

**Assessing the Use of Pennsylvania's  
Victims Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP)**

**FINAL REPORT**

Submitted to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency  
by the  
Justice Research and Statistics Association  
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Washington, D.C. 20002

March 2008

This report was prepared under Grant Number 2004/2006-DS/VS-19/ST-16510 from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the PCCD.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	1
PROJECT DESCRIPTION.....	4
Literature Review.....	6
PROJECT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY .....	11
Study Limitations.....	13
DETAILED FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS.....	15
Compensation Policies.....	15
Trends in Claims Received and Paid in Pennsylvania.....	16
Comparison With National Data.....	18
Characteristics of Pennsylvania Claimants.....	20
Victim Response Cards.....	22
Victim Service Providers' Survey .....	23
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .....	31
APPENDIX A: Annotated Bibliography .....	39
APPENDIX B: Survey of Victim Service Professionals.....	53
APPENDIX C: Victim Comments from Response Cards .....	61

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2005, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) issued a request for research to examine the use and nonuse of the state's Victims Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP). Specifically, PCCD was concerned about the perceived underutilization of crime victim compensation in the state. To support the notion of underutilization of compensation, the solicitation cited the small number of claims filed relative to the total number of target crimes reported, as well as the small number of claims filed in Pennsylvania relative to the number reported by other states.

JRSA conducted a literature review, as requested in the solicitation, to determine the current state of knowledge regarding use of victim compensation programs. The study examined the nature and extent of the use of the VCAP program using data published by PCCD as well as data from the Dependable Access for Victimization Expenses (DAVE) database. The study also used national data published by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) to compare Pennsylvania's use of compensation to that of the nation as a whole. JRSA also analyzed victim response cards provided by PCCD. Finally, JRSA conducted a survey of the state's victim service providers to obtain their assessment of factors that might account for a lack of use of compensation programs. A total of 160 survey responses were received from individuals representing at least 51 of the state's 67 counties. The vast majority of respondents were executive directors or program directors (41%), victim/witness coordinators (29%), and victim advocates or liaisons (14%).

The data sources and procedures used here introduce a number of limitations on the study that restrict our ability to draw firm conclusions about the VCAP program. In order to put the Pennsylvania claims data into context, these data can be compared to those of other states.

Making comparisons among states using the data collected and reported by OVC is a questionable undertaking, however. States do not appear to use standard definitions in how they count claims or in how they categorize claims in terms of crime types. Thus any of the differences discussed here may be due to reporting anomalies and differences in counting practices rather than reflecting the effectiveness of the compensation programs themselves. For this same reason, we have chosen not to compare Pennsylvania directly to other individual states, but rather to the nation as a whole. Regarding the survey of service providers, it should be noted that these individuals are expressing their views and opinions regarding other groups' experiences, including those of victims and police officers. We did not have the resources to survey these other groups, and the results of our survey of service providers should be viewed in this light.

The review of the literature on victim compensation programs finds some reason to be optimistic regarding their efficacy. With regard to use and nonuse by victims, the literature suggests that lack of awareness about victims' services in general, and compensation availability in particular, explains to a great degree victim nonuse of these services. Research has identified several factors that appear to be related to whether police officers provide information to victims, and suggest that training may help to mitigate at least some of these factors. An annotated bibliography of evaluation studies can be found in Appendix A.

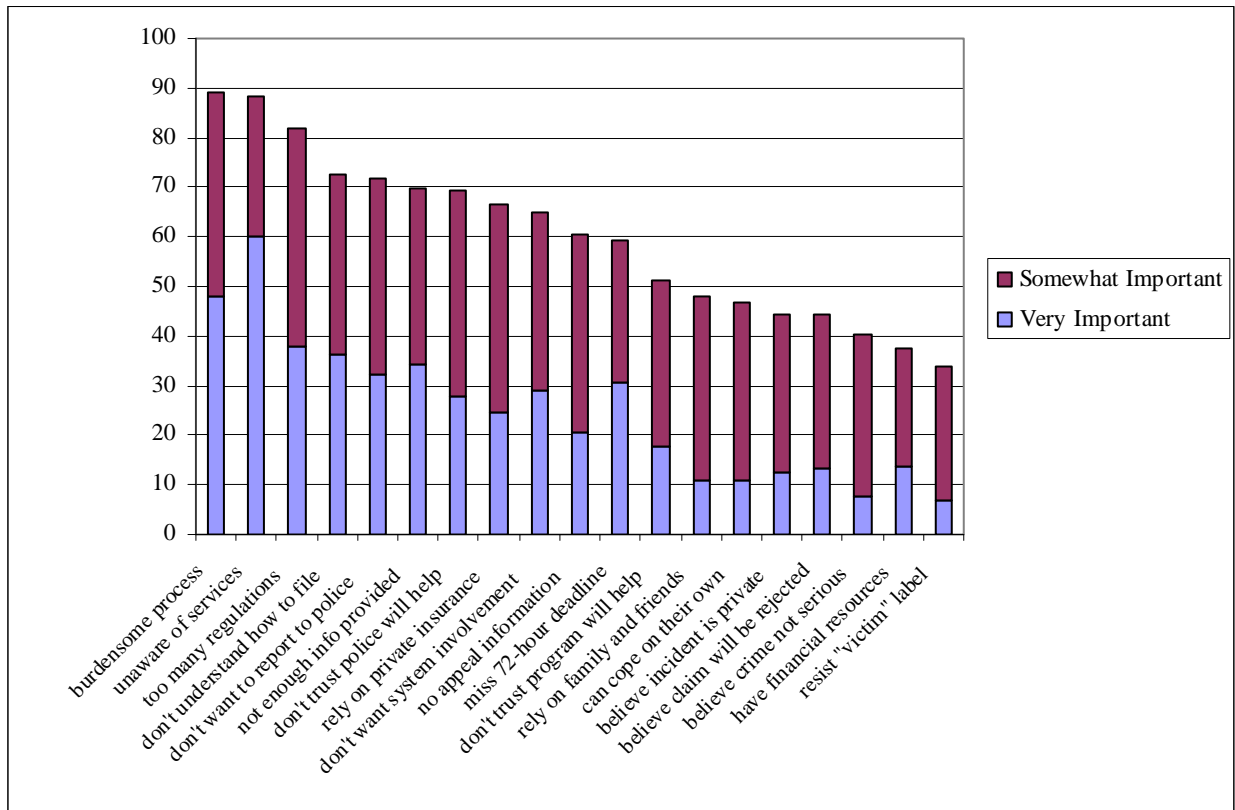
Analysis of data on Pennsylvania's VCAP program showed the following:

- Pennsylvania's compensation policies are similar to those of other states. Pennsylvania has a more generous claim filing deadline (two years) than most states.

- From FY1999 to FY2007, the number of claims received and paid by VCAP grew steadily, with claims received almost tripling and claims paid more than tripling over this time period.
- In FY2006, the average processing time for claims was just under 8.5 weeks (10.2 weeks if forensic rape exams are excluded). This is a significant drop in processing time from years past, and well below the 90-150 days recommended by OVC.
- In both Pennsylvania and the nation as a whole, the proportion of paid claims that were paid for assault is virtually the same (47% vs. 48%). The category of child abuse accounts for 19% of claims paid nationally but only 4% of claims paid in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania appears to pay a greater proportion of claims for homicide than the national proportion, and a lower proportion of sexual assault claims.
- The proportion of expenses paid for forensic rape exams in Pennsylvania was double that of the country as a whole, while the proportion of counseling expenses paid in Pennsylvania was less than half that of the nation as a whole.
- According to response cards completed by victims, the overwhelming majority of victims were satisfied with the compensation process and the service they received from PCCD's VCAP staff. Fully 92% reported satisfaction with the compensation process.

The survey of victim services professionals generated a great deal of interesting information. One of the most important questions asked respondents about their perceptions of the importance of various factors in limiting victims' use of compensation services in their localities. A summary of the ratings of these factors is shown in the figure below (Figure 6 in the report). In general, factors related to the process of filing claims were rated as being more important, while factors related to victims' beliefs were viewed as less important.

## Respondents' Ratings of Factors That Discourage Use of Compensation



The conclusions of the report can be summarized as follows:

- The general consensus from the literature is that more victims do not take advantage of compensation services because they are not aware of them. The findings from our survey of victim services professionals also support this notion.
- PCCD's Office of Victims' Services (OVS) has already implemented a variety of training and outreach efforts in order to increase awareness of compensation among victims and the professionals who work with them.
- Our comparison of Pennsylvania with the rest of the country shows that Pennsylvania pays proportionally fewer claims for child abuse and sexual assault, and pays a proportionally lower dollar amount for counseling, than the nation as a whole. This

confirms findings of the Urban Institute in its national evaluation using data from 2001.

The national comparisons suggest that PCCD should seek explanations for these observed differences.

- PCCD should consider commissioning a statewide victimization survey to obtain information on whether victims were informed about assistance and compensation services, by whom, and reasons that they did not file a claim.
- PCCD should consider clarifying the wording of the first two questions of the victim Response Card, since it is not clear that respondents realize that the questions refer to VCAP staff at PCCD rather than local program staff.
- The victim service professionals in our survey expressed the opinion that the compensation process was burdensome and that victims did not understand it. PCCD should continue their ongoing efforts to simplify forms and provide assistance to victims in completing them.
- Since comparing Pennsylvania's compensation claims data with that of the nation as a whole is problematic, an alternative that PCCD might consider for putting their numbers in context would be to compare Pennsylvania to a handful of other states carefully chosen to match Pennsylvania on a number of key criteria, such as violent crime rate, degree of urbanicity, and racial and ethnic composition of population.
- Obtaining specific and detailed information on a regular basis regarding how victims were informed about services, their experience with completing forms, and their suggestions for improvement would be helpful to PCCD in continuing to improve the VCAP program.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

In September 2005, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) issued a request for research to examine the use and nonuse of the state's Victims Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP). Specifically, PCCD was concerned about the perceived underutilization of crime victim compensation in the state. To support the notion of underutilization of compensation, the solicitation cited the small number of claims filed relative to the total number of target crimes reported, as well as the small number of claims filed in Pennsylvania relative to the number reported by other states.

JRSA proposed conducting a literature review, as requested in the solicitation, to determine the current state of knowledge regarding use of victim compensation programs. We proposed looking at the state's Dependable Access for Victimization Expenses (DAVE) database to determine the nature and extent of the use of the VCAP program, and looking at national data to compare Pennsylvania's use of compensation to that of other states. Finally, we proposed a survey of the state's victim service providers to obtain their assessment of factors that might account for a lack of use of compensation programs.

### **Literature Review**

The literature on the use and nonuse of victim services is scant, and little is known about monetary compensation as a form of victim services. There is a need for more research assessing the effectiveness of these types of programs in meeting victims' needs, why victim services are sought so infrequently, what might improve participation, and what types of individuals are more likely to utilize victim services. Generally, however, evidence suggests that few victims seek these services and among those who do, few receive significant benefits from them in terms of improved attitudes toward the criminal justice system, improved knowledge

about their case in particular, or reduced psychological or emotional harm as a result of their victimization (Sims, Yost, & Abbott, 2005).

### *Victim Service Programs*

Research on the use and nonuse of victim service programs suggests that the reasons for the underutilization of victim services may be similar to the reasons for nonreporting of crimes: a sense that the crime was not important enough to justify a report; the view that the incident was a private matter; resistance to being labeled as a victim; and a general lack of trust in police to intervene effectively (Sims et al., 2005; Stohr, 2005). Researchers conjecture that the nonreporting of crime may be directly related to the nonuse of programs, since most victims are made aware of victim services through law enforcement officers. However, there is no empirical support for this hypothesis.

### *Research on Victim Services in Pennsylvania*

Several studies have examined the use of victim services in Pennsylvania. The Center for Opinion Research (2003) compiled a statewide inventory of victim services and conducted interviews with clients in eight victim service agencies in Pennsylvania. Survey data were also collected from victims who chose not to use services. Results suggest that nonuse of services was largely the result of a lack of awareness about programs (47%), or the use of other resources like family and friends (49%), but not necessarily for financial support. Respondents also reported not needing any help (48%) or being able to cope on their own (45%). The study also found that 40% of victims said they did not know what kinds of services were offered, and when asked, most thought of emotional support and counseling, not compensation. The authors concluded that: "Crime victims do not use victim service programs more frequently because they simply are unaware of what these programs have to offer. If citizens know anything, they view

these agencies primarily as places to go for counseling. Few victims understand the range of services available to them” (p. 53).

In a more extensive study that included some of the same data used in the 2003 study, Sims, Yost, and Abbott (2005) examined differences between crime victims who sought services and those who did not. In order to compare service users to nonusers, the authors conducted a statewide telephone survey of adults that reached 626 crime victims, only 3% of whom had sought victim assistance services. With these data, the authors were able to identify demographic differences, crime-related differences, victims’ use of other forms of assistance, and individual coping skills used by victims. Bivariate analyses of demographic variables indicated that age, gender, race, income, marital status, receipt of government assistance, and employment status were all significantly related to the use or nonuse of services. Multivariate analyses, however, showed that only age (with older victims being more likely to seek help) and type of crime (with victims of violent crimes being more likely to seek help) remained significant predictors of whether victims sought assistance. The authors also concluded that nonuse of services is probably the result of a lack of awareness that they are available, since 40% of the victims in their sample reported that they did not seek this type of help because they were not aware it existed. Contrary to the findings of The Center for Opinion Research’s 2003 study, Sims et al. did not find a significant relationship between the availability of other forms of social support (e.g., friends and family) and use of victim services, suggesting that the availability of other kinds of assistance does not predict whether an individual will seek victim services.

#### *Victim Compensation Programs*

As noted previously, there have been few studies of victim compensation programs. In the largest and most recent study, the Urban Institute conducted a national evaluation of state

victim assistance and compensation programs in an effort to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs in serving their clients (Newmark, Bonderman, Smith, & Liner, 2003). The researchers used a variety of approaches to assess compensation programs, including a mail survey of state compensation administrators, site visits to six states (including Pennsylvania) for in-depth analyses of program operations, focus groups with clients of victim assistance programs, and a survey of more than 450 compensation claimants. On average, states reported approving 87% of claims, with funds being provided to victims of violent crimes and some nonviolent crimes to cover medical/dental expenses (47%), provide economic support because of lost wages (20%), and to cover funeral/burial expenses (13%). The average amount provided to a victim was \$2,800, and the typical claimant was an older, white female who was a victim of assault. The study also found that the vast majority of state administrators believed that they received too few claims.

Newmark et al. (2003) made five main recommendations for improving victim compensation programs. First, they recommended that the programs be expanded wherever possible, since federal allocations for victim compensation are expected to continue to rise. Second, program management can be improved with the completion of needs assessments, strategic planning, coordination and automation, and technical assistance from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). Third, states should conduct more outreach so that service providers and victims are aware that they may be eligible for compensation. Fourth, with improved communication to service providers about policies and procedures related to compensation programs, victims should expect improved claims processing times. And finally, there was some evidence that claimants were not informed as to why their claims were rejected; more education and outreach to rejected claimants should improve overall system efficiency and effectiveness.

Newmark and Schaffer (2003) reviewed key aspects of Maryland's victim compensation program to identify program accomplishments and provide suggestions for program improvements. Similar to the national evaluation discussed above, the authors relied on state documents pertaining to the program, a review of claim information from client case files, surveys of claimants, and surveys of violent crime victims. The study identified both strengths and areas of concern within the program. The program's strengths included a steadily rising number of claims filed from 2000 to 2002, accompanied by an average claim amount that was double the national average. Points of concern included underuse by certain types of victims (e.g., domestic violence and sexual assault victims) and use lower than the national average for some types of services, including counseling and economic support. In addition, the regulations governing the types of claims that can be approved are stricter than those in many other states, which might result in victims not receiving necessary funds to recover their losses.

The authors provide four suggestions for improving Maryland's system. First, they suggest that regulations governing claims be modified so as to allow more victims access to funds. Second, they suggest eliminating unnecessary steps in the review and approval process and improving communication with claimants who are denied compensation about subsequent actions they can take. Third, they suggest maximizing available funds through modification of accounting practices and offender payment practices. Finally, they suggest monitoring and evaluating program developments to assess their effectiveness by measuring performance through regular claimant surveys.

In both of the studies cited above, Newmark and her colleagues raise the issue of victims' lack of awareness about the availability of compensation funds. Fritsch, Caeti, Tobolowsky, and Taylor (2004) examined this issue from a slightly different angle: They surveyed Texas law

enforcement officers about factors that determine if the officers will inform a victim about the compensation program. The study found that eight variables predict the frequency with which law enforcement officers inform victims of compensation programs in Texas: (1) law enforcement officers are not pressed with too many other responsibilities and thus have time to provide this information; (2) they receive support from supervisors for making victims aware of compensation programs; (3) they do not hold a negative view of the victim; (4) they themselves are aware of the program; (5) they work in larger police departments; (6) they view the victim advocate/liaison as competent; (7) they receive information on the program from nonofficial sources outside the police department (media, informal conversations with other police officers); and (8) officers who have received college credits are more likely to inform victims. Fritsch et al. conclude that funds used for officer training in this area should be redirected toward in-service training in victimology to help officers overcome any negative perceptions about victims.

In summary, research on victim compensation programs finds some reason to be optimistic regarding their efficacy. With regard to use and nonuse of services by victims, the literature suggests that lack of awareness about victim services in general, and compensation availability in particular, explains to a great degree victim nonuse of these services. Research has identified several factors that appear to be related to whether police officers provide information to victims, and suggests that training may help to mitigate at least some of these factors. An annotated bibliography of evaluation studies can be found in Appendix A.

## **PROJECT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

In addition to conducting the literature review, JRSA examined claims data from the DAVE system and from reports published by PCCD, and conducted a survey of victim service providers. We used data from PCCD and from the federal government's Office for Victims of

Crime to examine claims in the state and how these compared to the nation as a whole. We also obtained victim response cards from PCCD and analyzed victims' perceptions of the VCAP program.

In order to obtain perceptions of factors related to the use of VCAP, we conducted a Web-based survey of victim service professionals around the state. Online surveys have the advantage of easy access and quick turnaround. Given that PCCD maintains a number of email lists, contacting potential respondents by email and providing them with a link to a Web site seemed like the most straightforward way of obtaining survey responses. The online survey was created using Survey Monkey (*www.surveymonkey.com*), one of many online membership sites that allow researchers to design high quality, economical Web surveys.

Victim service professionals in Pennsylvania were identified from email lists maintained by PCCD and by targeting grant coordinators for funding through: the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), Victims of Juvenile Offenders (VOJO), STOP Violence Against Women Program (STOP), and the Rights and Services Act (RASA). A pre-notice email was sent to our sample of victim service professionals on September 8, 2006, from Doug Hoffman, former Director of the Center for Research, Evaluation, and Statistical Analysis at the PCCD, and Lynn Shiner, former Lead Manager of the Office of Victims' Services at the PCCD. The purpose of this letter was to inform victim service professionals of the upcoming survey and to encourage their participation.

On September 15, 2006, we sent an email message to 245 victim service practitioners and advocates throughout Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> Two additional reminder emails were sent on September 19<sup>th</sup> and October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Surveys were received from September 15<sup>th</sup> through October 17<sup>th</sup>. The survey was designed to take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete, and consisted of 18 questions designed to obtain information regarding the following areas: respondent and agency

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<sup>1</sup> While 270 email addresses were originally targeted, 25 emails were returned as undeliverable.

characteristics, sources for information regarding VCAP, client utilization of victim compensation services, the role of law enforcement in the victim compensation process, and the DAVE database. Topic areas and specific questions were based in large part on the findings of the review of the literature, along with input from PCCD and the project advisory group. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix B.

### **Study Limitations**

The data sources and procedures used here introduce a number of limitations on the study that restrict our ability to draw firm conclusions about the VCAP program. In order to put the Pennsylvania claims data into context, these data can be compared to those of other states. Making comparisons among states using the data collected and reported by OVC is a questionable undertaking, however. States do not appear to use standard definitions in how they count claims or in how they categorize claims in terms of crime types. For example, roughly two thirds of the states generally count one claim per crime, regardless of the number of victims, while the rest (including Pennsylvania) count victims and indirect victims as separate claims. Some states may report multiple payments for the same claim (e.g., for different types of expenses or expenses that occur after the original claim was filed) as separate claims. Claims for forensic rape exams may be mistakenly included in states' reports to OVC. In addition, states vary widely in policies and procedures related to claims processing, and these policies and procedures may have a direct effect on claims reporting in various categories. Thus any of the differences discussed here may be due to reporting anomalies and differences in counting practices, rather than reflecting the effectiveness of the compensation programs themselves. For this same reason, we have chosen not to compare Pennsylvania directly to other individual states, but rather to the nation as a whole.

Another way to put the claims data into context is to standardize the number of claims by the number of crimes for which compensation could have been claimed. However, due to these reporting differences across states, trying to do this can further muddy the picture. For example, in 2005 Pennsylvania reported 756 homicides (according to UCR figures) and 505 claims paid for homicide. This ratio (roughly 2 claims paid for every 3 homicides reported) placed Pennsylvania 32<sup>nd</sup> in the country in ratio of homicide claims paid to number of homicides reported. However, of the 31 states that ranked higher than Pennsylvania, 20 had ratios greater than one; that is, they seemingly paid claims for more homicides than had occurred in their states. Some of this discrepancy is undoubtedly accounted for by different reporting time periods, and some by differing definitions of homicide between the two data collection sources. However, it is impossible to tell which states are reporting accurately, and where Pennsylvania ranks in relation to others. This is true of other crime types as well.

At the risk of further confusing this picture, researchers have attempted to establish the true number of potential claimants based on crime statistics. Parent, Auerbach and Carlson (1992) based their analysis on four factors regarding compensation: (1) the victim has to have been killed or injured severely enough to require medical treatment<sup>2</sup>; (2) the crime must be reported to law enforcement authorities; (3) the victim cannot have contributed to the incident by breaking the law him/herself; and (4) the victim must not have insurance. While the assumptions and numbers used by the authors may be questioned, their results showed that between one fourth and one half of all reported UCR Part I violent crimes (plus DWI fatalities and injuries and child abuse) involve victims eligible for compensation. Going through this exercise using Pennsylvania's reported murders, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults in 2005 suggests that

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<sup>2</sup> This assumes physical injury only, and does not consider eligibility for reimbursement for mental health counseling. See D. Parent, B. Auerbach, & K. Carlson, *Compensating Crime Victims: A Summary of Policies and Practices*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1992.

in that year VCAP received claims for about 17% of all eligible violent crimes. This estimate could be sharpened by using assumptions and data specific to Pennsylvania. In any case, while this particular number is unlikely to be very accurate, the exercise is instructive in that it demonstrates that comparing numbers of claims to the total number of crimes is overly simplistic.

Regarding the survey of service providers, it should be noted that these individuals are expressing their views and opinions regarding other groups' experiences, including those of victims and police officers. We did not have the resources to survey these other groups, and the results of our survey of service providers should be viewed in this light.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **Compensation Policies**

States have different restrictions on the allowable uses of victim compensation funds. The previously cited national assessment of compensation programs by Newmark et al. (2003) reviewed differences across states in terms of victim compensation rules and regulations. Table 1 summarizes some of the information from the report and compares this with Pennsylvania's regulations. This comparison suggests that Pennsylvania's compensation policies are similar to those of other states. Some states have no minimum amount for which they will compensate victims, and other states have limits lower than Pennsylvania's (while a few have higher limits). Some states have no payment caps, or higher caps than Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania has a more generous claim filing deadline (now two years) than most states.

Table 1. Comparison of Pennsylvania and Other States' Compensation Policies

<b>Claim Eligibility Criteria and Other Requirements</b>	<b>Pennsylvania's VCAP</b>	<b>Other States' Policies</b>
Types of expenses paid	Medical expenses, counseling, loss of earnings, loss of support, funeral expenses, stolen benefit cash, travel expenses, childcare, home healthcare, replacement services, relocation services, crime scene cleanup, forensic rape exams, emergency awards, and attorney's fees.	Typical expenses covered are: medical expenses, mental health counseling, lost wages, loss of support, funeral expenses. Most fees are paid to cover medical expenses.
Payer of last resort	Yes.	All states are payer of last resort.
Police reporting	Within 72 hours, unless good cause is shown.	Most states have a 72 hour limit.
Claim filing deadline	2 years after discovery of crime. For child victims, until the victim is 23 or until the statute of limitations has expired, whichever is greater	Most states allow claims to be filed within 1 year after discovery of a crime.
Contributory misconduct	Victim cannot have been involved in the crime for which s/he is applying for compensation.	States define contributory connection to crime differently.
Minimum losses	\$100 for victims under age 60. If 60 or older, no minimum requirement.	11 states have minimum losses, and these range from \$25 to \$200.
Payment caps	\$35,000. Counseling, crime scene cleanup and forensic rape exam expenses are over and above the \$35,000 maximum.	Average is \$35,000, which often includes counseling. Range is \$5,000 to unlimited.
Emergency awards	Yes, \$1,500 maximum.	41 states make emergency awards.

Source: Information on other states' policies is from Newmark, L., Bonderman, J., Smith, B., and Liner, E. B. (2003). *The national evaluation of state Victims of Crime Act Compensation and Assistance Programs: Trends and strategies for the future*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

### **Trends in Claims Received and Paid in Pennsylvania**

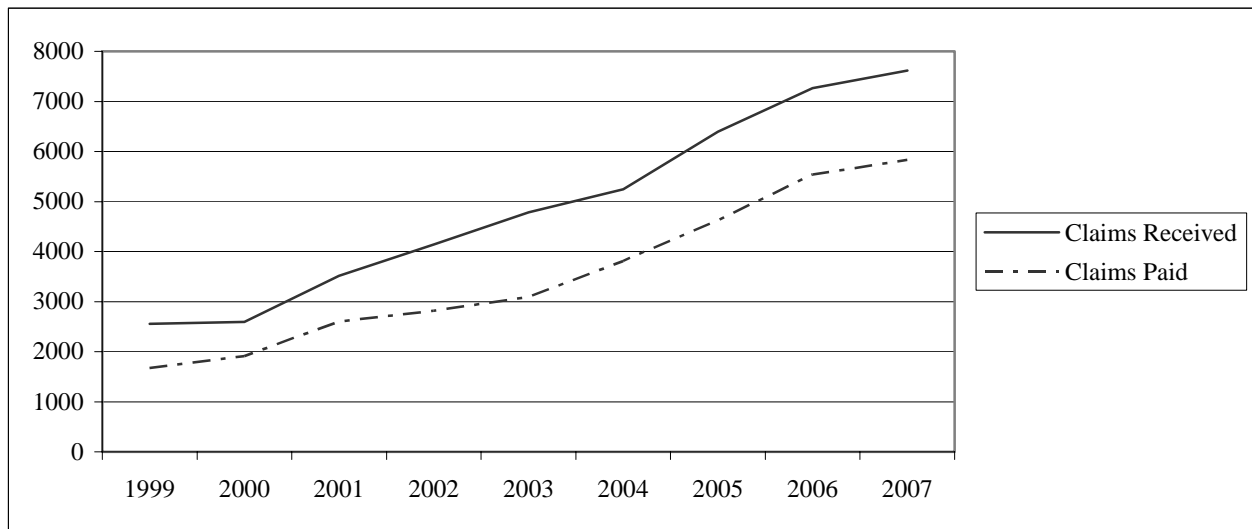
PCCD provided JRSA with a copy of the Dependable Access for Victimization Expenses (DAVE) database to explore patterns in utilization of the victim compensation program. The

database was obtained in October 2006, and contains claims beginning in 2002. We also used data found in annual reports published by PCCD.

Figure 1 shows claims received and paid for the last nine years. The number of claims received and paid grew steadily over this time period, with claims received almost tripling and claims paid more than tripling over this time period. From 2001 to 2006, claims received and paid increased by roughly the same rate (an average of 19% and 20% a year, respectively). In 2007, claims received and paid increased by 5% over 2006.

In FY2006, the average processing time for claims was just under 8.5 weeks (10.2 weeks if forensic rape exams are excluded). This is a significant drop in processing time from years past: in FY2005, for example, the corresponding average times were 10.4 weeks and 12.8 weeks. These processing times are well below the 90-150 days recommended by OVC<sup>3</sup>, and well below the median of 18 weeks found in the Urban Institute's national evaluation.

Figure 1. Claims Received and Paid: FY1999-FY2007



Source: Annual reports published by PCCD Office of Victims' Services

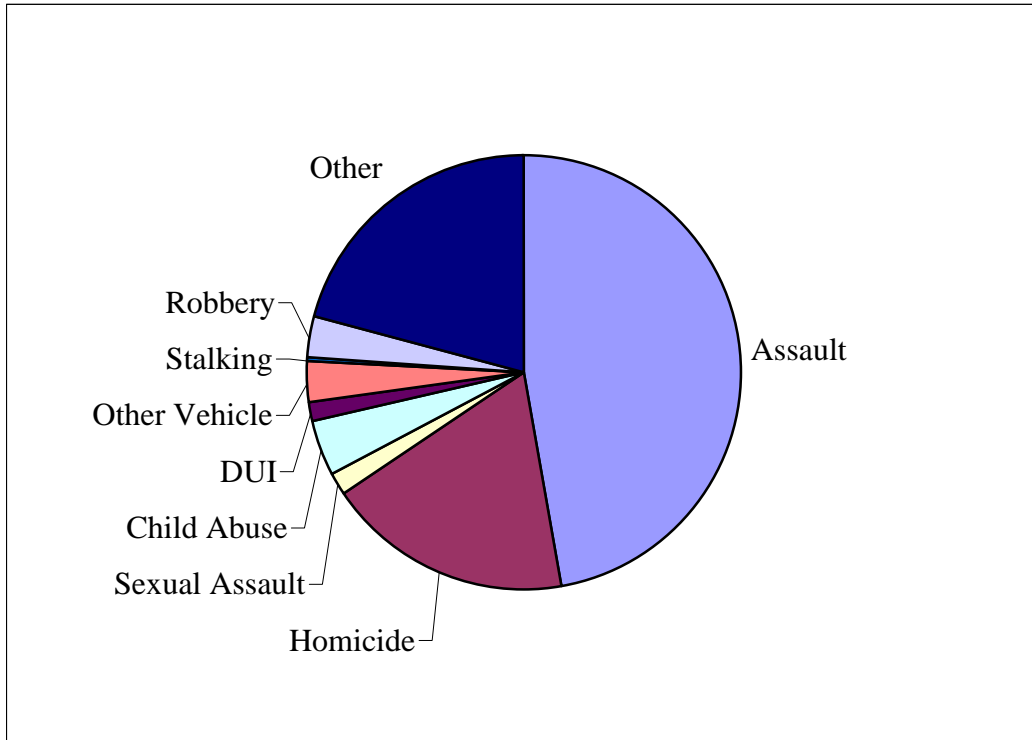
<sup>3</sup> Office for Victims of Crime. (1998). *New Directions from the Field: Victims Rights and Services for the 21st Century-Crime Victim's Compensation*. Washington, DC: Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

## **Comparison With National Data**

To compare Pennsylvania to the nation as a whole, JRSA used compensation data published by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). OVC maintains annual figures from the states regarding VOCA allocations, VOCA payments, number of new claims received, number of claims approved as eligible for compensation, number of claims denied as ineligible or closed, payments made by crime category, and total expenses paid by service (e.g., medical expense).

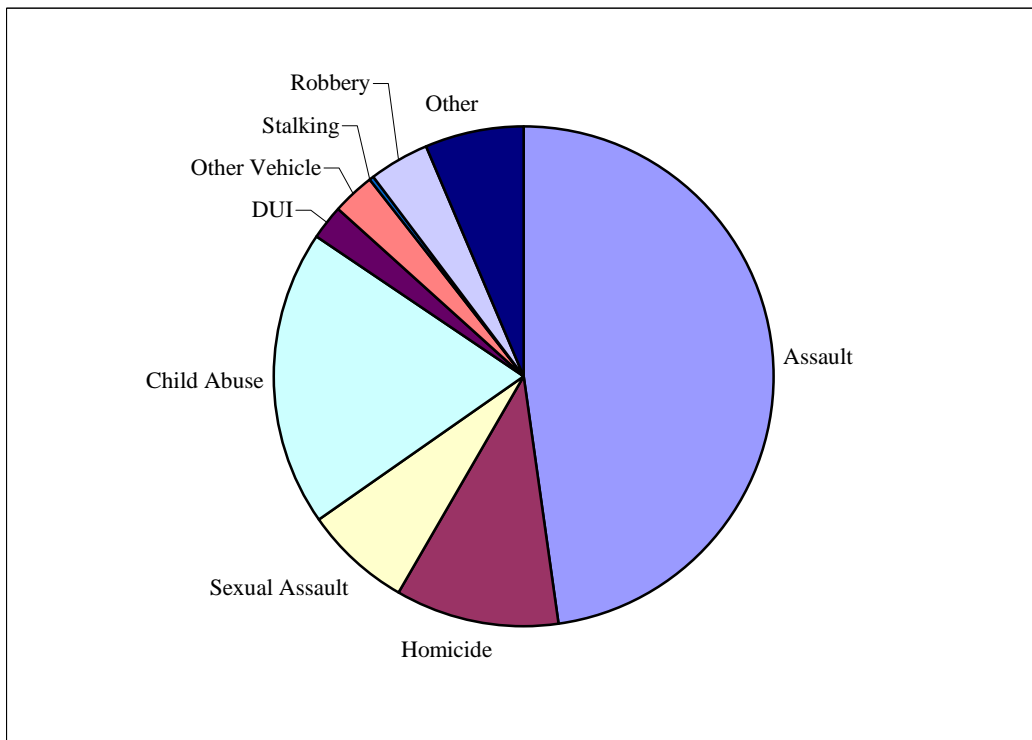
Figures 2 and 3 show, respectively, the claims paid by Pennsylvania and the nation as a whole for the various types of offenses for which the claims were filed. (These data are for FY2005, the most recent year for which national data were available.) In both Pennsylvania and the nation as a whole, assaults account for the largest number of claims paid (assaults are also the most frequent category of felony offenses reported to police), and the proportion of paid claims that were paid for assault in Pennsylvania and nationally is virtually the same (47% vs. 48%). The most obvious difference between the figures is in the category of child abuse, which accounts for 19% of claims paid nationally but only 4% of claims paid in Pennsylvania. As noted earlier, this difference may be due to reporting anomalies rather than to true differences between Pennsylvania and other states. Comparison of Figures 2 and 3 also shows that Pennsylvania appears to pay a greater proportion of claims for homicide than the national proportion, and a lower proportion of sexual assault claims (again, this is assuming that forensic rape exams are not mistakenly included in states' claim counts).

Figure 2. Claims Paid By Crime Type: PA, State FY2005



Source: Annual report published by PCCD Office of Victims' Services

Figure 3. Claims Paid By Crime Type: U.S., Federal FY2005



Source: Office for Victims of Crime VOCA Nationwide Performance Report Summary for FY2005

Figure 4 contrasts the major types of expenses that were paid in Pennsylvania and the nation as a whole for 2006. For the most part, the proportions of the various types of expenses are largely equivalent: Medical expenses for Pennsylvania are slightly less than for the nation as a whole, whereas funeral expenses and loss of earnings and support are slightly higher. The proportion of expenses paid for forensic rape exams in Pennsylvania was double that of the country as a whole, while the proportion of counseling expenses paid in Pennsylvania was less than half that of the nation as a whole (although both categories account for small proportions of overall expenses paid).

In sum, it is difficult, given the nature of the current national data, to determine where Pennsylvania's compensation practices stand compared with those of other states. However, it is clear that the number of claims filed and paid have increased steadily over the last nine years. It is also clear that only a small percentage of eligible victims seek compensation in Pennsylvania, as is true throughout the country, although how Pennsylvania ranks compared to other states in this regard is difficult to fathom. Further investigation is needed to determine whether apparent differences in claims paid for child abuse and sexual assault represent real differences and, if so, why this might be.

### **Characteristics of Pennsylvania Claimants**

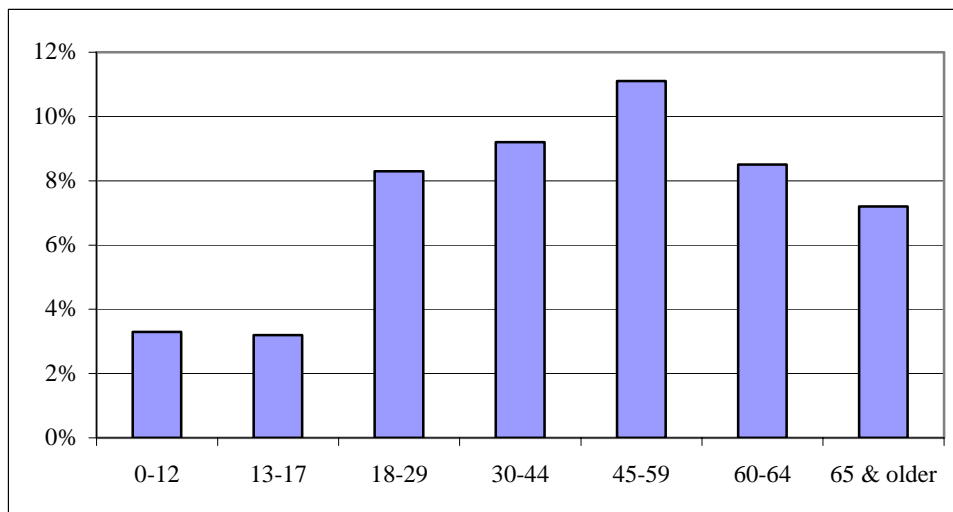
Over the time period from January 2002 – October 2006, females comprised 55% of claimants in Pennsylvania (also true in FY2006). Over that time, males' claims were denied at almost twice the rate of females' (10% vs. 6%). National data suggest that men are more likely to be victims of violent crime than women, with the exception of sexual assault. The fact that women are more likely to file claims may be due to the emphasis placed on providing services to

sexual assault victims. However, VCAP may want to explore working with men to both increase the number of claims filed and decrease the number denied.

Over the period examined, about 58% of claims were filed by whites, 33% by blacks, and the rest by other races. There were no differences in the proportion of claims approved for payment by race. However, it is difficult to assess Hispanic ethnicity in these data, and how the proportions of claims filed and approved by victims who speak Spanish only compare to those of English-speaking victims.

Figure 5 shows the proportion of claims denied by age group. The lowest proportions of claims denied are for youth under 18. Adults between 18 and 59 have relatively high proportions of claims denied, with denials peaking in the 49-59-year age group. The proportion of denials is somewhat lower in adults 60 and older. These age differences may reflect the emphasis placed by victim service providers on helping and working with parents of young victims or with older victims, or they may reflect the fact that the youngest and oldest victims are less likely to have been involved in illegal activity that may have caused the crime to happen.

Figure 5. Proportion of Claims Denied by Age: FY2002-FY2005



Source: DAVE database

## Victim Response Cards

PCCD's Office of Victims' Services provides response cards to victims who receive compensation services. The response card asks six questions as well as for contact information if victims would like a supervisor from VCAP to contact them. PCCD provided JRSA with hard copies of the cards with any contact information deleted. JRSA entered these data into computer files for analysis. A total of 984 feedback cards were coded, with about half from 2007 and half from earlier years (mostly 2006).

Table 2 summarizes victims' responses to the questions on the response cards. From 2006 to 2007 the form changed. Specifically, a compound question on the 2006 form was split into two questions on the 2007 form: "Do you want to discuss any unsatisfactory services with us?" and "Do you have any comments concerning the Victims Compensation Assistance Program you want to tell us about?" For these two questions, Table 2 shows only the responses obtained in 2007.

Table 2. VCAP Response Card Responses

<b>Question</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Valid Responses</b>
Contacted VCAP staff?	76%	24%	961
Satisfied with service received?	94%	6%	961
Satisfied with compensation process?	92%	8%	964
Want to discuss unsatisfactory services?	9%	91%	246
Do you have any comments?	30%	70%	245
Interested in talking publicly?	42%	58%	243

As the table shows, the overwhelming majority of victims were satisfied with the compensation process and the service they received from the VCAP staff. Although no actual space is provided on the form for comments, many victims wrote in comments in response to the

question asking whether they had any. These comments are provided in the table in Appendix C, with the names of specific staff members who were mentioned by victims removed.

## **Victim Service Providers' Survey**

### *Agency and Respondent Information*

As noted previously, JRSA conducted a survey of the state's victim service providers. A total of 147 individuals completed the online survey, and an additional 13 individuals responded to an identical version of the questionnaire via fax. The 160 responses represent a response rate of 66%.

The vast majority of respondents (84%) fell into one of three categories: executive directors or program directors (41%); victim/witness coordinators (29%); and victim advocates or liaisons (14%). The remainder of respondents identified themselves as professionals in the legal field (7%), police (4%), counselors (2%), or "other" (3%). Most (87%) respondents had been working in the field for three years or more, and most were employees of county governments, shelters, and victim advocacy programs.

The 160 respondents represented at least 51 of the state's 67 counties (there were 28 respondents who did not identify their agency). The 16 missing counties are fairly small, and all but one of them have a population of fewer than 100,000.<sup>4</sup>

When respondents were asked how many of the staff in their agencies were aware of the compensation services for which victims might be eligible, 45% indicated that all of their staff were knowledgeable about victim compensation services, and another 40% reported that half or more were familiar with these services.

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<sup>4</sup> The missing counties are: Adams, Armstrong, Bedford, Cameron, Carbon, Columbia, Fayette, Forest, Huntingdon, Juniata, McKean, Somerset, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, and Wayne.

The state Office of Victims' Services (OVS), in coordination with the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Institute, offers several trainings per year to victim service professionals that count toward PCCD's required annual training hours. When asked about training, respondents reported that nearly all (92%) agencies have at least one person from their staff who has attended at least one training session on victim compensation in the past two years.

When asked about the types of compensation information available at their agencies, most respondents reported that their agencies have literature available as well as a staff person who informs victims about services. Not as many agencies have applications for compensation at the agency; and about half of the agencies direct victims to a Web site for more information. Many respondents indicated that an informational letter is sent to the victim's home as soon as a police report is filed if the agency suspects that the victim could be eligible for compensation. Other respondents noted the availability of a 24-hour helpline that educates callers about the victim compensation program. Among agencies that do not assist victims in filing claims, many refer victims to community agencies that can help them to complete the necessary forms.

We asked victim service professionals whether they used DAVE; among the 142 responses to this question, just over half (51%) said that they did. The main reason reported for not using the system was that they had not yet received training on how to use it. Other common comments were: lack of Internet access in the agency, lack of need (i.e., their office does not file claims), and that they are too busy completing other tasks.

#### *Information Sources for Victim Compensation*

A principal concern among crime victim compensation program administrators is how best to inform violent crime victims that they could be eligible for victim compensation. Lack of awareness about compensation services is a common explanation for underutilization of services.

Thus the survey asked victim service professionals to rank the top five most common information sources where they believe victims in their jurisdictions learn about victim compensation services. We offered eleven possible information sources from which respondents were asked to choose: attorneys, clergy, prosecutors' offices, friends and family, hospitals, judges, law enforcement officers, funeral homes, coroner's offices, Internet searches, and victim service agencies.

Respondents indicated that victim service agencies are by far the primary means by which victims learn about compensation; almost 70% of respondents ranked them first. Prosecutors were ranked first by 34% of respondents, and ranked second by an additional 31%. Law enforcement was ranked first by 18% of respondents, and second by an additional 30%. While these sources of information were by far the ones most often ranked in the top three, other information sources ranked in the top three included hospitals (27%), attorneys (21%), and funeral homes (18%). Information sources other than those provided that were mentioned by respondents included juvenile probation departments, other social service providers, posters, billboards, listings in the phonebook, and doctors' and dentists' offices.

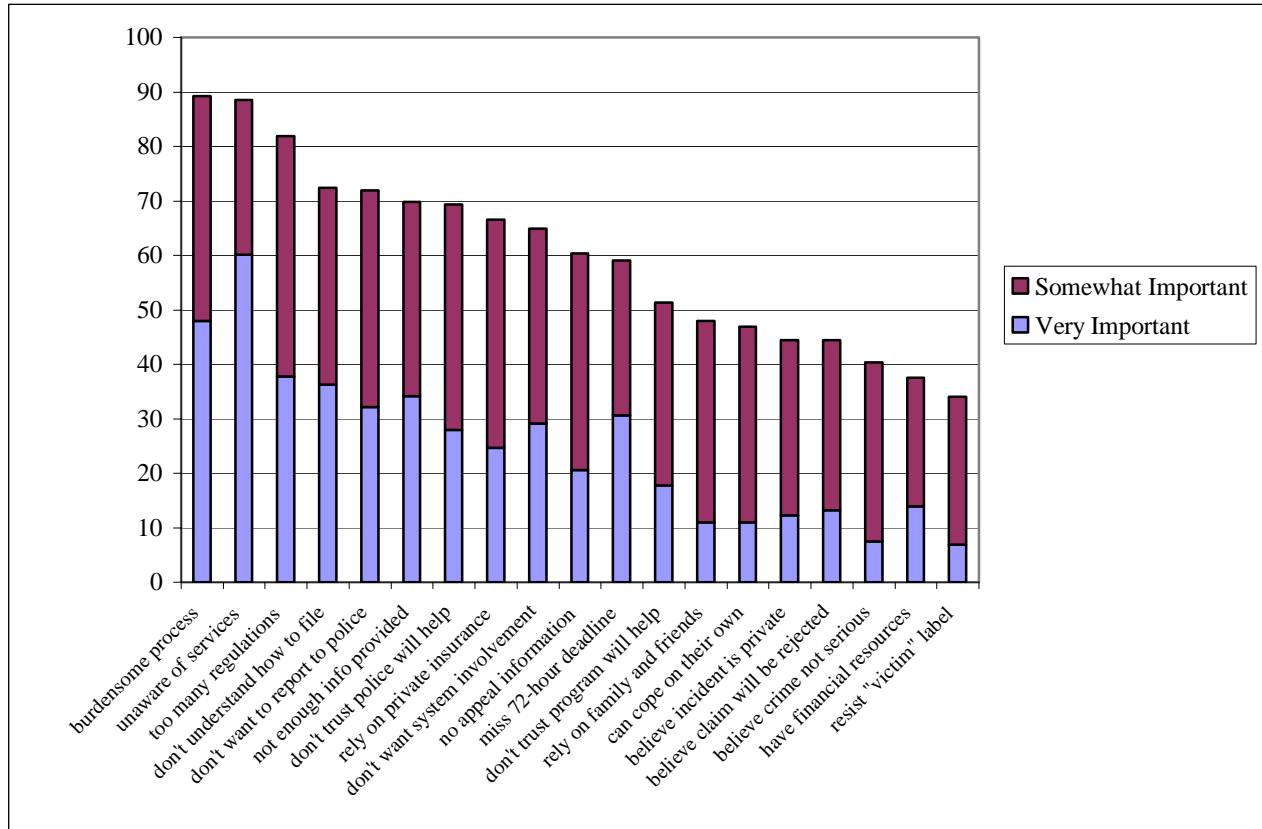
#### *Use of Victim Compensation Services*

Previous studies have identified a number of factors that appear to discourage use of victim services in general and victim compensation in particular. The survey identified 19 factors that might keep eligible clients from seeking compensation, and asked respondents to indicate how important they thought each factor was in limiting victims' use of compensation services in their area. Figure 6 shows the responses to this question ordered from most to least important. The factors rated as most important were that the process for filing claims is overly burdensome for victims, that victims were unaware of the availability of compensation services, and that there

are too many regulations governing the types of claims that can be approved. The factors rated as least important include: clients resist being labeled as victims, victims have enough financial resources to compensate for their losses, and victims believe that the crime is not serious enough to justify a report. In general, factors related to the process of filing claims were rated as being more important, while factors related to victims' beliefs were viewed as less important.

Respondents were provided with an "other" category to list additional reasons that eligible claimants might not file a claim in addition to the ones listed on the survey. The most commonly suggested reason was that the claim filing process is too complicated and burdensome for victims. Others commented that victims are not aware of the time limitations on reporting a crime until it is too late, or that they cannot assemble the necessary paperwork in time to file a claim. Another common remark was that victims do not have the money to pay "up-front" for services they require (e.g., doctor visits, funeral expenses), and that the period between filing and compensation is excessive.

Figure 6. Respondents' Ratings of Factors That Discourage Use of Compensation



Another impediment that victim service professionals mentioned was the language barrier for non-English speaking victims who wish to file a claim. According to Crime Victims Compensation (CVC) documents, only the PCCD CVC brochure and the *Financial Help for Victims* poster are available in English and Spanish. All other materials, including the claim forms, are printed only in English.

In summary, according to survey respondents, victims appear to be disinclined to seek compensation for many of the same reasons identified in studies elsewhere. Lack of awareness of the availability of compensation services, along with a burdensome process, were seen as most important in limiting victims' use of compensation services.

### *Role of Law Enforcement*

As they do in most states, the police play a vital role in educating victims about possible services in Pennsylvania, including compensation. As noted previously, respondents ranked police as common sources of information about compensation. In order to explore respondents' assessments of the role of the police, the survey asked about the importance of six different factors, identified in the literature, in influencing law enforcement officers' likelihood of informing victims about compensation services. For each factor, respondents were asked to rate the importance of its role in determining whether officers in their jurisdiction informed victims of services.

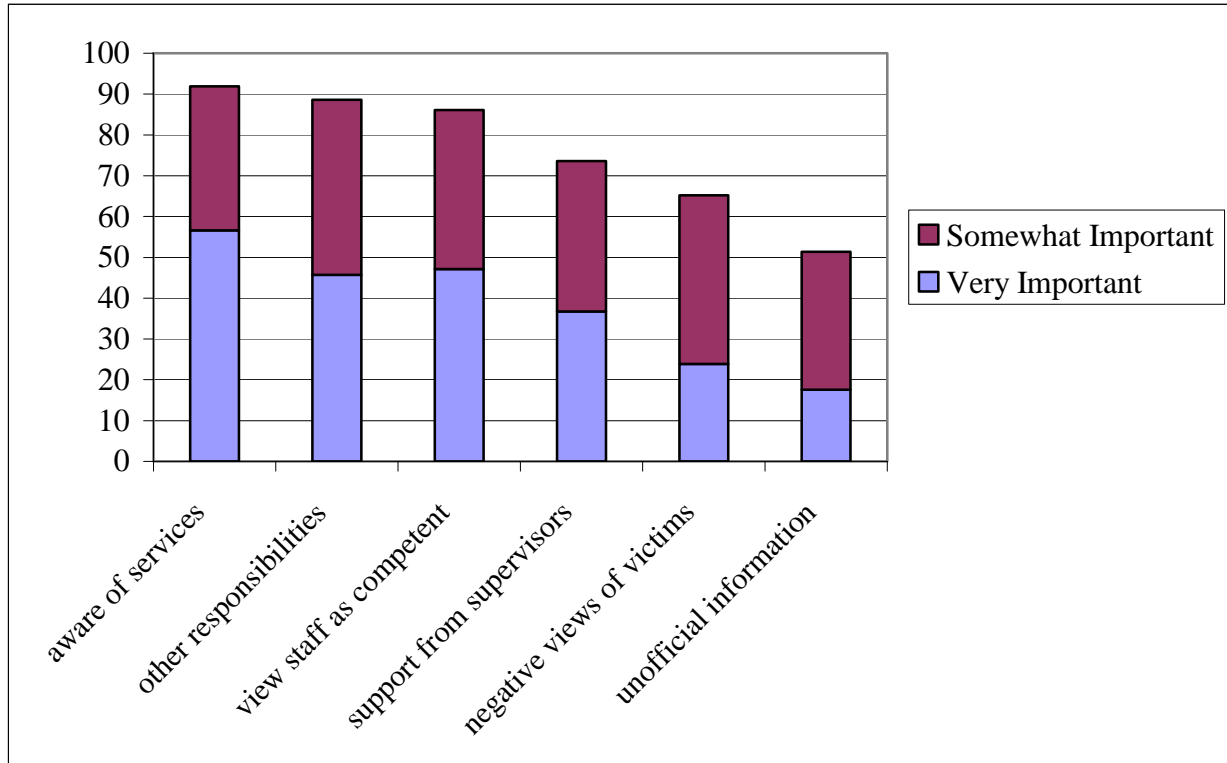
Figure 7 summarizes the responses to these questions. For five of the six factors, a majority of respondents indicated that they thought the factor was "somewhat" or "very" important. The only factor that did not fall into one of these two categories was the possibility that police receive information about the program from unofficial sources like the media or informal conversations with other officers. Not surprisingly, the most important factor was thought to be awareness on the part of the officer of the program itself. The vast majority of respondents also believed that other responsibilities that prevent the officer from informing the victim about compensation services was an important factor, as was the officer's view of the victim services staff as competent.

The final section of the survey asked respondents to suggest improvements for the victim compensation program. Responses to this question included:

- Simplify eligibility requirements and paperwork;
- Shorten the reimbursement process;

- Remove bureaucratic procedures that undermine the ability for victim service agencies to help victims;

Figure 7. Service Providers' Opinions Regarding Factors Influencing Police Likelihood of Informing Victims About Compensation



- Train law enforcement on victim compensation and hold them accountable for providing necessary information to victims;
- Educate victim services staff on requirements for handling victims' claims; and
- Educate staff in agencies beyond law enforcement to ensure that victims find out about victim compensation.

*Summary*

The survey findings suggest a few areas in which changes might improve the use of services. Respondents indicated that their staffs were familiar with victim compensation services,

but two in five reported that only half of their staff was familiar with such services. We did not ask if the staff members who needed to be familiar with such services are, but the overall response suggests the possibility that efforts (such as training, for example) be increased to educate all staff and agencies that deal with victims about the VCAP program. Since most respondents indicated that someone from their agencies had attended training on victim compensation in the last two years, perhaps those individuals could be given the responsibility and materials to train others in their agencies.

Rankings of information sources suggest that at least in respondents' views, information about compensation is coming from where one might expect: service provider agencies, the police, and prosecutors. One issue for further exploration is whether additional outreach should be undertaken for sources that were not ranked highly, such as the clergy.

With regard to reasons for why victims might not avail themselves of compensation services, respondents' ratings were in agreement with factors identified in other studies of the use of victims' services. Respondents felt that victims did not use services because they were unaware of them, and that the process for filing a claim was burdensome and involved too many regulations regarding how claims can be filed. (At the same time, it should be noted that as Table 1 shows, Pennsylvania's regulations do not appear to be appreciably different from those of other states.)

Among the other suggestions made, the idea of translating all forms into Spanish is a reasonable suggestion that is worth pursuing. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, over a million Pennsylvania residents now speak a language other than English at home, with Hispanics accounting for over half that number.

Respondents felt that law enforcement officers' awareness of the types of compensation services available is a key factor affecting the likelihood that they will inform victims of services. This suggests that more training for law enforcement officers on the types and importance of these services might help to increase use of such services. Pennsylvania has the largest number of law enforcement agencies in the country, and is among the highest in number of sworn officers, with 22,430. Ensuring that all of these agencies and officers have accurate information about victim services is a daunting task, but one that might pay dividends in increased use of these services. The factor rated the second most important by respondents was that law enforcement officers are often pressed with other responsibilities and have no time to provide compensation information. If this is indeed the case, agencies might do well to institute alternative methods for notifying victims regarding compensation services, and not rely solely on law enforcement officers to perform this function.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The general consensus from the literature is that more victims do not take advantage of compensation services because they are not aware of them. The National Center for Victims of Crime, for example, notes that only 7% of crime victims who call their national Helpline report that they knew about victim compensation before the call.<sup>5</sup> The Center for Opinion Research (2003), Sims, Yost and Abbott (2006), and the Urban Institute's national evaluation, which included Pennsylvania as one of the states targeted for intensive study, all confirm this conclusion as it applies to Pennsylvania's crime victims.

The findings from our survey of victim service professionals also support this notion. Awareness of services was rated the second most important factor related to victims' use of

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<sup>5</sup> S. Herman & M. Waul, *Repairing the Harm: A New Vision for Crime Victim Compensation in America*. Washington, DC: National Center for Victims of Crime, 2004.

compensation services, and in fact received more “very important” ratings than any other factor. Survey respondents indicated that most victims find out about compensation through victim service agencies, prosecutors, and law enforcement, which are also the most common sources cited in other studies of compensation.

The Urban Institute’s national evaluation, along with other studies and publications, offer a number of recommendations for improving outreach to victims and increasing the number of claimants, including the use of 24-hour hotlines; billboards; promotional materials in non-traditional venues, such as doctors’ and dentists’ offices; close coordination between victim compensation and victim assistance; and use of the Internet, to name a few.

The other suggestion offered in the literature is increasing outreach to specific groups, such as Hispanics or older victims. Ensuring that forms are in Spanish and that staff who speak Spanish are available in programs that serve areas with large numbers of Hispanic residents seem like reasonable steps to take in Pennsylvania. The present study found that females seem to be more likely to file claims than males, a finding also reported in the national evaluation. As noted previously, greater outreach to male victims might be worth exploring, although observed gender differences may simply be due to compensation regulations or the types of crimes for which compensation can be received. Claims filed by men are also more likely to be denied, but again, this may be due to compensation regulations (e.g., claims by men being more likely to be denied due to contributory misconduct). No significant racial differences were noted in the study: About one third of claims filed in Pennsylvania were filed by African-Americans, and data from crime victimization surveys suggest that African-Americans make up about this same proportion of victims.

PCCD's Office of Victims' Services (OVS) has implemented a variety of outreach efforts to increase awareness of compensation among victims and the professionals who work with them. The OVS provides extensive training and outreach to victim service agencies, prosecutors and law enforcement officers. Compensation training is required for most victim service agencies and is provided biannually at their required orientation program. In addition, compensation training is provided in person throughout the state and online approximately every three weeks. All victim advocates in district attorneys' offices are required to attend compensation training within six months of hire and then additional training each year. For law enforcement, the OVS writes, produces, and frequently updates the training curriculum that every state trooper and local police officer must attend upon hire. In addition, the OVS provides training throughout the state to police officers on compensation for victims and for themselves as "first responders." The OVS also targets other individuals or agencies that victims are likely to come into contact with, such as probation officers (training is provided to all new officers), hospital staff, funeral directors, legislative staff, counselors, community groups and many others.

In addition to trainings, many materials have been created and technology enhancements made to further reach out to underserved populations. The OVS has the claim form and many materials available in Spanish and has two native Spanish-speakers on staff. For over 170 other languages, the OVS has *Language Line*<sup>®</sup> which provides live and immediate translation services over the telephone. The PCCD Web site has been enhanced to convert immediately to four other languages if the user desires. For the visually impaired, the OVS has claim forms and other materials in large print. For the blind, claim forms and pamphlets are available in Braille. All OVS staff are required to attend training that includes working with victims from underserved populations. The OVS has also partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Aging to increase

awareness of the victim compensation program. Likewise, OVS created posters, a fact sheet and other materials on child abuse that were distributed to the Children and Youth Departments and victim advocates across the state. Recognizing that many children are victimized at school, the program has also provided outreach to school counselors. Finally, the OVS serves on the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania (formerly known as Pennsylvania Protection and Advocacy) and provides training and other outreach to providers of services to the disabled.

In its *New Directions from the Field* report, OVC suggests that all state compensation programs should be evaluated on a regular basis to determine if there are barriers to compensation that should be removed and if the programs' outreach and services are effective. However, OVC offers no guidance as to how a state should go about this evaluation process. Clearly, Pennsylvania has been collecting some of the data that would be necessary to carry out evaluation on an ongoing basis, and the existence of the DAVE database makes retrieval and analysis of the data much more straightforward. Performance measures, such as claim processing time, can be tracked over time and across jurisdictions on an ongoing basis. However, putting these measures into some sort of context, as illustrated earlier, is a daunting challenge.

As noted at the outset of this report, in their solicitation for this project PCCD cited, as evidence of underuse of compensation services, comparison of number of claimants with total number of eligible crimes reported, as well as comparison of Pennsylvania and other states on number of claims paid and filed for specific crime types. As we have demonstrated here, making these sorts of comparisons is tricky at best. Comparing Pennsylvania with national data, as was done here, seems safer, since differences due to individual states' regulations and reporting practices are minimized when all states are combined (although the states with the largest numbers of claims, like California and Texas, can significantly impact some categories of

national data). Our comparison of Pennsylvania with the rest of the country shows that Pennsylvania pays proportionally fewer claims for child abuse and sexual assault, and pays a proportionally lower dollar amount for counseling, than the nation as a whole. This confirms the analysis conducted by the Urban Institute in its national evaluation using data from 2001. Only 1% of all claims paid in Pennsylvania that year were for sexual assault, while the national median was 3% and the national average was 5%. In addition, only 2% of Pennsylvania's claims paid were for child abuse, while the national median was 5% and the national average was 8%. Clearly, whatever factors are underlying these differences have been going on for quite some time. The national comparisons suggest that PCCD should seek explanations for these observed differences.

An alternative to these national comparisons that PCCD might consider for putting their numbers in context would be to compare Pennsylvania to a handful of other states carefully chosen to match Pennsylvania on a number of key criteria, such as violent crime rate, degree of urbanicity, and racial and ethnic composition of population. It would then be possible to obtain data directly from these states, and to develop the detailed understanding of their compensation and data reporting policies and procedures required to properly interpret the data received. These more valid comparisons would allow Pennsylvania to properly put its own data into perspective.

Similarly, working toward improving the proportion of crime victims who receive compensation is a worthy performance goal. However, as discussed earlier, determining precisely (or even reasonably accurately) what that number is can be a difficult task. It would be worth PCCD's time, if they are going to view their claims data in this context, to review the assumptions discussed earlier in this report, and see what other factors come into play in

Pennsylvania that might allow for greater accuracy in estimating the target population for compensation.<sup>6</sup>

One useful way to gauge program performance is to compare the characteristics of claimants with those of Pennsylvania victims in general. PCCD apparently commissioned statewide victimization surveys in 1996 and 1999, but we could find no more recent data than this. It is possible that crime victims in Pennsylvania are different from those in the rest of the nation, and a state-specific victimization survey would get at this information. In addition, a victimization survey would provide information on whether victims were informed about assistance and compensation services, by whom, and reasons that they did not file a claim.

Some of the information required to more accurately assess the number of potential claimants, such as knowing whether victims have insurance or suffered medical expenses as a result of their victimization, could be obtained from a statewide victimization survey. Another method, specifically mentioned by OVC in its *New Directions* report as a tool for gauging program performance, is the use of customer satisfaction surveys. The Response Card used by PCCD is a good beginning, and shows that victims are overwhelmingly positive about the VCAP program. The Response Card is necessarily brief, however, and cannot get into details about specific aspects of the compensation process. PCCD's Office of Victims' Services has participated in an annual omnibus statewide survey conducted by the Center for Survey Research through Penn State University. This population-based telephone survey research allows the program to see what populations (by demographic characteristics) need more outreach and to address the leading causes for non-filing. JRSA has not seen the survey or its findings, but obtaining specific and detailed information on a regular basis regarding how victims were

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<sup>6</sup> For example, using denial reasons to determine the proportion of crimes in which the victim is culpable, or obtaining estimates of the proportion of Pennsylvanians who have private insurance.

informed about services, their experience with completing forms, and their suggestions for improvement would certainly be helpful to PCCD in continuing to improve the VCAP program.

Regarding the Response Card, we would recommend that PCCD consider clarifying the wording of the first two questions, since it is not clear that respondents realize that the questions refer to VCAP staff at PCCD rather than local program staff. This is evidenced by the fact that although 24% of respondents said that they had not contacted the VCAP program staff in Harrisburg (in response to Question 1), these same respondents answered Question 2, which refers to satisfaction with the VCAP program staff. These respondents are not distinguishing between local program staff and staff at PCCD. If the distinction is important, then the wording of the questions should be changed.

The victim service professionals in our survey expressed the opinion that the compensation process was burdensome and that victims did not understand it. When they talked to program administrators as part of their national evaluation, the Urban Institute learned that most successful programs do more than simply provide compensation forms to victims. Successful programs work closely with victims to complete compensation forms, help them sort through receipts, obtain additional information directly from doctors and insurers, and verify expenses. This point was made forcefully in an internal report produced for PCCD that examined the state's Victims of Juvenile Offenders (VOJO) program.<sup>7</sup> Based on a survey of VOJO-funded advocates, along with site visits and reviews of data, the consultants who did the study concluded that VOJO programs need to work with clients to complete the compensation claims forms, and not just hand out or mail the forms to victims with no follow-up. Advocates expressed their

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<sup>7</sup> K. Hoffman & M. Reich, *VOJO and Victims Compensation: What's the Problem?* Internal Document, PCCD, undated.

belief that their clients found the forms difficult to complete, and would often not complete them unless assistance was provided.

Findings from the national evaluation contradict these notions to some extent. The Urban Institute surveyed claimants in six states (including Pennsylvania). About half of the claimants surveyed reported receiving assistance with the claim process, most often by victim service providers. Friends and relatives were a more common source of assistance than the police or compensation program staff. However, while close to half the claimants reported receiving no help with the process, few claimants reported needing help they did not receive. Moreover, nearly all claimants felt that the application was easy to fill out and not too time-consuming, but over one quarter felt the documentation requirements were burdensome. One explanation for this apparent discrepancy may be that victims who find the forms difficult to fill out and the process difficult to understand do not end up filing claims. In any case, PCCD should continue their ongoing efforts to simplify forms and provide assistance to victims in completing them.

The findings of our analyses, along with those of previous studies, suggest a number of areas for PCCD to explore further in their understanding of the factors that affect victim compensation. Pennsylvania has many advantages in this regard, including the DAVE database, an active training program, and dedicated and knowledgeable staff at PCCD. One of the challenges will be to continue to devise methods and measures that will allow for ongoing monitoring and assessment that will lead to program improvement.

## **APPENDIX A: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Blomberg, T. G., Waldo, G. P., and Bullock, C. A. (1989). An assessment of victim service needs. *Evaluation Review*, 13(6): 598-627.

The purpose of this article is to evaluate crime victim witness services to develop a model for a victim intake center in Jacksonville, FL. The authors conducted different research strategies such as informal interviewing, structured interviewing, documentary analysis and statistical analysis in order to 1) determine the number of crimes that occur and estimate the number of victims who would require assistance in Jacksonville and 2) conduct a field assessment of the existing agencies providing crime victim services in Jacksonville. In their findings, the authors projected that the number of victims would increase, especially elderly victims, and that the number of victims using the service would increase over time. The authors recommend using a similar framework in the development of victim witness services to answer the specific needs of the victims in the community as a result of the success of Jacksonville's Victim Intake Center innovation.

Brickman, E. (2002). *Development of a national study of victim needs and assistance*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.

Brickman's study is based on data collected by a telephone survey of crime victims, contextual analysis, focus groups, and interviews. The study examines both the psychological and material needs of crime victims and whether these needs are being met. Brickman reports several significant findings related to material needs and victim compensation. The study finds that only 21% of people who incur an out-of-pocket expense know about the state victim compensation program. Forty-four percent of those who know about victim compensation heard about it from a victim's assistance program or the police. Only 1.9% of the total number of people surveyed filled out an application for victim's compensation. The study also finds that both psychological and material needs of crime victims are often met by informal support networks--the exception to this being victims of domestic violence.

Brooks, J. (1973). Compensating victims of crime: The recommendations of program administrators. *Law and Society Review*, 7(3): 445-472.

This article offers suggestions and guidelines to jurisdictions that will be adopting victim compensation programs. Brooks examines a variety of factors in program administration including: choosing an agency to administer the program; the necessity, process, and meeting details for compensation boards; maximum payments; costs; and administration programs. Brooks finds that communicating the existence of crime victim compensation is a key problem in administering the compensation programs. He states that efforts need to be made on two fronts to improve awareness. First, the general public needs to be better informed of compensation programs. Second, crime victims in particular need to be informed of their eligibility for compensation. Brooks says that both the police and physicians/hospitals can aid in the latter.

Brown, M. S. (1980). Wisconsin's victim compensation program. *Judicature*, 63(10): 497-500.

This article describes Wisconsin's victim compensation program as of 1980. In particular it explains how the program works and what changes could be made. Suggestions for improving the program include: eliminating the minimum loss requirement of \$200 and expanding the definition of victim to include the victim's spouse or children in the event of the victim's death. Publicity about the program and its relationship to the number of applications submitted is briefly discussed.

Center for Opinion Research. (2003). *Use, nonuse, and efficiency of Pennsylvania's victim services programs: Final report*. Millersville: Author.

The Center for Opinion Research examined the use of victim services in Pennsylvania by compiling a statewide inventory of victim services and conducting interviews with clients in eight victim service agencies in Pennsylvania. Survey data were also collected from victims who chose not to use services. Results suggest that nonuse of services was largely the result of a lack of awareness about programs (47%) or the use of other resources like family and friends (49%). Respondents also reported not needing any help (48%) or being able to cope on their own (45%) as reasons for not using victim services.

Danis, F. S. (2003). Domestic violence and crime victim compensation. *Violence Against Women*, 9(3): 374-390.

Danis analyzes state data from the United States Office for Victims of Crime and finds that over half of people who received services from victims' assistance programs are victims of domestic violence. Yet she also finds that only 13.4% of victim compensation awards are made to victims of domestic violence. She finds a wide variation between states in the both the percentage of domestic violence victims using victims' services and the percentage of domestic violence victims receiving compensation awards. Tennessee (73.31%) and Connecticut (72.31%) provide victim services to the highest percentage of domestic violence victims; and the District of Columbia (4.38%) and Wyoming (17.70%) provide the lowest. Hawaii (43.95%) and Nebraska (32.08%) pay the highest percentage of compensation claims to victims of domestic violence, while Maryland (0.37%) and Pennsylvania (0.65%) pay the lowest. Danis states that more research needs to be conducted in the area of victim compensation and domestic violence. She offers a few ideas as to why the percentage of domestic violence victims receiving compensation is so low, including victim eligibility and structural barriers (e.g., documentation).

Derene, S. (2005). *Crime victims fund report: Past, present, and future*. Washington, DC: National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators.

This report reviews the current and projected conditions of the Crime Victims Fund (the Fund). The report details the financial background and expenditures of the Fund. Specifically, the report explains that the large increase in deposits resulted from 12 corporate defendants that paid fines of \$100 million or more. Because of these large deposits the Fund has been able to double the number of subgrants awarded to state

victim assistance and compensation agencies. Since large corporate defendant fines cannot be counted on to sustain the Fund's level, three suggestions are put forward: restructure the fund allocations; increase deposits by improving the collection of criminal debts; and, if necessary, supplement deposits with fines obtained from federal civil or administrative sources.

Fritsch, E. J., Caeti, T. J., Tobolowsky, P. M., and Taylor, R. W. (2004). Police referrals of crime victims to compensation sources: An empirical analysis of attitudinal and structural impediments. *Police Quarterly*, 7(3): 372-393.

Fritsch et al. surveyed Texas law enforcement officers about factors that determine if the officers will inform a victim about the victim compensation program. The study found that eight variables predict the frequency with which law enforcement officers inform victims of compensation programs in Texas: (1) law enforcement officers are not pressed with too many other responsibilities and thus have time to provide this information; (2) they receive support from supervisors for making victims aware of compensation programs; (3) they do not hold a negative view of the victim; (4) they themselves are aware of the program; (5) they work in larger police departments; (6) they view the victim advocate/liaison as competent; (7) they receive information on the program from nonofficial sources outside the police department (media, informal conversations with other police officers); and (8) officers who have received college credits are more likely to inform victims. The authors conclude that funds used for officer training in this area should be redirected toward in-service training in victimology to help officers overcome any negative perceptions about victims.

Greer, D. S. (1994). A transatlantic perspective on the compensation of crime victims in the United States. *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, 85(2): 333-401.

Greer compares crime victim compensation programs in the United States and Britain. He finds that the programs are relatively similar with some exceptions. Differences between the British and U.S. systems include: 1) the British program can award for pain and suffering; 2) the U.S. has "comparatively low" maximums for award amounts (awards over \$750,000 have been made in Britain); 3) Britain's minimum loss required to file a claim is high compared to the U.S. (Britain minimum is \$1,500, while in the U.S. common minimums are \$100-\$200); 4) the compensation amount per 100,000 people is nearly 3.5 times higher in Britain than in the U.S. (\$197,000/100,000 people in Britain and \$58,000/100,000 people in the U.S.).

Hoelzel, W. E. (1980). A survey of 27 victim compensation programs. *Judicature*, 63(10): 485-496.

This report reviews victim compensation programs in the 27 states that had programs in 1980. The author identifies administration, operation, and eligibility factors for each of the programs, including budget and source of revenue for the program, maximum award,

reporting-to-police requirements, and minimum-loss-sustained requirements. The report also examines problems with public awareness and how these problems impact usage of victim compensation programs. Finally, the report suggests three solutions to the problem of low usage: 1) make it a statutory requirement for police to notify victims of the compensation program, 2) encourage hospitals to refer victims, and 3) encourage attorneys to refer victims.

Logan, T. K., Evans, L., Stevenson, E., and Jordan, C. E. (2005). Barriers to services for rural and urban survivors of rape. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 20(5): 591-616.

Logan et al. examine the barriers urban and rural rape survivors face in using health, mental health, and criminal justice services and the differences between the perceptions of the urban and rural survivors. Using focus group methodology, the authors collected data from participants who were recruited from rape crisis centers in urban and rural areas. After analyzing the data, the authors reported the following findings: 1) rape survivors thought that women who are victims of sexual assault experience many barriers to service utilization; 2) urban and rural rape survivors have some different perceptions on barriers to service utilization, which suggests that community context is important to keep in mind in regard to service use; and 3) barriers to health and mental health services overlap with barriers to criminal justice system services. The authors suggest that future research should compare more objective data to women's perceptions to further understand the barriers to service utilization.

Marion, N. E. (1996). The federal response to crime victims, 1960-1992. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 10(4): 419-436.

Marion analyzes victim-related activity by Congress in the past 30 years by concentrating on the trends and patterns of the federal government's focus on victims, the victims' status according to the government, and a description of the types of victims that have received the Congress' attention. As a part of the study analysis, Marion first looks at bills concerning victims signed into law by the government in the past 30 years. Second, Marion provides a description of the federal funds going to projects being provided to victims. Finally, Marion also looks at other factors that may influence the activity of the Congress, such as public opinion, interest groups, and crime rates. Findings show that despite the increasing interest in victims in Congress, victims are not necessarily getting the attention they deserve. For example, victim compensation programs have grown due to funding by the government, but are often underpublicized, underfunded, hold high eligibility requirements, and are inaccessible. Marion suggests that future policy needs to be based on facts as opposed to party and political ideologies.

McCormack, R. J. (1991). Compensating victims of crime. *Justice Quarterly* 8(3): 329-346.

This article uses data from a survey of state violent crime compensation boards and the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) to analyze the use of victim compensation by victims of violent crime. Data from 45 states are analyzed both on a state and national scale.

McCormick finds that nationally only about 6% of violent crime victims request compensation and 3.8% receive it. The state with the highest proportion of victims applying for compensation in 1987/1988 was Colorado with 31%; the states with the lowest proportion were Illinois and Louisiana with 1.2% of victims of violent crime applying for compensation. The study also found significant differences among states in the percentage of awards to claim ratios. Finally, McCormick reports that lack of public awareness of victim's compensation programs may be the cause of low application levels. He notes that Colorado, the state with the highest proportion of applications, has a decentralized program, with each of its 22 judicial districts receiving claims and making awards.

Miller, D. T. and McFarland, C. (1986). Counterfactual thinking and victim compensation: A test of Norm Theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 12(4): 513-519.

Miller and McFarland examine Norm Theory in regard to understanding reactions to victims. Norm Theory states that the more strongly outcomes evoke alternatives, the stronger will be any emotional reaction elicited by them. Miller and McFarland conducted two separate experiments to test the following two hypotheses: 1) it is easier to imagine alternatives to abnormal or unusual action than to normal or routine actions; and 2) the less distance that needs to be covered in order for a negative fate to be avoided, the more abnormal the fate will be and the more sympathy the victim will receive. Both hypotheses were supported by the results of the experiments. This study broadens the research on Norm Theory by using between-subject designs, observing subjects' personal reactions to the victims, and using victim compensation as a socially relevant dependant measure. In regard to victim compensation, this theory supports the hypothesis that abnormal fates receive higher recommendations for compensation than normal ones despite their objective severity or probability.

The National Center for Victims of Crime. (2004). *Repairing the harm: A new vision for crime victim compensation in America*. Washington, DC: Author.

The National Center for Victims of Crime report describes the current victim compensation program in the United States and makes suggestions for the program's future. The first two sections of the five-section report detail crime, crime's costs, and the victim compensation program in the United States. The third section gives information about compensation programs in Great Britain, Australia, and Continental Europe. The report's fourth section describes the September 11<sup>th</sup> Victim Compensation Fund. The final section of the report proposes ten core principles that victim compensation should reflect: 1) all crime victims should be qualified to receive compensation unless they are involved in the crime; 2) any type of crime-related economic loss should be eligible for compensation; 3) non-economic losses should be eligible for compensation; 4) compensation programs should not have filing deadlines; 5) every victim should be informed about compensation programs; 6) federal tax revenues should fund compensation; 7) the victim compensation application process should be simple and fair; 8) tax deductions should be allowed for uncompensated crime-related expenses; 9) compensation should be only a part of an extensive victim services program; and

10) state and federal legislators should establish a thorough examination of victim compensation. In respect to about informing victims about compensation programs, the report offers several ideas, including requiring that law enforcement officers, victim advocates, healthcare professionals, and employers be responsible for providing compensation information. It is suggested that the automated systems used to notify victims of criminal justice proceedings also be used to notify victims about victim compensation. The report likens victim compensation to unemployment benefits and workers compensation and argues that since individuals know about unemployment and workers compensation programs they should also be educated about victim compensation programs.

New, M. and Berliner, L. (2000). Mental health service utilization by victims of crime. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 13(4): 693-707.

This article focuses on mental health service utilization by crime victims eligible for compensation from the Crime Victims Compensation (CVC) Program in Washington State. Using a sample size of 926 victims whose mental health treatment costs were compensated by the CVC Program, the authors conducted separate analyses on the child and adult victims. Regarding the child victims, age, crime type, relationship to offender, duration of assault, and post traumatic stress disorder were found to be correlated to service use. Adult victims' gender, ethnicity, marital status, crime type, weapon involvement, and primary diagnosis were found to be associated with different service use. This study demonstrates that crime victims seeking treatment obtain modest amounts of therapy, especially individual therapy, despite the cost. The majority of these victims were found to be domestic violence or sexual assault victims. The authors conclude that looking into the improvement in the quality of treatment is important for these crime victims.

Newmark, L., Bonderman, J., Smith, B., and Liner, E. B. (2003). *The national evaluation of state Victims of Crime Act Compensation and Assistance Programs: Trends and strategies for the future*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Newmark et al. conducted a national evaluation of state victim compensation programs in an effort to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs in serving their clients. The researchers used a variety of approaches to assess compensation programs, including a mail survey of state compensation administrators, site visits to six states (including Pennsylvania) for in-depth analyses of program operations, focus groups with clients of victim assistance programs, and a survey of more than 450 compensation claimants. On average, states reported approving 87% of claims, with funds being provided to victims of violent crimes and some nonviolent crimes to cover medical/dental expenses (47%), provide economic support because of lost wages (20%), and to cover funeral/burial expenses (13%). The average amount provided to a victim was \$2,800, and the typical claimant was an older, white female who was a victim of assault. The study also found that satisfaction with the services they received was high among victims interviewed. The authors of this report made five main recommendations for improving

victim compensation programs. First, they recommended that the program be expanded wherever possible, since federal allocations are expected to continue to rise. Second, program management can be improved with the completion of needs assessments, strategic planning, coordination and automation, and technical assistance from OVC. Third, states should conduct more outreach so that service providers and victims are aware that they may be eligible for compensation. Fourth, with improved communication to service providers about policies and procedures related to compensation programs, victims should expect improved claim processing times. And finally, there was some evidence that claimants were not informed as to why their claims were rejected; more education and outreach to rejected claimants should improve overall system efficiency and effectiveness.

Newmark, L. and Schaffer, M. (2003). *Crime victim compensation in Maryland: Accomplishments and strategies for the future*. The Urban Institute: Washington, D.C.

Newmark and Schaffer reviewed key aspects of Maryland's victim compensation program to identify program accomplishments and provide suggestions for program improvements. The authors relied on state documents pertaining to the program, a review of claim information from client case files, surveys of claimants, and surveys of violent crime victims. The study identified both strengths and areas of concern within the program. The program's strengths included a steadily rising number of claims filed from 2000 to 2002, accompanied by an average claim amount that was double the national average. Points of concern included underuse by certain types of victims (e.g., domestic violence and sexual assault victims) and lower than national average use of some types of services, including counseling and economic support. In addition, the regulations governing the types of claims that can be approved are stricter than those in many other states, which might result in victims not receiving necessary funds to recover their losses.

The authors provide four suggestions for improving Maryland's system. First, they suggest that regulations governing claims be modified so as to allow more victims access to funds. Second, they suggest eliminating unnecessary steps in the review and approval process and improving communication with claimants who are denied compensation about subsequent actions they can take. Third, they suggest maximizing available funds through modification of accounting practices and offender payment practices. Finally, they suggest monitoring and evaluating program developments to assess their effectiveness by measuring performance through regular claimant surveys.

Parker, S. G. (2001). Establishing victim services within a law enforcement agency: The Austin experience. *OVC Bulletin*. Office of Victims of Crime: Washington, D.C.

Parker reviews the Austin Police Department's Victim Services Division in the *Office for Victims of Crime Bulletin*. The Austin Victim Services Division is one of a very small number of victim services providers that work within law enforcement agencies. Parker points out that having a victim service program in a law enforcement agency is ideal for

the following reasons: 1) victims are more likely to report a crime with support from counselors, 2) victim service programs complement community policing, 3) counselors can assist victims, allowing police officers to return to their duties, 4) counselors can assist officers in cases in which children are involved, and 5) law enforcement agencies are natural locations for victims to get in contact with victim assistance. In order to work with law enforcement and offer victim services, the Austin program had to gain an understanding of the law enforcement culture, become an essential part of the agency, and maintain a well-trained staff that would be able to handle the job. Parker concludes that the Austin Victim Services Program has recently had the opportunity to reach out to more victims despite the growing population in Austin in the past two decades.

Ramker, G. F. and Meagher, M. S. (1982). Crime victim compensation: A survey of state programs. *Federal Probation* 46: 68-76.

Ramker and Meagher examine the growth in victim compensation programs in the United States from 1977 to 1980. They observe rapid expansion in the number of programs, program budgets, and the number of applications and awards. Despite the increasing number of applications for compensation, however, only a small percentage of eligible victims apply for compensation. The authors state that making this percentage larger is critical to improving victim compensation programs, and suggest two methods for accomplishing this: launching public awareness campaigns and/or requiring that law enforcement/other criminal justice officials inform victims about the compensation program.

Ruback, R. B. and Bergstrom, M. H. (2006). Economic sanctions in criminal justice. *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 33(2): 242-273.

This article reviews five different economic sanctions: restitution, costs, fees, fines, and forfeiture. The authors cite five advantages in using economic sanctions: 1) they are effective and cheap, 2) they are easier to impose, 3) they are more punitive, 4) they are flexible, and 5) they are easy to evaluate. After examining the purpose of and research conducted on the impositions of each sanction, the authors found four problems. First, the amounts of the sanctions imposed are unequal due to location, type of crime, and offender characteristics. Second, several economic sanctions were found to be left unpaid, mostly due to the offenders' inability to pay them off. Third, prioritizing between the different economic sanctions the offender has to pay is due to differential enforcement and the offenders' knowledge of where the payment goes. Finally, the dual roles of the probation officer, as counselor or collection agent, conflict. The authors suggest that the use of economic sanctions will increase over time, but that problems if left unresolved will undermine their use.

Ruback, R. B. and Menard, K. S. (2001). Rural-urban differences in sexual victimization and reporting. *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 28(2): 131-155.

This article compares sexual victimization data from the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) and the Uniform Crime Report (UCR). After analyzing the two datasets, the authors found that the correlation between the rates per county is significantly higher in urban areas than in rural areas. As a result of this discrepancy, the authors compared urban and rural counties in terms of victimization, reporting, and the predictor variables relating to context. Using multivariate analyses, the authors tested to see if the location moderated for any other county-level factors net of controls. They found that both data source and location affect rates of sexual victimization and reporting. This study shows that UCR rates do not represent sexual assault victimization very well. Contrary to prior literature, an important finding from this study is that according to PCAR data, rural counties have higher rates of sexual victimization than urban counties.

Ruback, R. B., Ruth, G. R., and Shaffer, J. N. (2005). Assessing the impact of statutory change: A statewide multilevel analysis of restitution orders in Pennsylvania. *Crime & Delinquency* 51(3): 318-342.

This article examines the policies used to determine the implication of restitution before and after the 1995 statutory change making restitution mandatory. The authors collected information from decisions made in restitution-eligible cases from the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing (PCS) for the years 1990 to 1994 and 1996 to 1998. After conducting multivariate analyses, the authors found that restitution was used as a sanction mostly for offenders with no prior criminal history, property crime offenders, female offenders, and white offenders during both time frames. The only significant difference was the county-level variance between the urban and rural counties. While an increase in the use of restitution was found in the cases after the statutory change, demographic characteristics continue to play a role in sanctioning restitution. The authors, however, suggest that there is some movement toward a victim-focused policy, but further research is necessary to examine the effects of contextual factors in sentencing outcomes.

Ruback, R. B. and Shaffer, J. N. (2005). The role of victim-related factors in victim restitution: A multi-method analysis of restitution in Pennsylvania. *Law and Human Behavior* 29(6): 657-681.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the role of victim-related factors in restitution decisions in Pennsylvania through two studies. In the first study, the authors conducted a statewide survey of judges to learn what victim-related, offender-related, and system-related factors they believe affect the imposition and payment of restitution. The first study confirmed that judges are following the 1995 Pennsylvania statute by imposing restitution for appropriate victims. A second study was conducted to determine whether victim-related contextual differences affect actual sentencing decisions using sentencing information from the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing. Results from the second study were consistent with the first study's findings, namely, that judges impose lower restitution amounts when there are higher fine amounts to reduce the economic burden on

the offender. The second study also demonstrated that contextual factors play a bigger role in the decision on the amount of restitution than in the initial decision on whether or not to impose restitution. The authors suggest that the structure of victim services influences judges' decisions about whether to order restitution and how much restitution to order.

Sanders, D. (1981). Alabama's anti-profit statute: A recent trend in victim compensation. *Alabama Law Review* 33(1): 109-141.

Sanders examines anti-profit statutes that allow the state to hold in escrow money paid by the media to an accused or convicted offender for the offender's story. The money is held in escrow so the victim or victim's family can file a civil suit and potentially be awarded the money. The idea is that an offender shouldn't profit from his/her crime. Sanders considers the constitutionality of this practice and concludes that the offender's rights to freedom of speech and due process are violated by the Alabama anti-profit statute. Sanders urges the Alabama legislature to amend the constitutional issues surrounding the statute.

Sims, B., Yost, B., and Abbott, C. (2006). The efficacy of victim services programs: Alleviating the psychological suffering of crime victims. *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 17(4): 387-406.

Sims, Yost, and Abbott evaluate the use and nonuse of victim services programs in Pennsylvania in alleviating psychological disorder. Using a quasi-experimental design, the authors conducted a statewide telephone survey from a random sample of users and nonusers of victim service programs. Through bivariate analysis, the authors discovered that psychological functioning appears to be correlated to the individual's background, but found no difference in the psychological functioning between those individuals who used and those who didn't use victim service programs. Using multivariate analysis, age and coping skills were found to be the best predictors of psychological functioning as opposed to other characteristics such as gender, race, type of crime, and strong social support system. Similar to the result of the bivariate analysis, the authors found no difference between users and nonusers of victim services programs in the multivariate analysis. The authors recommend reconsidering the services offered to victims to alleviate psychological disorder though they may not necessarily change the results of victims' psychological suffering.

Sims, B., Yost, B., & Abbott, C. (2005). Use and nonuse of victim services programs: Implications from a statewide survey of crime victims. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 4(2): 361-383.

The authors examine differences between Pennsylvania crime victims who sought services and those who did not. In order to compare service users to nonusers, the authors conducted a statewide telephone survey of adults that reached 626 crime victims, only 3% of whom had sought victim assistance services. With these data, the authors were able to identify demographic differences, crime-related differences, victims' use of other

forms of assistance, and individual coping skills used by victims. Bivariate analyses of demographic variables indicated that age, gender, race, income, marital status, receipt of government assistance, and employment status were all significantly related to the use or nonuse of services. Multivariate analyses, however, showed that only age (with older victims being more likely to seek help) and type of crime (with victims of violent crimes being more likely to seek help) remained significant predictors of whether victims sought assistance. The authors also concluded that nonuse of services is probably the result of a lack of awareness that they are available, since 40% of the victims in their sample reported that they did not seek this type of help because they were not aware it existed. Contrary to the findings of The Center for Opinion Research's 2003 study, the authors of this study did not find a significant relationship between the availability of other forms of social support (e.g., friends and family) and use of victim services, suggesting that the availability of other kinds of assistance does not predict whether an individual will seek victim services.

Smith, B. L., Sloan, J. J., and Ward, R. M. (1990). Public support for the victims' rights movement: Results of a statewide survey. *Crime & Delinquency* 36(4): 488-502.

This report examines the extent and distribution of public support in the United States for the following victims' rights legislation: crime compensation, restitution, the use of victim impact statements, victim notification and input at parole hearings, and the right of the victim to sit with the prosecutor throughout the defendant's trial. The authors conducted a statewide telephone survey in Alabama that was administered to a "nonactivist" victims sample and a general population sample. The results from the survey showed strong support for the right of victims to be notified and have input at parole hearings and low support for victim compensation. After analysis, the authors discovered that females, older persons, highly educated people, and victims of serious crime were more likely to support victims' rights legislation. While the survey shows that there is strong support for victims' rights, the authors conclude that this could change with less appealing legislation once the initial victims' rights legislation has passed.

Smith, C. L. (1985). Victim compensation: Hard questions and suggested remedies. *Rutgers Law Journal* 17(1): 51-91.

Smith identifies several flaws in victim compensation statutes that can restrict the number of victims who can apply for and receive awards. First, Smith discusses the flaw of denying compensation to culpable victims. Specifically, she states that culpability is too widely defined, such as when the victim is related to the offender, and argues that the definitions of culpability should be restricted. Second, Smith argues that certain victims should be compensated for pain and suffering, e.g. victims of sexual crimes. Finally, Smith considers the lack of compensation for property loss. She states that this exception constitutes a bias against the poor and elderly who may not have property insurance or other forms of compensation.

Smith, H. P. (2006). Violent crime and victim compensation: Implications for social justice. *Violence and Victims* 21(3): 307-322.

In this article, Smith accounts for the disparity of victim compensation allocations between state and local compensation programs as being a result of the following two social frameworks: liberalism and radical feminism. First, Smith evaluates victim compensation as an important component of restorative justice. Smith also reviews the history of federal and state victim funding that led up to the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). In reviewing two recent studies on victim compensation, one conducted at a national level and the other conducted in the state of Maryland, Smith notes discrepancies between the recipients of victim compensation in the two studies. Smith concludes that nationally VOCA recipients tend to be female and victims of domestic violence, but in states such as Maryland, they appear to be African-American males with low socioeconomic backgrounds. Smith explains that the discrepancy is due to the different frameworks each follows. VOCA is allocating funds according to the radical feminist framework by rating women as the most in need of assistance nationally. On the other hand, states such as Maryland are following the liberalism framework by giving the funds to young, African-American male victims because they view them as the most in need of assistance. Smith suggests that a liberal approach is necessary to develop a model for victim compensation based on victims most in need as opposed to the framework currently being used on a national level.

Steger, M. A. E. (1985). The impact of eligibility rules on female and male crime victims in a state compensation program. *Justice System Journal* 10(2): 193-212.

Using Wisconsin data from 1979 and 1983, Steger examines denials of victim compensation claims to determine the effects of gender on eligibility rules. Steger focuses primarily on sexual assault victims. She finds that sexual assault victims are usually female and that female victims are usually denied because they do not sustain physical injuries. Steger also finds that males are denied for conduct reasons more often than females. She emphasizes that due to the nature of the crime, victims of sexual assault, and thus many women, will not accrue the minimum monetary loss and not be fairly compensated.

Stohr, M. K. (2005). Victim services programming: If it is efficacious, they will come. *Criminology and Public Policy* 4(2): 391-398.

In this article, Stohr reacts to Sims, Yost, and Abbott's (2005) article about the use of victim service programs. Stohr states that while many service programs are underused, not all are. Moreover, the essay suggests that the underuse of victim service programs is actually indicative of the criminal justice system as a whole. Only in urban areas is major crime a significant problem; in rural areas law enforcement officials deal mostly with traffic tickets and petty theft and county attorneys may often work part time. Stohr recommends that more resources be allocated to agencies that are overused and to victims who are in greater need.

United States General Accounting Office. (1991). *Victims of Crime Act grants: Better reporting needed for compensation and assistance programs*. Washington, DC: Author.

This report reviews the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) compensation and assistance grant programs. The General Accounting Office (GAO) sampled victim compensation claims in four states--California, Michigan, New York, and Ohio. These states accounted for 34% of VOCA compensation grants in 1990. The GAO examined 474 claims from 1990 and found that the states were generally in compliance with VOCA objectives. It also found that, as allowed by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), states differed in the administration of awarding compensation. Finally, the GAO identified two areas of weakness in evaluating OVC's report of program results. First, OVC used inaccurate and inconsistent state performance reports when it prepared its report to the President and the United States Congress. Second, OVC does not maintain information assuring that 10% of grant funds were being allocated to each of four priority areas (victims of sexual assault, spousal abuse, child abuse and violent crime) as mandated by legislative requirements.

## **APPENDIX B: SURVEY OF VICTIM SERVICE PROFESSIONALS**

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. The information gathered in the next several pages will be used to improve Pennsylvania's Victim Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP). We appreciate the time you take to complete these questions. If you have any questions pertaining to this survey or how the information will be used, please contact Ashley Nellis, JRSA Research Associate, at 202-842-9330 ([anellis@jrsa.org](mailto:anellis@jrsa.org)).

Agency Code:

Section I: About Your Agency

1. How long have you been working at this agency?

- Fewer than 3 months
- Between 3 and 6 months
- Between 6 and 12 months
- Between 1 and 3 years
- More than 3 years

2. What is your title?

3. Please tell us what you think about the rate of staff turnover at this agency (Please mark one.)

- I think turnover at this agency is too low
- I think turnover at this agency is too high
- I think turnover at this agency is neither low nor high

4. How many of your agency's staff are knowledgeable about the victim compensation services that your clients might be eligible for? (Please mark one.)

- Fewer than half
- About half
- More than half
- All

5. Do you collect information (for example, exit surveys) from claimants on satisfaction with the claims process?

- Yes
- No

6. Has anyone currently on your staff attended victim compensation trainings, aside from required orientation training, in the past two years?

- Yes
- No

Section II: Information Sources for the Victim Compensation Program

7. It is helpful to know where victims who might qualify for compensation initially receive information about these services. In your opinion, what are the most common ways in which victims in your jurisdiction hear about the victim compensation services that might be available to them? Please rank the following possible information sources from 1 (most common information source) to 5 (least common information source) from the following 12 options.

- Attorneys
- Clergy
- Prosecutors' offices
- Friends and family
- Hospitals
- Judges
- Law enforcement
- Funeral homes
- Coroner's offices
- Internet search
- Victim service agencies
- Other: Please explain:

8. Does your agency provide outreach to any of the possible resources listed above?

- No
- Yes

If yes, please tell us which ones:

9. What information, if any, is available at your agency on victim compensation services that your clients might be eligible for? (Please mark all that apply.)

- Clients receive literature (i.e., brochures) on victim compensation services when they come to our agency
- Clients are given a website and/or phone number where they can obtain more information
- Clients are given the application to apply for compensation at our agency
- A staff member in our agency informs clients of the victim compensation services

Other: Please explain:

Section III: Client Utilization of Victim Compensation Services

10. In general, are clients assigned to a staff member at your agency with whom they have consistent contact throughout the filing process, or are clients more likely to have their claims dealt with by multiple staff members at your agency? (Please mark one.)

- One staff member typically is responsible for the whole process
- Multiple staff members typically handle individual claims

11. What information, if any, is provided at your agency on the process of filing an appeal for rejected claims? (Please mark all that apply.)

- Clients receive literature (i.e., brochures) at our agency on the appeals process and the steps they need to take to file an appeal
- Clients are directed to a Website where they can obtain more information on the appeals process and the steps they need to take to file an appeal
- Clients are given a phone number they can call to receive more information on the appeals process and the steps they need to take to file an appeal
- A staff member in our agency assists clients in filing for appeals
- No information is provided by our agency
- Other (Please explain):

12. Listed below are a number of factors that might discourage victims' utilization of compensation services. Using the options offered, please tell us the how important you think the following factors are in limiting victims' use of compensation services in your area.

a. Victims are unaware that compensation services are available

- Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

b. Victims do not understand the process of filing a claim for compensation

- Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

c. Not enough information about compensation services is provided to victims

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

d. The process for filing claims is overly burdensome for victims

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

e. Victims have enough financial resources to compensate for their losses

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

f. Victims prefer that the incident be finalized as quickly as possible, and see this process as one which will extend their involvement with the system

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

g. Victims believe their claims will be rejected, even if they are eligible to file

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

h. Clients resist being labeled as victims

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

i. Victims believe that the crime is not serious enough to justify a report

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

j. Victims believe that the incident is a private matter

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

k. Victims do not trust that the victim compensation program will help them

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

l. Victims do not want to report the crime to the police or file a Protection from Abuse Order (PFA )

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

m. Victims do not trust that law enforcement agencies will help them

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all



This is lower than the rest of the state

I don't know

#### Section IV: Role of Law Enforcement in the Victim Compensation Process

15. Law enforcement officers play a vital role in informing victims of their eligibility for compensation. How often do you think law enforcement officers in your jurisdiction inform eligible victims about compensation services (Please mark one)?

Always

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

16. Several factors might affect the likelihood of law enforcement officers' informing crime victims about compensation services. Some of these factors are listed below. Please tell us the extent to which each factor seems to determine the likelihood of officers in your jurisdiction to inform victims of services (Example: Very important = this factor plays a very important role in determining officers' likelihood to inform victims of services).

a. Law enforcement officers are often pressed with too many other responsibilities and thus have no time to provide compensation information

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

b. Officers receive support from supervisors for making victims aware of compensation programs

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

c. Officers hold negative views of victims

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

d. Officers themselves are aware of the types of compensation services available

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

e. Officers view the victim services staff as competent

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

f. Officers receive information on the program from unofficial sources such as the media or informal conversations with other police officers

Very important     Somewhat important     Not very important     Not important at all

Section V: DAVE Database

17. Do you submit claims using the Dependable Access for Victimization Expenses (DAVE) system? (Please mark one.)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know what DAVE is

17a. If you do not submit claims using the DAVE system, why not?

Section VI: Final Comments

18. What suggestions can you offer for improving the utilization of compensation services by victims in your jurisdiction or in the state as a whole?

**APPENDIX C: VICTIM COMMENTS FROM RESPONSE CARDS**

A life saver.
Compensation process very satisfactory - I never expected to get my money back. My only income is social security so I could not afford that loss. Thank you very much for being there.
Everyone was very kind and helpful, including the Police District!
Everything was great! I cannot thank you enough.
Excellent service.
Excellent service; I appreciate this program. Thank you immensely!
Excellent.
Extremely competent, friendly.
God bless you.
Good comments!
Had some problems, but grateful it exists. Thank you!
Happy they got a hold of me.
I appreciate all of the courteous service I have received.
I appreciate the help.
I appreciate the program. It really helps victims.
I never expected to see my loss settled. You were persistent with your letters and phone calls. Thank you very much.
I never knew this program existed until I received a letter. Thank you all so much. It made me feel much better.
I really appreciate you. God Bless you.
I wish to thank all involved in this program.
I would just like to thank you guys again for compensating me.
I wrote a letter to thank you.
It helped me quite a bit; ___ was a big help to me and a wonderful and caring person. I needed help and received it. I'm so much better but still have a little way to go. Thanks so much for the help.
It took 5 months to get help - I could have lost everything by that time. But thank you, I appreciate the help - I really do!
It was hard on me getting around, but they paid all my medical bills.
Just - thank you.
Just wanted to mention that ___ did an excellent job. I appreciate his help.
Keep up the good work, you guys are awesome.
Many thanks.
My daughter's claim representative has been wonderful throughout this process. Thank you.
On behalf of my grandson ___ I and ___'s mother say thanks and God Bless you all for your kindness on the phone. You helped me to
One of my claims representatives was difficult to reach, and reimbursements were also a problem. I understand now she has been on and off leave time, and the other staff member is wonderful and supportive!
Only positive comments.

Outstanding, immediate help.
Service by my advocate was excellent!
So grateful for your help
So helpful. ___ was always available to answer questions.
Superior follow-up service.
Thank you (14 respondents)
Thank you - a good program, but little known.
Thank you and God Bless you.
Thank you for all the help I received.
Thank you for your courtesy and prompt returned phone calls.
Thank you to ___ from 18th District Police Station.
Thank you very much for all of your help. We needed kindness and your staff gave it.
The kindest people in the world. I'm disabled and everyone helped me.
The Pittsburgh staff was so helpful; thank you and God Bless. I was very satisfied with the compensation process.
The process is good and I'm grateful for the assistance. However, for the magnitude of what my perpetrator did to me, it is not enough compensation. I haven't been able to work for 3 years and don't know when/if I will.
The service was wonderful thanks.
They are so helpful and considerate.
They worked fast to get my claim processed.
This was the best service we have ever received from any agency of any kind.
Treated very well; thank you.
Very fine help.
Very grateful for the assistance - made therapy possible.
Very helpful and compassionate.
Very much appreciated. Thank you! This is very helpful due to lost income.
Very professional, understanding and sympathetic.
Very responsive. I am thankful for your services.
Very satisfied with service - ___ was very cooperative and responsive.
Very satisfied.
We appreciate the program very much.
We are very pleased with our claims specialist.
We were glad this program exists.
Without you, I would have lost everything.
___ has been outstanding.
___ has been super.
___ is wonderful, so helpful, so kind. Thank you so much!
___ was always very pleasant and helpful!
___ has been fabulous/helpful.
___ and staff were very nice to work with. But transportation to and from required hearings - compensation if I must

go out of state?
___ was extremely kind and courteous to me.
Assistance has helped greatly but it takes an awfully long time.
Compensation process took too long.
Compensation process was slow.
I called ___ because I thought the process was too convoluted; he spent a lot of time with the Philadelphia office gathering info
I got no help for myself for the move; people said one thing and did another.
I was treated callously by some staff. The process was too highly complex; terribly written materials.
It seems the criminal has more rights than the victim!
It took a very long time to receive money.
It was extremely difficult to get to a live person when calling. I was not satisfied with the phone system.
Mifflin County Crime Victim Office did not inform me in regard to compensation.
Mileage unfair.
Not always satisfied with service
Only somewhat satisfied with service and process; issues with moving of funds.
Only somewhat satisfied with the compensation process.
Police did NOT inform me.
Process was slow (3 respondents).
Service generally rude; you make it too difficult - I was already victimized once.
The system needs to change in some ways, especially the moving timeline, so that it does not affect us financially. The system only helped us partially.
They need a real person on the other end of the phone and the person could answer better.
Took way too long.
When living 1/2 below the poverty level, it [the compensation process] doesn't do nothing compared to any pain, stress, and agony I go through, and you keep letting these animals back out again and again.