IACP LEV Case Studies Report

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from six case studies of law enforcement-based victim services programs that were funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV) Program. The research was conducted between April and July 2021 by the Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA), in partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). The aims of this cross-case research were to explore the organizational structure, functioning, and service delivery process of the LEV grantees, and identify their strengths and challenges in service provision. The ‘lessons learned’ from the case studies offer insight into and recommendations on how law enforcement can successfully develop, implement, strengthen, sustain, and expand victim services in their agencies.

Six LEV grantees (three funded through fiscal year 2018 LEV award and three funded through fiscal year 2019 LEV award) voluntarily participated in the case studies. The six sites were identified by JRSA in close consultation with IACP based on their diversity across geographic location, jurisdiction size, organizational structure, and victimization types served. Across these agencies, a total of 17 staff, comprised of law enforcement leadership, directors or program managers of victim services, and victim services staff across four police departments and two sheriff’s offices, participated in virtual interviews. These interviews were informed by a review of each agency’s documents regarding their victim services program which were requested from the sites prior to the interviews. Qualitative analyses of the interview data were divided into four main focus areas: (1) Historical Context, (2) Organizational Structure, (3) Training and Service Delivery Process, and (4) Sustainability and Expansion of Victim Services.

**Historical Context**

Of the six case study sites, three have had long-standing victim services programs for over 20 years, and the remaining three sites had only been operating for less than a year at the time of the interviews. Despite their staggered starts, a common thread among the agencies is that they all have strong support from leadership and had successfully acquired grant funding from multiple sources. Nevertheless, there were still major challenges in establishing and enhancing victim services in each site, mostly related to the complexities of navigating grants and the hurdles of government administrative processes. These challenges included: reliance on few funding sources that influenced the focus of service provision and the types of populations served, the capacity to hire new staff, and varying levels of internal and external support.

**Organizational Structure**

Three key elements related to organizational structure were examined: (i) organizational chart placement (i.e., grouping of the agency’s functions into divisions or units), (ii) integration of victim services, and (iii) victim services program models and personnel. Findings for each are summarized below.

**Organizational Chart Placement.** Five law enforcement agencies had a similar structure, whereby victim services was housed under the criminal investigations division. For larger
agencies, this was further subdivided by crime type, and victim services was placed within a specialty unit (e.g., homicide, sexual assault, domestic violence). Of the three long-running programs, the current organizational placement of victim services emerged after many years of organizational re-structuring to find where victim services best fit. Importantly, the strategic decision to co-locate victim services with investigative services was to foster partnerships and collaboration between investigators and victim services personnel. These findings suggest that the physical proximity of victim services to sworn staff may influence its ability to carry out their operations.

**Integration of Victim Services.** Various efforts were made across sites to integrate victim services personnel into the culture of the agency. The findings suggest that by creating opportunities for victim services personnel to integrate with the rest of the agency staff, it elevates the program and enables victim services staff to not only be *seen* but also *heard*. Moreover, regular contact and interactions between agency staff can also help to increase understanding of victims and build positive agency culture around victim services.

**Victim Services Program Models and Personnel.** Victim services across the six sites differed in terms of the number, composition (e.g., professional, contractual, sworn, paid interns, volunteers), and type of victim services staff (i.e., designated staff who do not fall under a specific unit, or were part of a designated victim services unit), and who they reported to in the chain of command. Victim services programs in smaller agencies operated under a management model in which a single supervisor managed all of the staff and operations and was also responsible for all administrative tasks. In contrast, larger agencies with more staff functioned using a multilayered management model that separated supervisory and administrative tasks into two distinct roles (e.g., staff supervisor and program manager, respectively). The implication here is that the type of management model employed by law enforcement-based victim services is influenced by agency and staff size.

**Victim Services Training and Service Delivery**

While all victim services personnel across the six sites had received training, the type and length of training differed considerably. The types of training received included national and state-level training, in-house training that was unit/crime-type specific, and on-the-job training (e.g., shadowing). However, according to the interviewees, internal training opportunities for victim services personnel were generally limited in scope and mostly informal.

All sworn officers in their respective agencies had received limited victim services training through the academy. In some agencies, victim advocates provided in-house training, which was delivered through the agency’s academy (if they had one) and/or on an ad hoc basis (e.g., unit meetings, roll calls). The trainings were primarily aimed at newly recruited officers (i.e., patrol) and took place year-round, whereas more experienced officers were intermittently offered additional in-service training and/or refresher courses. The methods of training varied widely across the six sites and included briefings (i.e., during roll calls), presentations, and short training sessions involving scenario-based role playing and other activities. Some sites also utilized some of their grant funding to bring in external subject matter experts to deliver the training (e.g., trauma-informed care).
This limited training was reflected in the fact that there was strong consensus among victim services personnel that most law enforcement officers have only a very basic understanding of victim services and in some cases, this is limited to simply knowing who to call for victim assistance. These findings suggest that sworn officers may not fully understand the value of victim services and therefore, could benefit from further education and training on what victim services are and how they can assist investigations and support to victims and families.

The process of service delivery was different across the six law enforcement agencies. Collectively, victim services staff reported providing assistance to victims and families with the following:

- information about the legal system, criminal justice process and victims’ rights;
- applications for victim compensation;
- assisting with securing protective orders;
- being present during interviews;
- emergency provisions (e.g., hygiene kits, bus passes);
- referrals to health and social services (e.g., medical, counseling);
- transportation (e.g., to/from appointments);
- court accompaniment (at victims’ request); and
- court notification/updates.

Most of the sites do not have a formal procedure for closing out cases. Services typically end either when a case is resolved (e.g., investigation is closed, case forwarded to prosecution), or if the victim decides that they no longer need assistance. However, it is not uncommon for victim advocates to remain in contact with victims post-conviction or if a victim re-engaged with the criminal justice system.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 public health crisis interrupted law enforcement and victim services operations across the country, which subsequently impacted inter-agency integration and case collaboration with investigators and patrol. This was particularly problematic for victim services programs that were relatively new and still figuring out the logistics of service delivery. Overall, fewer victims were served for some victim services programs and there were delays in services to victims.

**Sustainability and Expansion of Victim Services**

There was strong consensus among the interviewees across the six sites that support from law enforcement and community leaders and funding were the most important factors in the sustainability of law enforcement-based victim services. All six case study sites had been successful at securing grant funding from various sources to establish or expand their program and hire staff. Additionally, interviewees from two sites reported that some victim services positions (e.g., program supervisors/managers) were incorporated into the agency budget. Nevertheless, all six programs were reliant on grant funds, which meant that they were constantly under financial strain and facing staff shortages due to the short-term nature of grants.
When asked about indicators that signified the program was going well, several interviewees stated that information was mostly obtained through informal channels, such as through emails and letters from victims, verbal feedback from officers, and occasional accolades and commendations from leadership. Informal feedback can be used to gauge the benefits, quality and value of victim services, which all broadly relate to satisfaction. Moreover, as recipients of the LEV award, the sites are required to collect data on services provided and report to the funder quarterly. Three sites mentioned that they collect information on the following:

- number of calls/contacts made (including amount of time it took to make contact and reason for follow up such as crime type)
- number of calls for assistance from the district attorney’s office
- number of repeat victims
- number of contacts assigned to a victim advocate
- number of victims connected to resources
- number of victims assisted with victim compensation claims (including amount of money victims qualified for)
- number of victims served
- number of external partner meetings attended

Of the three sites mentioned above, this data was used strategically to promote program sustainability (e.g., conversations with command staff, presentations to city council, new grant proposals). Only one site reported using a formal tracking tool to manage the data collected. Data collection on victim services was not systematic across the other sites, which meant that the data were not easily accessible (e.g., “We record all the work that we do on each case and so we have that information but finding it might take a little bit of legwork.”).

Overall, these findings suggest that performance measurement is an area in which all six case study sites could improve upon. Collecting and tracking outcome data (e.g., on victim satisfaction and service delivery) would enable programs and leadership to better identify gaps in services and demonstrate the impact and value of victim services to stakeholders.

**Recommendations and Conclusions**

Based on the lessons learned from this research, the following recommendations are offered to those who seek to develop, implement, strengthen, sustain, and expand victim services in their agencies:

- Invest time in identifying funding opportunities and diversify funding sources to ensure stability of the program and enable more flexibility in service provision and hiring new staff.
- If resources allow, hire or seek assistance from experienced grant writers/grant managers to navigate the proposal development process and ensure compliance with grant reporting requirements.
- Identify key stakeholders (e.g., leaders in law enforcement and the community) and develop their support *well in advance* of applying for funding for victim services. Engage them throughout program planning, implementation, and evaluation as they can help programs identify and access internal and external resources, target service efforts more
effectively and efficiently, and provide valuable feedback on the quality and impact of services. Moreover, by cultivating these relationships, as full partners, they may also become champions of the victim services program and help to make the case for additional funding when needed.

- Ensure access to sworn colleagues through consistent meetings and shared physical space.
- Create opportunities for victim services staff to be seen and heard within the law enforcement agency.
- Establish consistent training requirements for all personnel involved in victim service provision.
- Work with law enforcement leadership to develop performance measures and collect and track this data in order to be able to demonstrate the impact that their program has made to stakeholders who can influence the expansion and sustainability of the program.
- Initiate financial sustainability discussions from the beginning of a grant and engage in strategic planning throughout the life of the grant.

In closing, the case studies were an exploratory look into the various ways that LEV grantees are carrying out victim services, both in terms of structure and process. While the sites are not necessarily representative of victim service provision within law enforcement across the country, information obtained through the case studies provides insights that law enforcement agencies and funding sources can use to expand and improve victim services in the law enforcement context. Additionally, these exploratory studies provide a foundation for more detailed and expansive empirical inquiry into what works in victim service provision in law enforcement, and how structural and service delivery processes can be better understood to improve service provision for all stakeholders.
Introduction

In partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA) conducted six case studies of law enforcement-based victim services programs that were funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV) Program\(^1\). The primary aims of this cross-case research were to:

- explore, in-depth, the organizational structure, functioning, and service delivery process of the LEV grantees’ victim services programs, and
- identify their strengths and the challenges they have faced in service provision.

The ‘lessons learned’ from the case studies provide insight into and recommendations on how law enforcement can successfully develop, implement, strengthen, sustain, and expand victim services in their agencies.

Method

Sample Sites

Six LEV grantees (three funded through fiscal year 2018 LEV award and three funded through fiscal year 2019 LEV award) voluntarily participated in the case studies. The six sites were identified by JRSA in close consultation with IACP based on their diversity across geographic location, jurisdiction size, organizational structure, and victimization types served. Key characteristics of the six sites are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
<th>Jurisdiction Size</th>
<th>LE Type</th>
<th>LEV Grantee Type</th>
<th>Time in Operation</th>
<th>Victim Services Staff Size</th>
<th>Staff Type</th>
<th>Crime Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Sheriff’s Office</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>8 FT</td>
<td>Professional Staff</td>
<td>All types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Police Dept.</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>3 FT</td>
<td>Professional Staff, Contractual</td>
<td>Gun-related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Police Dept.</td>
<td>Enhance</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>3 FT</td>
<td>Professional Staff, Sworn</td>
<td>All types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Police Dept.</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>1 FT</td>
<td>Professional Staff</td>
<td>All types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Sheriff’s Office</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>9 months(^3)</td>
<td>1 FT 2 PT</td>
<td>Professional Staff, Sworn, Volunteer</td>
<td>All types</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) For further information on the LEV program, please go to [https://www.theiacp.org/projects/law-enforcement-based-victim-services-lev](https://www.theiacp.org/projects/law-enforcement-based-victim-services-lev)
This report is based on a qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with law enforcement leadership \((n = 6)\), directors or program managers of victim services \((n = 6)\), and victim services staff \((n = 5)\) across four police departments and two sheriff’s offices. The interviews were conducted virtually between April and July 2021 by JRSA researchers, working in collaboration with a retired chief of police with extensive experience and involvement with law enforcement-based victim services.

**Interview Protocols**

Prior to conducting the interviews, the project team gathered and reviewed various program materials (e.g., general orders, code of ethics, personnel standards) from each site that had these available. This provided an overview of victim services in the agency and informed the development of the interview protocols. Three separate interview instruments were developed for law enforcement leadership, directors/program managers of victim services, and victim services staff (see Appendix A for copies of the interview instruments). The interview questions explored the following research questions across all six sites:

1. What is the structure of victim services programming at each agency?
2. What is the process of victim services provision utilized at each agency?
3. What program aspects or outcomes does each agency believe are an indication their victim services program is working well?

**Analytical Approach**

NVivo software was used to code the rich qualitative data from the interviews into categories and themes, and then a grounded theory approach was used to conceptualize the insights and experiences conveyed by the participants. As shown in Figure 1 below, the analyses were divided into four main focus areas: (1) Historical Context, (2) Organizational Structure, (3) Training and Service Delivery Process, and (4) Sustainability and Expansion of Victim Services. The first three sections are theorized to contribute to sustainability. Interviewee quotations are interspersed throughout the report to help contextualize the interview responses and analytical findings.
The organization of the remainder of this report is as follows. Findings regarding the early development of victim services in each of the six case study sites are presented first, focusing on the main drivers of program development, including key facilitating factors and funding sources. Findings regarding the structure of victim services at each site are presented next, particularly in terms of how the victim services programs and personnel are embedded and integrated into law enforcement agencies, followed by findings on victim services training and the process of service delivery in each site. In light of the COVID-19 public health crisis since March 2020, the impact of the pandemic on victim services is also discussed. Issues concerning sustainability of victim services are presented next. The report closes with a discussion of the lessons learned from the case studies and recommendations for those who seek to create or enhance victim services in a law enforcement setting.
Findings

Historical Context

This section presents the findings on the main drivers of program development at each site, including the key facilitating factors and funding sources.

Three out of the six case study sites have employed victim services personnel for 20 years or more, whereas at the remaining three sites, victim services had only been operating for less than one year at the time of the interviews.

Regarding the former (sites 1, 3, and 6), law enforcement leadership could not recall how victim services originated in their respective agencies because it was already operational when they joined the department. When it originated, victim advocate roles were less prescribed, and victim services were adaptive and tended to be responsive to units where victim assistance was most often perceived to be needed (typically domestic violence). Victim services at these agencies were funded by various state and federal grants (see list of funding sources in sidebar), and only two programs were partially supported with direct funding from the law enforcement agency. Funding sources generally provided support to enhance/expand victim services in the following ways:

- by formally establishing a designated victim services unit within the agency;
- by expanding services to a wider range of criminal victimization types, and/or
- by creating formal positions with specific functions for victim services personnel (e.g., program manager, victim witness coordinator).

In the remaining three sites (sites 2, 4, and 5), victim services launched in either in 2018 or 2019, following an LEV award. Prior to this, as one commander described, “victim services was very much at the discretion of the officer.” The impetus for establishing victim services at the three sites stemmed from leadership who were strong proponents of victim advocacy and in two instances, a commanding officer recognized that there was a major gap in services for crime victims between the time that a police report was made and when prosecution occurred.

Yet despite strong support from leadership and successfully acquiring funding from various sources, there were still significant challenges in the start-up and enhancement of victim services. To illustrate:

- One of the longer-running programs was historically funded by VAWA, but because of the grant’s narrow focus on gender-based crime, the agency eventually migrated to other funding sources that were less restrictive and enabled them to serve broader populations.

FUNDING SOURCES ACROSS SITES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEV Program</th>
<th>Victims of Crime Act State Sub-Grants (VOCA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crime Gun Intelligence Center Integration (CGIC) Initiative</td>
<td>Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Site-Based Program (COSSAP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants to Encourage Arrest Program (GTEAP)^2</td>
<td>Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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2 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
• At two of the new sites, there were significant time delays between receiving grant funding and hiring staff. In one instance, this was due to complications in gaining city approval to create the positions.
• Victim services in one agency was experiencing a severe staff shortage but the city was not in favor of adding new staff to the budget that fiscal year.
• One administrative law enforcement leader successfully secured a VOCA grant proposal, but the award only provided a partial amount of the total funds requested. However, because the city was unable to supplement the remaining balance, the agency could not accept the award.

These examples highlight the complexities of navigating grants and the many hurdles of government administrative processes in developing law enforcement-based victim services. To overcome challenges with grant proposal development, one commander sought guidance from a victim services director employed at another law enforcement agency. Another agency had a grant writing specialist on staff who not only secured the grant that funded their victim specialist division, but also enabled them to extend the reach of their services to two neighboring jurisdictions that are ‘Qualified Opportunity Zones’. The implication here is that for those seeking to apply for grant funding, it may be beneficial to hire or contract with a professional grant writer (if resources allow), or seek technical assistance from local partners and others who have experience with this process (e.g., city grant writers, staff from other police agencies). More importantly, however, is to identify, engage with, and gain buy-in from key stakeholders well before proposal development begins to avoid delays and problems later on. Waiting to build these relationships until a later time often means missing out on funding opportunities because the grant application process can be very complex and time-consuming.

Ensure success in program development by:

• Invest time in identifying state and federal funding opportunities.
• Diversify funding sources.
• Identify key stakeholders (e.g., leaders in law enforcement and the community) well in advance and build up support from them before applying for funding.
• Seek assistance from an experienced grant writer to navigate the proposal development process and ensure compliance.
• Engage stakeholders throughout the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of victim services.

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2 Qualified Opportunity Zones are census tracts of low-income and distressed communities designated by state governors and certified by the Department of Treasury.
Organizational Structure

A strategic, carefully planned organizational structure is important because it can help to facilitate the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. Three key elements related to organizational structure are discussed in this section: (i) organizational chart placement (i.e., grouping of the agency’s functions into divisions or units), (ii) integration of victim services, and (iii) program models and victim services personnel.

Organizational Chart Placement

Despite having existed for various lengths of time, five of the law enforcement agencies had a similar structure whereby victim services were housed under the criminal investigations division (although victim assistance was still available to other units). For some agencies, this was further subdivided by crime type, and victim services was placed within a specialty unit (e.g., homicide, sexual assault, domestic violence). Of the three long-running programs, the current organizational placement of victim services emerged after many years of organizational re-structuring to find where victim services best fit. For the programs that had been operating for less than a year, this structure may have partly evolved from support through the LEV grant. Importantly, the strategic decision to co-locate victim services with investigations was to foster partnerships and collaboration between investigators and victim services personnel to increase understanding of victims and build positive agency culture around victim services. This was exemplified across the sites through increased use of victim services and increased case collaboration.

One agency had a unique structure compared to the other five sites. Internally, victim services personnel were assigned to the Gun Crime Intelligence Center under the Intelligence Bureau and therefore, focused exclusively on cases involving non-fatal gun violence and homicide. The agency also contracted with local partner organizations to fill the need for victim assistance in domestic violence and sexual assault cases. The rationale for this setup was that the agency previously held a CGIC grant that funded a victim services contractor from the local Crime Victim Center who carried out their function within the police agency. After receiving LEV funding, the agency hired the victim advocate to work in-house under the same structure, and also expanded the unit by hiring a second advocate. The two advocates currently work in tandem to provide services to gun crime victims and co-victims, while one additionally handles the administrative duties.

The implications of these findings is that deciding where to situate victim services in the organizational structure of a law enforcement agency can be a fluid process that depends on the size of the department. In smaller agencies with few layers of division, there may be fewer options for placement of victim services, whereas in larger agencies, grouping victim services personnel with investigators enables them to establish a presence and be accessible at the point of service so that investigators can easily call on victim advocates when needed.
The physical proximity of victim services staff to the officers may influence their operations.

In one police department in the Midwest, victim services personnel were initially located offsite at the local Family Justice Center. The victim advocates mostly worked with domestic violence cases because investigators from other units in the agency rarely called on them for assistance. Leadership eventually decided to relocate victim services to police headquarters where they were placed in the same bay as the detectives. By facilitating daily interactions between victim services and sworn staff, this setup was successful in fostering partnerships and increasing case collaborations between them.

Integration of Victim Services
As Table 2 below shows, various efforts were made across the sites to integrate victim services personnel in the law enforcement agency, and often, more than one approach was taken within an agency. For example, participating in roll calls and recurring staff meetings enabled victim services personnel to bring cases to agency staff, ask and answer questions, and contribute to discussions from a victim-centered lens. There were also discussions in one agency about bringing officers into the victim services office on a rotating basis to shadow staff and gain exposure to victim services operations.

The findings suggest that in addition to physically embedding victim services programs within the law enforcement agency, creating opportunities for victim services personnel to integrate with the rest of the agency staff is vital to elevate the program and provide avenues for victim services personnel to not only be seen but also heard. Regular contact and interactions between victim services and sworn staff can also help to build positive agency culture around victims and victim services.

Table 2. Examples of Ways to Integrate Victim Services Personnel in Law Enforcement Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches to Integration</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participating in roll calls</td>
<td>Bridges relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending weekly detectives/investigators meetings</td>
<td>Builds trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attending monthly agency staff meetings</td>
<td>Demonstrates legitimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion in departmental emails</td>
<td>Develops partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal engagements (e.g., coffee breaks, lunch)</td>
<td>Fosters information sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing victim services personnel with investigators</td>
<td>Promotes buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in ride alongs with officers</td>
<td>Raises awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing access to case/police reports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular check-ins by leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotating victim services staff across units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Victim Services Program Models and Personnel

Victim services across the six sites differed in terms of the number, composition (e.g., professional, contractual, sworn, paid interns, volunteers), and type of victim services staff (i.e., designated staff who do not fall under a specific unit or were part of a designated victim services unit), and who they reported to in the chain of command (e.g., administrative commander, assistant chief of criminal investigations division). Law enforcement leadership were asked about essential or desired attributes of victim services personnel and their responses are presented in the sidebar.

The number of victim services staff per agency ranged from one to eight full time equivalents. In agencies with few victim services staff, one challenge that this posed was that there was no one to cover for staff who were out of the office. This often resulted in a disruption to services and backlog of cases because no one was available to follow up with victims.

Four victim services programs were composed of professional (civilian) staff and two were augmented with contractual staff, interns, and/or volunteers. Victim services at the remaining two sites were comprised of a combination of professional and sworn staff. While the latter staffing structure was less prevalent, professional staff spoke of the benefits of working alongside retired sworn advocates. For example, their sworn colleagues served as a conduit to the ‘world of law enforcement’ by educating them about police culture and answering questions about the investigative process when the case lead detective was unavailable. The presence of sworn advocates also increased victim advocates’ perceptions of safety when working with certain cases. It should be cautioned, however, that sworn personnel working in an advocacy role may lead to role confusion for staff and victims.

The victim services programs in small agencies operated under a management model in which one supervisor supervised all of the advocates (see Figure

Key Attributes of Victim Services Personnel

According to law enforcement leadership, the top five essential or desired attributes of victim services personnel are:

- **Compassion/Empathy** for victims who are experiencing trauma.
- **Team-Player** who is skilled in communication and collaboration across disciplines and is a “force multiplier” (a resource that improves unit effectiveness).
- **Experienced** in providing direct services to victims (required), grants management (desired), and program development (desired).
- **Critical Thinker** who can think ‘outside the box’ and innovate new ways to get people what they need.
- **Motivated/Self- Starter** who is driven to help others and is a quick learner with the expertise to manage the fast-paced environment of the law enforcement agency.

Victim Services Program Models and Personnel

Victim services across the six sites differed in terms of the number, composition (e.g., professional, contractual, sworn, paid interns, volunteers), and type of victim services staff (i.e., designated staff who do not fall under a specific unit or were part of a designated victim services unit), and who they reported to in the chain of command (e.g., administrative commander, assistant chief of criminal investigations division). Law enforcement leadership were asked about essential or desired attributes of victim services personnel and their responses are presented in the sidebar.

The number of victim services staff per agency ranged from one to eight full time equivalents. In agencies with few victim services staff, one challenge that this posed was that there was no one to cover for staff who were out of the office. This often resulted in a disruption to services and backlog of cases because no one was available to follow up with victims.

Four victim services programs were composed of professional (civilian) staff and two were augmented with contractual staff, interns, and/or volunteers. Victim services at the remaining two sites were comprised of a combination of professional and sworn staff. While the latter staffing structure was less prevalent, professional staff spoke of the benefits of working alongside retired sworn advocates. For example, their sworn colleagues served as a conduit to the ‘world of law enforcement’ by educating them about police culture and answering questions about the investigative process when the case lead detective was unavailable. The presence of sworn advocates also increased victim advocates’ perceptions of safety when working with certain cases. It should be cautioned, however, that sworn personnel working in an advocacy role may lead to role confusion for staff and victims.

The victim services programs in small agencies operated under a management model in which one supervisor supervised all of the advocates (see Figure

Key Attributes of Victim Services Personnel

According to law enforcement leadership, the top five essential or desired attributes of victim services personnel are:

- **Compassion/Empathy** for victims who are experiencing trauma.
- **Team-Player** who is skilled in communication and collaboration across disciplines and is a “force multiplier” (a resource that improves unit effectiveness).
- **Experienced** in providing direct services to victims (required), grants management (desired), and program development (desired).
- **Critical Thinker** who can think ‘outside the box’ and innovate new ways to get people what they need.
- **Motivated/Self- Starter** who is driven to help others and is a quick learner with the expertise to manage the fast-paced environment of the law enforcement agency.
2). In addition to overseeing all staff and operations, the supervisor was also responsible for all administrative tasks. In larger agencies with more staff, the management model separated supervisory and administrative tasks into two distinct roles (e.g., Staff Supervisor and Program Manager, respectively, as shown in Figure 2).

![Program Model in Smaller Agencies VS Program Model in Larger Agencies]

**Figure 2. Victim Services Program Models**

Overall, while one management model is not better than another, determining what type of structure works best for a victim services program largely depends on the size of its staff. Larger programs with more staff may benefit from a multilayered design, whereas smaller programs with fewer staff may function more effectively with a simpler structure.
Victim Services Training & Service Delivery
This section presents the findings on victim services training for both victim advocates and sworn staff, and the service delivery process. In light of the COVID-19 public health crisis since March 2020, the impact of the pandemic on victim services is also discussed.

Staff Training
Training for Victim Services Personnel. While all victim services personnel across the six sites had received training, the type and length of training differed considerably. One program manager developed a training matrix for the unit, which is a useful tool to track the acquisition of training and skills required to deliver services effectively. Some specific national and state-level training and resources were mentioned (e.g., Conference on Crimes Against Women, State Advocate Coalition, Statewide Advocate Victim Organization (SWAVO), OVC Victim Assistance Training (VAT) Online). In addition, some victim services staff learned about their role by shadowing court advocates, and some had undertaken in-house training that was unit/crime-type specific. However, according to the interviewees, internal training opportunities for victim services personnel were generally limited in scope and mostly informal. Most victim services personnel were experienced advocates when they were hired; however, they expressed a need for additional training for their role in the agency and on how they can best utilize their skills within the context of the law enforcement agency.

One site utilized a peer-to-peer teaching approach in which staff were expected to self-specialize to become the resident expert on a subject, and then train the rest of the team. On one hand, the advantages of this approach are that it cultivates peer relationships and facilitates personal growth and development by giving staff an opportunity to select their own specialty area(s). On the other hand, however, the peer learning process also needs to be monitored to ensure that the education and training received/delivered meets professional standards. Moreover, for victim services units that have more staff, adopting a facilitated staff development approach may be beneficial; however, this model may be less effective for units with fewer staff (e.g., one site only had a single designated victim services advocate).

Overall, these findings suggest that supervisors should invest time to identify training gaps and staffs’ specific training needs. It may also be advantageous for supervisors to consult with law enforcement leadership as well as subject matter experts in the field of advocacy to ensure that the knowledge and skills developed from the trainings have practical utility in supporting the agency’s mission and are consistent across victim services staff.

Law Enforcement Training. According to the interviewees, all sworn officers in their respective agencies received some victim services training through the academy, although this tended to be minimal. OVC’s 40-hour online training\(^3\) was mentioned; however, there was an expressed desire for a condensed version for officers. In some agencies, victim advocates also provided in-house training, which was delivered through the agency’s academy (if they had one) and/or on an ad hoc basis. The trainings were primarily aimed at newly recruited officers (i.e., patrol) and took place year-round, whereas more experienced officers were intermittently offered

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\(^3\) See [https://www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspOnline_VATOnline.cfm](https://www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspOnline_VATOnline.cfm)
additional in-service training and/or refresher courses. The methods of training varied widely across the six sites and included briefings (i.e., roll calls), presentations, and short training sessions involving scenario-based role playing and other activities. Some sites also utilized some of their grant funding to bring in professionals to deliver the training (e.g., trauma-informed care).

There was strong consensus among victim services personnel that most law enforcement officers have only a very basic understanding of victim services and in some cases, this is limited to simply knowing who to call for victim assistance. For patrol officers, this may partly be explained by the fact that, typically, they have not been on the force for long, and due to their functional duties (e.g., responding to traffic incidents), they may have less direct interaction with crime victims for an extended period of time.

In contrast, investigators were generally perceived to be more familiar with victim services than their patrol colleagues. This may reflect the fact that the investigators were more exposed to victim services given their shared organizational and physical space, as described above. Yet despite investigators’ familiarity with victim services, victim services personnel still felt that they were underutilized.

Overall, these findings suggest that sworn officers may benefit from additional education and training on what victim services are and how they can assist investigations and provide support to victims and families.

**Service Delivery**
The process of service delivery varied across the six law enforcement agencies. Table 3 below presents the ways in which victim services personnel across the six case study sites described coming into contact with victims, including:

- Victim services personnel being called out by investigators to attend a crime scene (usually only for major incidents). In cases of sexual assault, domestic violence, and non-fatal shootings, victim advocates may get called to the hospital.
- Providing officers with cards/brochures containing basic information about victim services to help connect victims with services quicker.
- In many cases, crime victims contacted victim services themselves, either by walking into the agency, or contacting victim services by phone or email. One agency also operated a 24-hour hotline so when victims called in, their case would be assigned to an advocate according to a case assignment protocol.
- Some victim services personnel reported having direct access to case records/police files which they would review either daily or weekly and flag cases that were eligible for services (typically violent crimes such as homicide, aggravated batteries where the victim is hospitalized, and domestic violence). The benefit of this approach is that it enabled staff to select which cases to prioritize. However, this was a challenge for programs with fewer staff who had to review a large volume of cases.
- In some cases, victim services personnel conducted community outreach to identify potential victims.

Collectively, victim services staff provided assistance to victims and families with the following:
• information about the legal system, criminal justice process, and victims’ rights;
• applications for victim compensation;
• assisting with securing protective orders;
• being present during interviews;
• emergency provisions (e.g., hygiene kits, bus passes);
• referrals to health and social services (e.g., medical, counseling);
• transportation (e.g., to/from appointments);
• court accompaniment (at victims’ request); and
• court notifications/updates.

Table 3. Victim Services Approaches to Contact with Victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim Services Approaches to Contact with Victims</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Dispatch notification</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Referrals from partner agencies/organizations or others</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Victim self-referrals (e.g., walk-ins, calls to victims hotline)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Responding to patrol/detective call outs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Case/police report reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Community outreach</td>
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Services typically end either when a case is resolved (e.g., an investigation is closed, a case is forwarded to prosecution), or if the victim decides that they no longer need assistance. However, it is not uncommon for victim advocates to remain in contact with victims post-conviction or if a victim re-engages with the criminal justice system.
COVID-19 Impact on Service Delivery

In March 2020, the COVID-19 public health crisis interrupted law enforcement and victim services operations across the country. Social distancing restrictions prevented in-person roll calls, ride-alongs, and on-scene responses for victim services staff, which subsequently impacted inter-agency integration and case collaboration with investigators and patrol. This was particularly problematic for victim services programs that were relatively new and still figuring out the logistics of service delivery. Overall, it resulted in fewer victims being served for some victim services programs and delays in services to victims. In addition, agency staff meetings transitioned to virtual meetings, but one victim advocate commented that: “in some ways that’s good and in some ways it’s bad. People are more likely to attend. But there’s just something about that interaction, you know, face-to-face interaction, that is really important, especially in a community like ours.”

In terms of contact with victims, victim services staff connected and communicated with victims mainly by phone to provide information, resources and referrals. However, staff were limited in their ability to give victims a warm hand-off to other service providers (e.g., “When charges got issued, I would go with them to the warrant office and introduce them to the victim advocate from the prosecutor's office and then say, here’s the person you're going to be working with moving forward, I'm just here for support. But COVID stopped that.”). Some regular trainings, meetings with community partners, and community outreach activities were postponed while others were transitioned to virtual meetings. In some instances, this hindered community engagement and information-sharing with stakeholders and the public. For instance, in one agency, leadership and victim services staff postponed their year-end meeting with the mayor and city council to present their programs’ progress because they felt that the presentation would be more impactful in person rather than delivered virtually. The commanding
officer explained that this was important “for buy-in to get this [program] funded in our budget the next go around.”

These findings further highlight the aforementioned importance of integrating victim services personnel in the agency for case collaboration. It also underscores the importance of maintaining communication and engagement with stakeholders throughout program implementation and evaluation.
Sustainability and Expansion of Victim Services

There was strong consensus across the six sites that funding and support from law enforcement and community leaders were the most important factors in the sustainability of law enforcement-based victim services.

As previously discussed, all six case study sites had been successful at securing grant funding from various sources to establish or expand their program and hire staff. Additionally, interviewees from two sites reported that some victim services positions (e.g., program supervisors/managers) were incorporated into the agency budget. Nevertheless, all six programs were reliant on grant funds. Due to the short-term nature of grants, the programs were constantly under financial strain and facing staff shortages. The implication here is that while grant funding is essential to establishing and enhancing of victim services, programs are subject to a continuous cycle of seeking and applying for grants to fund operations. It would, therefore, be advantageous to initiate financial sustainability discussions from the beginning of a grant and engage in strategic planning throughout the life of the grant.

As mentioned above, out of the six sites, two of the longest-running programs had successfully petitioned for financial support from the city to fund part of their staff, while also retaining some grant-funded positions. While it is beyond the scope of the present research to comment on whether this funding arrangement improves sustainability of victim services, it may be worthwhile for law enforcement-based victim services programs to explore transitioning from being primarily reliant on grant funding to diversifying their funding streams by appealing to the law enforcement agency and city, county, state, or tribe in which they operate. In addition, the ideal ratio of grant to agency funding could not be determined by the case studies but would also be worthy of future exploration.

Interestingly, what the two programs with both city- and grant-funded positions have in common is that they had unwavering buy-in and support from the Mayor and City Council. In fact, at one site, the Assistant Chief over the Victim Services Unit, along with one of the victim advocates, are members of the Mayor’s Victim Assistance Advisory Council. This further highlights the importance of ongoing engagement with key stakeholders and keeping them apprised of program activities and successes in order to maintain their support to sustain victim services.

Measuring Program Success

When asked about indicators that signified the program was going well, several interviewees stated that this was mostly informal, such as through emails and letters from victims, verbal feedback from officers, and occasional accolades and commendations from leadership. These responses can be used to gauge the benefits, quality and value of victim services, which all broadly relate to satisfaction, and can help to identify areas to explore in a formal evaluation.

One victim services interviewee reported that their law enforcement supervisor had asked them to start including “success stories” in monthly emails to staff to help raise awareness of victim services within the agency. The interviewee also thought this was beneficial because “if you tell somebody a story, and then they come across a similar situation… it'll click, hopefully, and trigger them to say, ‘Oh, let me call victim services because I remember they helped with a victim situation that was similar.’” These success stories may also boost staff morale. As one victim services
supervisor stated: “But more than anything, it ends up recharging my staff’s batteries because they get these lovely statements from survivors that say, “you changed my life…” It's the human connection and that basic kindness human need, which I then feed back to my staff.”

Interviewees from two sites mentioned the use of a survey, one of which was used to glean victims’ satisfaction with services and the other was a survey developed for family survivors of homicide victims. However, one interviewee reported low response rates and explained that this was partly due to a lack of victim services staff to follow up with victims (currently, they rely on another agency staff member to help contact victims to complete the survey). Another issue mentioned was related to the timing of survey implementation: “So, at whatever point the case kind of wraps up and they aren't asking for services, we give them a little bit of time to get through the crisis before we put a demand on them. We're pretty careful to try not to ask of things from victims during a window where it should be about them and we try to be pretty gentle.”

As recipients of the LEV award, the sites are required to collect data on services provided and report to the funder quarterly. Three sites mentioned that they collected the following information: number of calls/contacts made (including amount of time it took to make contact and reason for follow up such as crime type); number of calls for assistance from the district attorney’s office; number of repeat victims; number of contacts assigned to a victim advocate; number of victims connected to resources; number of victims assisted with victim compensation claims (including amount of money victims qualified for); number of victims served; and number of external partner meetings attended. A few sites mentioned using this data strategically to promote program sustainability (e.g., conversations with command staff, presentations to city council, new grant proposals). Only one site reported using a formal tracking tool to manage the data collected. This process was not systematic across the other sites which meant that the data were not easily accessible (e.g., “We record all the work that we do on each case and so we have that information but finding it might take a little bit of legwork.”).

Overall, these findings suggest that performance measurement is an area in which all six case study sites could improve upon. Collecting and tracking outcome data (e.g., on victim satisfaction and service delivery) would enable programs and leadership to identify any gaps in services and demonstrate the impact that their program has made to gain buy-in from stakeholders. In addition to the abovementioned measures, some additional data that may be beneficial for victim services to track include:

- victim demographic information (to assess whether certain populations are not being reached);
- number of victims assisted with emergency protection orders;
- number of victims who cooperated on scene or during interviews with the presence of a victim advocate;
- number of victims whose basic needs are met (e.g., hygiene kits, transportation); and
- number of referrals for services (e.g., trauma/grief counseling).

Moreover, it is advisable to develop performance metrics in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that what is being measured as success also aligns with their goals and objectives. In addition, the fact that law enforcement and community leaders (e.g., police chiefs, sheriffs,
mayors) often have a fixed tenure (typically around four to six years) means that it is prudent to include middle-management in stakeholder engagement efforts because their eventual promotion means that they will likely have a strong influence over whether a victim services program will be sustained in the long term. Therefore, cultivating relationships with multiple champions of the program and ensuring middle managers are part of the team may help to increase the longevity of law enforcement-based victim services programs.

**Recommendations and Conclusions**

The aims of the case studies were to explore the organizational structure, functioning, and service delivery process of the LEV grantees’ victim services programs and identify the strengths and challenges. Overall, as Figure 3 shows, the findings from the case studies indicate that the elements of stakeholder support, funding, robust service delivery, and the ability to measure success all influence the sustainability of law enforcement-based victim services.

![Figure 3. Sustainability of Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services](image)

Based on the lessons learned from this research, the following recommendations are offered to those who seek to develop, implement, strengthen, sustain, and expand victim services in their agencies:

- Invest time in identifying funding opportunities and diversify funding sources to ensure stability of the program and enable more flexibility in service provision and hiring new staff.
- If resources allow, hire or seek assistance from experienced grant writers/grant managers to navigate the proposal development process and ensure compliance with grant reporting requirements.
- Identify key stakeholders (e.g., leaders in law enforcement and the community) and build up support from them *well in advance* of applying for funding and engage them throughout program planning, implementation, and evaluation as they can help identify internal and external resources, focus on what matters, and provide feedback on services. Moreover, by
cultivating these relationships, as full partners, they may also become champions of the victim services program and help to make the case for additional funding when needed.

• Ensure access to sworn colleagues through consistent meetings and shared physical space.
• Create opportunities for victim services staff to be seen and heard within the law enforcement agency.
• Establish consistent training requirements for all personnel related to serving victims.
• Victim services programs should work with law enforcement leadership to develop performance measures and collect and track this data in order to be able to demonstrate the impact that their program has made to stakeholders who can influence the expansion and sustainability of the program.
• Initiate sustainability discussions from the beginning of a grant and engage in strategic planning throughout the life of the grant.

In closing, the case studies were an exploratory look into the various ways that LEV grantees are carrying out victim services, both in terms of structure and process. While the sites are not necessarily representative of victim service provision within law enforcement across the country, information obtained through the case studies provides insights that law enforcement agencies and funding sources can use to expand and improve victim services in the law enforcement context. Additionally, these exploratory studies provide a foundation for more detailed and expansive empirical inquiry into what works in victim service provision in law enforcement, and how structural and service delivery processes can be better understood to improve service provision for all stakeholders.
Appendix A

Law Enforcement Agency Leadership Interview Instrument

[Note: Additional questions may be added to this instrument after document review and/or the first round of interviews at the site]

1. Can you describe the history of victim services at your agency?
   a. What have been the key factors in building or maintaining a victim services program in your agency?
   b. What plans are in place for program sustainment and growth, if applicable?
      i. How does funding factor into those plans?

2. What efforts have been made to integrate victim services personnel into the daily work of your agency?
   a. Does the organizational culture support victim services efforts?
      i. If not, why do you think that is?
   b. Can you describe how the professional (civilian) victim services staff interact with sworn staff (officers, investigators, leadership)?
   c. Which law enforcement agency staff receive training on the response to victims?
   d. Do officers utilize victim-centered language (i.e., victim’s choice, safety, and well-being are the focus, and the needs of the victim are everyone’s concern) in reports?
   e. Are victim response goals incorporated into personnel performance appraisals?

3. Can you describe the victim service partnerships that your agency has in your community?
   a. Have there been any barriers experienced when trying to form community partnerships?

4. What program aspects or outcomes do you believe are an indication your victim services program is working well?
   a. What might indicate the program is not working well?
      i. How do you typically address those challenges?
   b. Have there been efforts to measure these aspects?

5. What would you characterize as being the biggest success for your agency’s victim services program in the last year?

6. Do you have anything else you would like to share?
Director of Victim Services Interview Instrument

[Note: Additional questions may be added to this instrument after document review and/or the first round of interviews at the site]

[Note: For sites with no additional victim services staff, the Director of Victim Services will receive the following questions along with any questions included in the Victim Services Staff Interview Instrument and not the Director of Victim Services Interview Instrument]

1. Can you describe the structure of victim services within the agency?
   a. Are victim services personnel placed in an investigative specialty unit or within a larger command or division?
   b. Who directly supervises or leads the victim services efforts?
   c. What considerations led to this structuring?
   d. Have you faced any challenges that seem to relate to the structure of victim services in your agency?

2. What policies and procedures have been developed through the victim services program (e.g., Victim Services Code of Ethics, On Call Response Protocol, etc.)?
   a. Do any of these apply to the entire agency?

3. What trainings do you offer in your agency, particularly those related to the services offered by the victim services program?

4. How would you describe the support for victim services within the agency?
   a. Does the organizational culture support victim services efforts?
      i. If not, why do you think that is?

5. Does your program currently have any victim response goals?
   a. If so, what are they and how are you planning to measure progress?

6. How do victims typically get connected to victim services programming at your agency?
   a. Does your program have standardized triage and assessment criteria that prompt victim services personnel involvement?
      i. What criteria do other personnel at the agency use to request victim services involvement on a case (e.g., patrol officers are provided with a checklist, and, if certain criteria are met, they request victim services personnel respond to a scene)?
      ii. Are these criteria outlined in policy/protocols?
   b. What are some of the less common ways that you come into contact with victims?
   c. Are there any ongoing community outreach activities?
   d. Has connection with victims and/or community outreach changed since the COVID-19 pandemic?

7. Can you describe the resources available to victims both within your agency and through referrals?
   a. What methods do you utilize to deliver these services to victims?
   b. What partnerships do you have within and outside of your agency to facilitate victims receiving services?
c. Can you describe the handoff practices utilized?

8. How does the agency maintain ongoing contact with victims?
   a. Does this continue after a case is closed?
   b. How do you determine when contact with a victim will be discontinued, if applicable?

9. What program aspects or outcomes do you believe are an indication your victim services program is working well?
   a. What might indicate the program is not working well?
      i. How do you typically address those challenges?
   b. Have there been efforts to measure these aspects?

10. What would you characterize as being the biggest success for your agency’s victim services program in the last year?

11. Do you have anything else you would like to share?
Victim Services Staff Interview Instrument

[Note: Additional questions may be added to this instrument after document review and/or the first round of interviews at the site]

1. How do you feel about the structure (i.e., the unit or division where victim services is located, program supervision, etc.) of victim services within the agency?
   a. Are you able to receive meaningful management support and supervision?
   b. Have you faced any challenges that seem to relate to the structure of victim services in your agency?

2. How would sworn law enforcement officers describe the work that you do as a victim services professional in the agency?
   a. How do the expectations for your position match up with capabilities/reality of only having 24 hours in a day?

3. How would you describe the support for victim services within the agency?
   a. Does the organizational culture support victim services efforts?
      i. If not, why do you think that is?

4. What was the most valuable training you received that helped you do your job?
   a. Does the agency support regular professional development opportunities?

5. Can you describe how you coordinate partnerships within and outside of your agency to facilitate victims receiving services?

6. What program aspects or outcomes do you believe are an indication your victim services program is working well?
   a. What might indicate the program is not working well?
      i. How do you typically address those challenges?
   b. Have there been efforts to measure these aspects?

7. What would you characterize as being the biggest success for your agency’s victim services program in the last year?

8. Do you have anything else you would like to share?