Overview

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), with funding from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), partnered with the Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA) and the Center for Victim Research on the Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV) Program to administer a survey to law enforcement-based victim services programs. The project aims to gain knowledge of the landscape of law enforcement-based victim services across the country. IACP recognizes that law enforcement agencies are providing victim services in a lot of different ways but there is no real map of where and how these programs exist across the country. Results from this survey will illuminate the current state of law enforcement-based victim services and identify needs for technical assistance to providers and future research directions. Results can also help identify common practices in this growing field and support program development and sustainability.

This survey is being conducted in two waves. The first wave targeted law enforcement-based victim services programs funded through the OVC Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV) Program and/or OVC Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. Follow-up interviews were conducted with a convenience sample of survey respondents. The second wave will expand the sample to all law enforcement agencies indicating they address victim services in the 2016 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey.

This research brief presents the results from the first wave of survey administration and analysis.

Methodology

The Wave 1 sample frame was developed from two sources:

- Fiscal year 2018 and 2019 OVC Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV) Program grantees with victim services personnel on board at the time of sample development
- Fiscal year 2020 OVC VOCA subgrantees designated as law enforcement agencies designated as law enforcement agencies
Follow-up interviews were conducted with a convenience sample of survey respondents, aiming to achieve demographic diversity in terms of geography and agency type and size where possible.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was developed in close consultation with IACP, with additional advice from OVC and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The instrument included questions on the law enforcement agency and victim services. Respondents answered questions related to the structure of victim services in the agency such as supervisory responsibility, program duration, staffing, victimization categories served by the program, services provided to victims, and trainings utilized.

Survey Administration

Wave 1 of the survey was administered via SurveyMonkey between June 17, 2020 and September 16, 2020. Importantly, the survey was designed to be completed by an individual employed by the law enforcement agency regardless of the configuration of victim services (i.e., in-house vs. contracted out). Only one response per agency was sought.

Results

Of the 498 agencies in the sample, 201 responded, for about a 40% response rate.

- One agency reported that they provided victim services but had not done so in the past six months.
- Four had never provided victim services.
- 16 agencies did not respond to the question.

Our primary focus for this survey was on agencies that had provided victim services in the past six months. This research brief focuses on the 180 respondents that fell into that group.

How do law enforcement agencies provide victim services? (n = 178)

In terms of how services are provided, 83% of responding agencies indicated they provide services to victims of crime with a specialized victim services unit.

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How long have agencies provided victim services? (All agencies = 162, LEV Grantees = 27)

Agencies had been providing services anywhere between less than six months to over 30 years.
- Agencies had been providing services for an average of 18 years.

The 27 LEV Grantees tended to be agencies with newer victim services programs.
- LEV Grantees had been providing services for an average of 7 years.

Where are responding law enforcement agencies located? (n = 180)

Respondents represented 42 different states from all regions of the United States. Certain states were overrepresented:
- Florida (25), Texas (23), Colorado (17), and Utah (13).

This overrepresentation was proportionate to the number of agencies from these states in the sampling frame:
- 87 Florida agencies and 77 Texas agencies were included in the sampling frame.
It appears there is a strong focus on law enforcement agencies in these states seeking funding for victim services from OVC. The other 38 states contributed fewer than 10 respondents each.

Survey respondents were asked the number of full- and part-time employees in the victim services program, including professional (civilian), sworn, and contract employees. The total number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees was calculated (one part-time employee = half a full-time employee). On average, agencies had five full-time victim services employees. 54% of agencies had two or fewer full-time employees. 74% of agencies used volunteers in addition to paid staff.

The majority (79%) of victim services programs were directly supervised by a sworn law enforcement officer.

Agencies were asked approximately how many victims, including both primary and secondary, were served in 2019. Agencies had served between 0 and 12,302 victims in 2019.

On average, victim service programs had provided services to 1,458 victims in 2019.
Respondents were asked what services their agencies offered for victims of crime. The average agency provided 20 services for crime victims. The most commonly provided services tended to be informational such as general information about crime and victimization and assistance with filing for victim compensation. The least commonly provided services included counseling, conflict resolution, support groups, and restorative justice.

How are victim service providers trained? (n = 157)

Respondents reported that their victim services personnel received training from a number of sources. This included national, state, and local trainings, both online and in person, as well as formal victim academies.

Other Training Sources Mentioned:
- IACP Trainings
- Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP)
- University

What crime types are receiving services? (n = 157)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victimization Type</th>
<th>% of Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VAWA Crimes</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide/Attempted Homicide</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Other Violence</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elder or Child Abuse</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strangulation</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Trafficking</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gun Crimes</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mass Violence/Disaster</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic/DUI</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Offenses</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Felonies</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Misdemeanors</td>
<td>27%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked what types of crime victims are receiving services based on written policy. The most common types of victimizations served were Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) crimes (domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking), homicide, and attempted homicide. All felonies and all misdemeanors were less commonly eligible for services.

What services do agencies offer victims? (n = 160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Common Services Provided</th>
<th>% of Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Information about Crime/</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victimization/ Prevention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement Interview</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompaniment/ Advocacy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistance Filing for Compensation</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate/Emergency Safety</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Notification of Legal Rights</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notification of Case Events</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Status Updates</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prosecuting Attorney’s Association
Internal Agency Trainings

Training gaps described included trainings on strangulation and threat assessment, vicarious trauma and self-care, working in law enforcement as a professional civilian, and intermediate and advanced advocacy.

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Program Development

Follow-up interviews explored various topics under structure, staffing, services, and measurement (i.e., data collection and evaluation) of victim services programming. Importantly, key factors to building a victim services program within the law enforcement agency were explored. Findings indicate that there was not a universal path to creating victim services. There was usually more than one single factor at play including a person within the department, often the chief or sheriff, having an interest in bringing in a victim-centered approach, and funding opportunities. In some cases, outside political influences led to development often in conjunction with changes in legislation such as passing of victims’ bill of rights. Partnerships with the community were also key to program development.

Program Support and Agency Culture

Interviewees were asked to describe the support for victim services in their agency. Support coming from the top down was an important factor in gaining agency support along with higher-level staff engagement in the program development process. Support was described as growing over time, particularly once officers saw the value of internal victim services firsthand. As professional (civilian) staff, advocates described the importance of understanding and adapting to law enforcement agency culture in order to gain acceptance.

Next Steps

The next step of the project is to administer the second wave of the survey, which is much broader in terms of included agencies as it will expand beyond those receiving OVC funding.

- Wave 2 was released in March 2021.
- Final products will be completed in September 2021.

“We have a good community. That’s the bottom line. We have a lot of good people trying to do good things.”
- Midwest PD