support in the area. She has expressed that she trusts the services she is receiving from VLAN. By providing wraparound holistic legal *and* social services to this client, we provide support and encouragement while ensuring her personal growth and hopefully legal success!”
 - Rosa E. Ortiz, Esq., Staff Attorney, Maria Abbott Miller, Senior Case Manager, Victim Legal Assistance Network Legal Aid Society | Metropolitan Family Services
Chicago, IL

This product was supported by Grant No. 2014-XV-BX-K013, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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