

C R I M E | V I C T I M S '  
I N S T I T U T E

1997-1998  
THE IMPACT OF CRIME ON VICTIMS  
*A Baseline Study on Program Service Delivery*

FINAL REPORT



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
STATE OF TEXAS  
JOHN CORNYN

# CRIME VICTIMS' INSTITUTE

---

## THE IMPACT OF CRIME ON VICTIMS *A Baseline Study on Program Service Delivery* 1997-98

### FINAL REPORT

Office of the Attorney General  
*State of Texas*

John Cornyn  
*Attorney General*

Shane Phelps  
*Deputy Attorney General for Criminal Justice*

Dr. Brian Ogawa  
*Director, Crime Victims' Institute*

# THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH AND MEMBERS OF THE 76TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE

---

## *Letter From the Advisory Council*

Dear Governor Bush and Members of the Seventy-sixth Legislature:

This report presents the results of the first research project conducted by the Crime Victims' Institute. This study begins the enormous and complex tasks of characterizing the impact of crime on victims and society in Texas and of assessing the efficacy of crime victim legislation, policies, and programs in place to address the needs of the people affected by crime. This effort is long overdue.

We, the members of the first Advisory Council, are fortunate to have played an active role in the production of this work. We ask that you review the results carefully and give the recommendations serious consideration.

We also want to express our thanks to you for your support of the Crime Victims' Institute and to the many victims, service providers, law enforcement personnel, prosecutors' office personnel, and others who participated in this project. Finally, we want to thank all of the research staff at the Institute whose many hours of hard work will benefit victims/survivors now and in the future.

Sincerely,  
Members of the Advisory Council



Vincent M. Torres  
*Crime Victim Advocate*  
*Chair, Advisory Council*



Sylvia Silva  
*Director of Victim Services*  
*City of El Paso Police Department*



The Honorable Ted Poe  
*District Judge, 228th District Court*  
*Vice Chair, Advisory Council*



Deborah Caddy  
*Director, Rape Crisis Program*  
*Women's Center of Tarrant County*



Patricia A. (Patsy) Day  
*Executive Director, Victims Outreach*



Nancy E. Harrington  
*Executive Director*  
*Montgomery County Women's Center*



The Honorable Allen Place, Jr.  
*Member, Texas House of Representatives*



Deborah D. Tucker  
*Executive Director, National Training Center*  
*on Domestic and Sexual Violence*



The Honorable Mike Moncrief  
*Member, Texas Senate*



Lt. Bill Walsh  
*Youth and Family Crimes Division*  
*City of Dallas Police Department*



The Honorable Arthur C. (Cappy) Eads  
*Bell County District Attorney*



Michele Deitch, Esq.  
*Director, Center for Criminal Justice*  
*Initiatives*



Ralph K. Fletcher  
*Investigator, Potter County District Attorney's*  
*Office*



Richard Nedelkoff  
*Office of the Governor*  
*Executive Director, Criminal Justice Division*



Kathi West  
*Victim-Witness Coordinator*  
*U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of*  
*Texas*

# OUR PURPOSE

---

## *Crime Victims' Institute*

The Crime Victims' Institute was created by the 74th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature as specified in Chapter 412, Subchapters A, B, C, & D of the Government Code and other related citations. The legislative intent for the Institute is the following:

- *Study the impact of crime on victims and survivors, their family members, and society at large*
- *Develop policies to assist the criminal justice and juvenile justice systems in preventing criminal victimization*
- *Evaluate the effectiveness of criminal justice and juvenile justice policies, programs, and services related to crime victims and their family members*
- *Make general recommendations for improving crime victim services in the State of Texas*
- *Advise and assist the legislature in developing plans, programs, and legislation for improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice and juvenile justice systems in addressing the needs of victims and survivors*

# 1998 ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

**JOHN CORNYN**  
*Attorney General*  
*State of Texas*

*The Crime Victims' Institute receives guidance from an Advisory Council whose members are appointed by the Attorney General. The Council is composed of the Attorney General and the following individuals, each of whom is appointed by category as designated by statute.*

**CHAIR, Mr. Vincent M. Torres**  
*Austin*

Crime Victim Advocate *(a person with broad knowledge of homicide issues)*

**VICE CHAIR, The Honorable Ted Poe**  
*Houston*

District Judge, 228th District Court  
*(a district judge whose primary responsibility is to preside over criminal cases)*

**Ms. Patricia A. (Patsy) Day**  
*Dallas*

Executive Director, Victims Outreach  
*(a crime victim)*

**The Honorable Allen Place, Jr.**  
*Gatesville*

Member, Texas House of Representatives

**The Honorable Mike Moncrief**  
*Fort Worth*

Member, Texas Senate

**The Honorable Arthur C. (Cappy) Eads**  
*Belton*

Bell County District Attorney  
*(a district attorney who prosecutes felony cases)*

**Mr. Ralph K. Fletcher**  
*Amarillo*

Investigator, Potter County District Attorney's Office *(a law enforcement officer)*

**Ms. Kathi West**  
*Austin*

Victim-Witness Coordinator,  
U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Texas *(a crime victims' assistance coordinator)*

**Ms. Sylvia Silva**  
*El Paso*

Director of Victim Services  
City of El Paso Police Department  
*(a crime victims' liaison)*

**Ms. Deborah Caddy**  
*Fort Worth*

Director, Rape Crisis Program  
Women's Center of Tarrant County  
*(a mental health professional experienced in the care and treatment of crime victims)*

**Ms. Nancy E. Harrington**  
*Conroe*

Executive Director  
Montgomery County Women's Center  
*(a person with broad knowledge of sexual assault issues)*

**Ms. Deborah D. Tucker**  
*Austin*

Executive Director, National Training  
Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence  
*(a person with broad knowledge of domestic violence issues)*

**Lt. Bill Walsh**  
*Dallas*

Youth and Family Crimes Division  
City of Dallas Police Department  
*(a person with broad knowledge of child abuse issues)*

**Ms. Michele Deitch, Esq.**  
*Austin*

Director, Center for Criminal Justice  
Initiatives  
*(a person with broad knowledge of research methods)*

**Mr. Richard Nedelkoff**  
*Austin*

Office of the Governor  
Executive Director, Criminal Justice  
Division  
*(a designee of the Governor)*

**Vacant Position**

*(a person with broad knowledge of intoxication offenses)*

# CRIME VICTIMS' INSTITUTE

---

## *Staff*

### **Research Specialists**

David Whiteside, Ph.D.  
Jerry Usher, M.S., M.Div.  
Li-Chin Wu, M.A.

### **Administrative Assistant**

Sally Griffiths

### **Intern**

Tze-Ching John Lin  
University of Texas at Austin  
*Major: Government/Economics*

# CONTENTS

## *Impact Study Final Report*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xii
LIST OF TABLES .....	xiv
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	
Director's Overview .....	1
Summary of Key Findings .....	2
Funding .....	3
Staff .....	3
Training .....	5
Services .....	7
Information Management .....	8
Recommendations .....	10
<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b>	
Purpose .....	15
Literature Review .....	15
<b>II. RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	
Scope .....	21
Design .....	23
<b>III. SURVEY OF CRIME VICTIM SERVICES/PROGRAMS IN TEXAS</b>	
Methodology .....	26
Database List .....	32
Results .....	35
<b>IV. SURVEY OF CRIME VICTIMS/SURVIVORS IN TEXAS</b>	
Methodology .....	69
Results .....	81
<b>V. FOCUS GROUPS</b>	
Methodology .....	105
Results .....	109

## Appendices

<b>APPENDIX A:</b>	
Literature Search and Cited Sources .....	123
<b>APPENDIX B:</b>	
Survey of Crime Victim Services/Programs in Texas .....	127
<b>APPENDIX C:</b>	
Tabulated Results of Survey of Crime Victim Services/Programs in Texas .....	137

**APPENDIX D:**  
Prosecutor’s Office Adult Victim Information Form . . . . . 159

**APPENDIX E:**  
Survey of Crime Victims/Survivors in Texas (English) . . . . . 163

**APPENDIX F:**  
Survey of Crime Victims/Survivors in Texas (Spanish) . . . . . 171

**APPENDIX G:**  
Tabulated Results of Survey of Crime Victims/Survivors in Texas . . . . . 179

**APPENDIX H:**  
Regional Focus Group Participants . . . . . 193

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

This study was the largest and most extensive of its kind ever in Texas and one of the most ambitious conducted in any state. The cooperation and collaboration of many individuals and organizations were therefore essential to the successful completion of the project. The Crime Victims' Institute would like to thank the following for their invaluable assistance:

---

*We would like to especially thank the many victims and survivors who participated in the pilot study and state-wide survey.*

## **CENTER FOR SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**

Barbara White, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Social Work

Ruth McRoy, Ph.D., Director

Fran Danis, M.S.W., Associate Director

Elizabeth Pomeroy, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Harriet Sullivan, Administrative Assistant

Graduate Assistants:

Diane Green, M.S.W.

Maureen Cannistra, M.S.W.

Mary Beth Harris, M.S.W.

## **TEXAS DISTRICT AND COUNTY ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION**

Tom Krampitz, Executive Director

Rob Kepple, General Counsel

Joni Sager, Communications Director

## **PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS, STAFF, AND VICTIM COORDINATORS FOR THE 46 COUNTIES THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY OF VICTIMS/SURVIVORS:**

Harris County, John B. Holmes, Jr., District Attorney

Don Stricklin, First Assistant District Attorney

Amy Smith, Director of Victim Services

Dallas County, John Vance, Criminal District Attorney

Sherry Wallace Patton, Assistant District Attorney

Vicky Isaacs, Assistant District Attorney

Tarrant County, Tim Curry, Criminal District Attorney

David Montague, Staff Attorney

Ann Diamond, Chief of Litigation, Civil Section

Shari Shanafelt, Victim Assistance Coordinator

El Paso County, Jaime Esparza, District Attorney

Marcos Lizarraga, First Assistant District Attorney

Travis County, Ronald Earle, District Attorney

Rosemary Lehmberg, First Assistant District Attorney

Vicki Skinner, Director of Administration

Cameron County, Yolanda De Leon, County & District Attorney

Marvelia Cano, Office Manager

Jefferson County, Tom E. Maness, Criminal District Attorney

Paul McWilliams, Assistant Criminal District Attorney

Elaine Jones, Secretary

Don Simonson, Chief, Data Processing

Lubbock County, William C. Sowder, Criminal District Attorney  
George White, Office Manager

Bell County, Arthur (Cappy) Eads, District Attorney  
Jill Hargrove, Victim Assistance Coordinator

Webb County, Jose Rubio, Jr., District Attorney  
Art Munos, Investigator

Smith County, Jack Skeen, Jr., Criminal District Attorney  
Barbara Valentine, Office Manager  
Betty Whitten, Crime Victim Coordinator

Taylor County, James Eidson, Criminal District Attorney  
Kay Berry, Felony Secretary

Midland County, Al Schorre, District Attorney  
Francie Murdock, Victim Assistance Coordinator

Guadalupe, Gonzales, Lavaca Counties (25th Judicial District) W.C. Kirkendall, District Attorney

Randall County, James Farren, Criminal District Attorney  
Gil C. Farren, Victim Assistance Coordinator

Tom Green, Concho, Runnels Counties (119th Judicial District), Stephen Smith, District Attorney  
Diane Wilson, Investigator

Tom Green, Coke, Sterling, Irion, Schleicher Counties (51st Judicial District), Stephen R. Lupton, District Attorney  
Diane Wilson, Investigator

Comal County, Dib Waldrip, District Attorney  
Maria Corona, Victim Assistance Coordinator

Walker County, David Weeks, Criminal District Attorney  
Denise Vogler, Victim Assistance Coordinator

Bastrop County, Charles Penick, Criminal District Attorney  
Tracy Mach, Crime Victim Coordinator

Lamar County, J. Kerye Ashmore, County & District Attorney

Clay, Archer, Montague Counties, Tim Cole, District Attorney  
Patti Poe, Crime Victim Coordinator

Brewster, Jeff Davis, Presidio, Pecos, Upton, Reagan Counties, Albert Valadez, District Attorney  
Mark Griesser, Legal Assistant

Carson, Childress, Collingsworth, Donley, Hall Counties (100th Judicial District), Randall Sims, District Attorney  
Hattie Sanderson, Crime Victim Coordinator

Caldwell County, Charles Kimbrough, Criminal District Attorney

San Jacinto County, Scott Rosekrans, Criminal District Attorney  
Patti Buchanan, Victim Assistance Coordinator

Terry County, George Pruitt, County & District Attorney  
Gary Cook, Investigator

Floyd County, Becky McPherson, District Attorney

**THE PROVIDERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY OF SERVICE PROVIDERS  
(NAMES ARE IN THE CRIME VICTIM SERVICE PROVIDER DATABASE LIST FY1998):**

Police Departments  
Sheriff Offices  
Family Violence Programs  
Sexual Assault Programs  
Community Supervision and Correction Departments  
**TEXAS ASSOCIATION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT (TAASA)**  
Carol Townsend, M.Ed., Executive Director  
Zoila Rizzo, Training Specialist  
Oralia Diaz, Production Coordinator/Training Specialist

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM**

Karen Parker, M.S., Administrator

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

Angie McCown, Victim Services Coordinator

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE, CRIMINAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE DIVISION**

Ray Ramirez, Victim Services Coordinator

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE, VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION**

Raven Kazen, Director

Dan Guerra, Assistant Director

**TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE**

Cleonne Drake, Director

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY COUNCIL**

Tony Fabelo, Ph.D., Director

Gene Draper, Ph.D., Deputy Director

**REGIONAL FOCUS GROUPS SITE COORDINATORS**

University of Texas at Austin

Steven Dietz, M.S.I.S., Assistant Director, Texas Institute for Public Problem Solving

University of Houston

Lacey Sloan, Ph.D., Graduate School of Social Work

University of Texas at El Paso

Mary Beth Harris, M.S.W., Social Work Program

University of Texas at Brownsville

Sue Ritter, Ph.D., Department of Criminal Justice

University of Texas at Arlington

Marjie Barrett, Ph.D., School of Social Work

Texas Tech University

Craig Crabtree, M.S.W., M.B.A. Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work

**TEXAS COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER STANDARDS AND EDUCATION**

Dennis Graffious, Program Manager

**FORMER DIRECTOR OF VICTIM SERVICES AND SPECIAL PROJECTS, Office of the Attorney General**

Laurel Kelly

# LIST OF FIGURES

---

	PAGE
<b>PART II RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	
Figure 2.1 Flow Chart of Research Phases . . . . .	22
<b>PART III SURVEY OF CRIME VICTIM SERVICES/PROGRAM</b>	
Figure 3.1 Flow Chart of Provider Survey Methodology . . . . .	25
Figure 3.2 Service Provider Survey Respondents . . . . .	36
Figure 3.3 Funding for Crime Victim Services . . . . .	37
Figure 3.4 Significant Changes in Past Two Years. . . . .	38
Figure 3.5 Providers That Do and Do Not Have Crime Victim Liaisons or Coordinators. . . . .	39
Figure 3.6 Use of Volunteers and Interns . . . . .	40
Figure 3.7 Providers That Do and Do Not Have Crime Victim Service Staff. . . . .	41
Figure 3.8 Support For Establishing State Certification Standards. . . . .	42
Figure 3.9 Population of Service Area . . . . .	43
Figure 3.10 Source of Victim Referrals for All Service Providers . . . . .	44
Figure 3.11 Media Sources Used to Inform Crime Victims of Services . . . . .	45
Figure 3.12 Significant Changes in Services . . . . .	46
Figure 3.13 Percentage of Victims Who Were Served Face-to-Face, By Phone, or By Mail . . . . .	48
Figure 3.14 Median Number of Felony and Misdemeanor Crime Victims Served. . . . .	49
Figure 3.15 Changes in Number of Victims Served During the Past Two Years . . . . .	51
Figure 3.16 Conditions for Denying Services to Victims. . . . .	52
Figure 3.17 Impact of Crime on Victims . . . . .	55
Figure 3.18 Affirmative Responses to Crime Victims' Compensation Related Issues. . . . .	56
Figure 3.19 Percentage of Providers That Do Not Document Basic Victim Demographic Data . . . . .	58
Figure 3.20 Gender of Victims Served. . . . .	59
Figure 3.21 Race/Ethnicity of Victims Served . . . . .	60
Figure 3.22 Percentage of Providers That Document Victims Belonging to Specific Populations . . . . .	61
Figure 3.23 Use of Automation and Documentation of Victim Demographic Data . . . . .	63
Figure 3.24 Changes in the Collection of Victim Information During the Past Two Years . . . . .	64
<b>PART IV SURVEY OF CRIME VICTIMS/SURVIVORS IN TEXAS</b>	
Figure 4.1 Flow Chart of Victim Survey Methodology . . . . .	69
Figure 4.2 Outcome of Survey Mailing Procedure . . . . .	82
Figure 4.3 Average Number of Months for Cases To Reach Final Disposition . . . . .	84
Figure 4.4 Type of Crime Experienced . . . . .	85
Figure 4.5 Gender of Respondents . . . . .	86
Figure 4.6 Race/Ethnicity of Respondents . . . . .	87
Figure 4.7 Education Level of Victims. . . . .	88
Figure 4.8 Marital Status of Respondents. . . . .	89
Figure 4.9 Income Level of Respondents. . . . .	90

Figure 4.10	Age Groups of Respondents . . . . .	91
Figure 4.11	Relationship of Offender to Victim . . . . .	92
Figure 4.12	Long-term, Disabling Conditions Resulting from Crime . . . . .	93
Figure 4.13	Impact of Crime on the Lives of Civilians and Officers. . . . .	94
Figure 4.14	Impact of Crime on Victims Belonging to Different Race/Ethnic Groups . . . . .	95
Figure 4.15	Victim Impact Statement . . . . .	96
Figure 4.16	Helpfulness of Others to Victims . . . . .	97
Figure 4.17	Most Frequently Utilized Services by Victims of Different Crimes. . . . .	98
Figure 4.18	Usefulness of the Most Commonly Received Services. . . . .	99
Figure 4.19	Victims Who Were Not Informed of Certain Rights. . . . .	100
Figure 4.20	Sources of CVC Information . . . . .	101
Figure 4.21	Reasons Victims Did Not Apply for CVC . . . . .	102
Figure 4.22	Sources of Financial Assistance . . . . .	103
Figure 4.23	Victims Who Would Report the Crime Again . . . . .	104

**PART V REGIONAL FOCUS GROUPS**

Figure 5.1	Regional Focus Group Sites . . . . .	105
Figure 5.2	Agenda for Focus Groups. . . . .	106
Figure 5.3	Guidelines for Focus Group Participants . . . . .	107
Figure 5.4	Structured Focus Group Questions. . . . .	107
Figure 5.5	Flow Chart of Focus Groups . . . . .	108
Figure 5.6	Focus Group Participants . . . . .	110

# LIST OF TABLES

---

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>PART III</b>	<b>SURVEY OF CRIME VICTIM SERVICES/PROGRAM</b>
Table 3.1	Provider Survey Participants . . . . . 28
Table 3.2	Sites and Participants in Provider Questionnaire Review Groups . . . . . 30
Table 3.3	Provider Response Rate . . . . . 31
Table 3.4	Type of Felony Crime Victims Served . . . . . 50
Table 3.5	Direct Victim Services Provided . . . . . 53
Table 3.6	Rank Order of Services to Which Victims Were Referred by Providers. . . . . 54
<b>PART IV</b>	<b>SURVEY OF CRIME VICTIMS/SURVIVORS IN TEXAS</b>
Table 4.1	Prosecutor Offices Participating . . . . . 74
Table 4.2	Return Rate of Victim Questionnaires. . . . . 81
Table 4.3	Reasons Questionnaires Could Not Be Delivered. . . . . 83
<b>PART V</b>	<b>REGIONAL FOCUS GROUPS</b>
Table 5.1	Focus Group Participants at Each of Six Sites . . . . . 111

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *Director's Overview*

### STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

During 1997, an estimated 117,087 violent crimes occurred in Texas. The ratio of violent crimes to a fixed time interval revealed that one violent crime occurred every 4 minutes. Little is known about the victims of these crimes, their needs, and the services that are available to meet their needs.

### PURPOSE OF RESEARCH STUDY

The Crime Victims' Institute (CVI) conducted a baseline study to learn more about the impact of violent crime on victims and to document the services that are available. The findings from this study can be used to make recommendations on improvements to service delivery and to assist decision makers in allocating resources.

## Purpose of the Study

- Document the extent and nature of services available to crime victims in Texas.
- Understand how existing services meet the expressed needs of victims.

This research project and report are in keeping with the duties of the Crime Victims' Institute as legislated in the Government Code Subtitle B, Title 4, Chapter 412, Subchapter B, Sec. 412.012(1)(A) and Sec. 412.012(5), which require the Institute to "conduct an in-depth analysis of the impact of crime on victims..." and "make general recommendations for improving the service delivery systems for victims in the State of Texas."

### SCOPE OF RESEARCH STUDY

Given the unique characteristics of victim/survivor populations, the geographic expanse and socio-cultural diversity of Texas, research studies face specific challenges. These challenges include the complexity of political jurisdictions, international border issues, urban/rural dichotomies, a mobile population, and linguistic variations. The baseline study that was completed was the largest inquiry into crime victim services ever conducted in Texas. The study consisted of three phases:

- Phase One:** Survey of over 1,400 crime victim service providers;
- Phase Two:** Survey of over 8,200 crime victims/survivors; and
- Phase Three:** Convening of six (6) regional focus groups.

### COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

In order to successfully complete this large state-wide study, the collaboration of many individuals, agencies, and organizations was necessary. The Crime Victims' Institute Advisory Council participated in the project design and methodology, development of survey instruments, leadership in focus groups, and reviewing and approving the final report and recommendations. The close involvement of the Council was essential in ensuring that the research was timely and relevant. The Council membership represents various stakeholders, including victims and survivors, elected officials, criminal justice professionals, direct service providers, and policy makers.

---

*In order to successfully undertake such a large state-wide study, the collaboration of many individuals, agencies, and organizations was necessary.*

The Texas District and County Attorneys' Association was instrumental in establishing communication between CVI and prosecutors' offices. The Texas Department of Public Safety, Family Violence Program of the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS), and Criminal Justice Assistance and Victim Services Divisions of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) responded quickly and efficiently to our requests.

An essential part of the project was the involvement of university researchers. The Center for Social Work Research at the University of Texas at Austin, in particular, was vital to our efforts. The Center faculty and staff, assisted by doctoral level graduate students, performed the data entry and initial analysis for both surveys. The Center also helped organize, coordinate, and facilitate the regional focus groups as well as conduct the preliminary content analysis of the participant comments.

The focus groups were held at six universities to encourage the partnership of universities, communities, and public and private agencies. Colleges and universities across the state will continue to play a major role in working with the Institute to establish a sound and coordinated agenda for crime victim research and evaluation.

This partnership of researchers, practitioners, and policy makers is one of the most significant recent developments in the crime victimization research field. Collaboration is becoming the preferred and standard approach to ensure that studies are both credible and ethical. Scientific integrity and practical benefit are essential goals for any research that seeks to improve the lives of crime victims and survivors.

## *Summary of Key Findings*

Complete tabulations of the results for each survey are provided in the appendices of this report. Other sections of this report describe the findings for each phase of the study.

---

### *Funding, Staff, Training, Services, and Information Management*

The results could be summarized in a number of useful ways. There is a rich amount of data that can be grouped, compared, and analyzed using the hundreds of possible and meaningful combinations of variables. The following categories were chosen to highlight the findings:

- Funding for victim services,
- Staff for victim service programs,
- Training for staff and volunteers,
- Present services and their usefulness, and
- Information management, including victim data collection, records, and notification.

# Funding

## FUNDING RECEIVED

Almost 90 percent of law enforcement agencies (i.e., police and sheriff departments), 85 percent of community supervision and corrections (probation) departments, and 60 percent of the prosecutors' offices reported that they received no funding for crime victim services. These findings reveal that most agencies having contact with victims do not receive funds to respond to victim needs or provide them with their rights.

---

*Almost 90% of law enforcement agencies, 85% of probation departments, and 60% of prosecutors' offices reported they received no funding for crime victim services.*

By comparison, all family violence and sexual assault programs reported receiving funding from various local, state, and federal sources. Significant improvements occurred in these family violence and sexual assault programs over a recent two-year period due to increased funding, as reported by almost 63 percent of these programs. This does not mean that family violence and sexual assault programs are adequately funded or should not receive additional funds for their services.

It is evident that there needs to be much improvement within the criminal justice system to adequately provide victim services. Not surprisingly, it seems that improved services for all programs are reasonably tied to increased availability of funding.

Funding, particularly for victim services staff, was an issue noted by focus group participants. Numerous participants representing various victim service providers said that funding for staff positions and salaries is inadequate. As a result, existing staff are required to maintain heavy case-loads. These demands appear to lead to burnout and high turnover rates. In short, the delivery and quality of victim services is diminished.

## FUNDING SOURCES

Of those agencies and programs that received funding for victim services, nearly 80 percent (79.7%) said their funds were from county/city sources. Twenty-seven percent received funds from the United Way and private donations, 17 percent from the Office of the Governor (federal Victims of Crime Act, Violence Against Women Act, etc.), and 12 to 14 percent from state agencies (Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Department of Human Services, and Office of the Attorney General).

# Staff

## PROSECUTOR VICTIM ASSISTANCE COORDINATORS

The Texas legislature has mandated that each prosecutor's office designate a victim assistance coordinator to ensure that a victim, guardian of a victim, or close relative of a deceased victim is afforded rights within the criminal justice system [*Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 56.04 (a)*]. Of the prosecutor offices who responded to the survey, almost all stated that they had designated victim assistance coordinators. It appears, however, that having designated coordinators does not mean that they are exclusively dedicated to victim services or that there are sufficient staff to meet victim needs.

---

*Having designated victim assistance coordinators does not mean that they are exclusively dedicated to victim services or that there are sufficient staff to meet victim needs.*

Written responses to an open-ended question on the service provider survey revealed that some victim assistance coordinators have been unable to meet the needs of victims seeking services. For the most part, these coordinators are located in rural counties (i.e., counties with populations under 100,000) where they have no other staff to assist them. Many noted that they have job responsibilities and duties that extend beyond those related to victim services. This situation is compounded by the large number of rural law enforcement agencies that serve victims by referring them to the prosecutors' victim assistance coordinators.

#### **LAW ENFORCEMENT CRIME VICTIM LIAISONS**

Law enforcement agencies are also mandated to designate a crime victim liaison [*Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 56.04 (c)*] to ensure that victims receive information regarding their rights (e.g., information on a defendant's right to bail, criminal investigation procedures, and compensation). Each law enforcement agency must also provide, in writing, the "name, address, and phone number of the law enforcement agency's victim assistance liaison" to a victim. This information should be provided during an initial contact or at the earliest possible time [*Code of Criminal Procedure, Art. 56.07 (C)(3)*]. Over 35 percent of police departments and sheriffs' offices, however, reported that they did not have a designated crime victim liaison.

---

*Over 35% of police departments and sheriffs' offices reported that they did not have a designated crime victim liaison.*

As noted above, many law enforcement agencies rely on prosecutors' victim assistance coordinators and programs by frequently referring victims to them. Police reported prosecutors as their second most frequent referral after crisis centers, counseling services, and shelters. Sheriffs noted prosecutors' victim assistance programs as their primary referral to victims. Some of the survey respondents from law enforcement agencies wrote that agreements had been established with prosecutor offices to have the prosecutors' offices provide victim services.

Smaller jurisdictions appear to have difficulty assigning a liaison role for a number of reasons, including lack of perceived or actual need for a liaison (e.g., given relatively low crime incident numbers) and limited staffing.

#### **VOLUNTEERS**

Only one in five (21.1%) of the survey respondents indicated that their agencies or programs used non-paid volunteers. Even fewer (8.9%) indicated the use of counselor interns. Most family violence and sexual assault programs (95.2%) reported using non-paid volunteers, and almost 65 percent reported using counselor interns.

---

*Only one in five (21.1%) of the survey respondents indicated that their agencies or programs used non-paid volunteers.*

At least 80 percent of law enforcement agencies and prosecutor offices do not utilize the services of volunteers. It is difficult to determine the impact that volunteers might have on the staffing problems noted previously since programs that utilize volunteers (i.e., sexual assault and family violence programs) expressed high staff turnover and burnout issues in the focus groups. Hence, the use of volunteers by more law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices may or may not alleviate the problems reported by overburdened victim assistance coordinators.

#### **UNFUNDED MANDATES**

The requirements for law enforcement and prosecutors' offices to have staff designated as crime victim liaisons or victim assistance coordinators are unfunded mandates. There are no funding provisions specifically attached to these requirements.

---

*The requirements for law enforcement and prosecutors' offices to have staff designated as crime victim liaisons or victim assistance coordinators are unfunded mandates.*

## **Training**

#### **TRAINING CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS**

Victim service providers receive training through a variety of non-profit organizations and government agencies. The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, Texas District and County Attorneys Association, Texas Council on Family Violence, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Crime Victims' Compensation Division of the Office of the Attorney General, and Texas Victim Services Association all sponsor annual conferences or periodic workshops. Although continuing education credits are given for many professions and there is generally a high caliber of instruction at the conferences and workshops, there is no uniform curriculum or standard of instruction among these entities.

#### **STANDARDIZED TRAINING/CERTIFICATION**

The Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services Division, Office of the Attorney General, has developed (with facilitation from the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault), a voluntary state-wide certification program for Hotline Volunteer Advocates and Direct Services Volunteer Advocates in sexual assault programs. Hotline volunteers receive 30 hours of standardized classroom instruction on set topics, self-study, and on-the-job training. Direct services volunteers receive 40 hours of training.

---

*There is no uniform curriculum or statewide standard of instruction for victim service providers*

Various law enforcement agencies also conduct formal training or "academies" for volunteer advocates. The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE), moreover, provides training to peace officers on victims' rights, compensation, and notification. The Basic Peace Officer Certification Course requires instruction on crisis reactions experienced by victims, secondary victimization by the criminal justice system, death notification, and mandated responsibilities related to victim rights. There is, in addition, a Special Investigative Topic Course offered every two years as part of continuing education that covers the Code of Criminal Procedure as it relates to law enforcement and victim rights.

The National Academy for Victim Studies (NAVS) is a partnership of National Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Sam Houston State University. The Academy was started at the University of North Texas in 1995 but was relocated to Huntsville in 1998. The Academy conducts academic instruction and continuing education courses and is also developing a national certification program for victim service providers. These endeavors could have a significant impact upon standardized training in Texas because of the potential for career studies and university-based classroom requirements.

The Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice, offers an annual one-week summer training at select universities across the nation. A number of Texas victim service providers have benefitted from this training each year. The summer 1999 Academy will include Sam Houston State University as one site. The National Victim Assistance Academy (NVAA) uses an original text, which contains contributions from Texas service providers.

---

*Service providers were equally divided on whether to establish standards for certification.*

In response to the survey question on state certification of victim services, an equivalent number of service providers did and did not support establishing standards for certification. Most (74.2%) of family violence and sexual assault programs favored the idea, as did one-half (50.6%) of the prosecutors' offices. The Texas District and County Attorneys Association is in the process of developing a voluntary certification for prosecutor-based victim assistance coordinators. More than one-half of the respondents from probation departments (51.2%) and law enforcement agencies (55.3%) were opposed to establishing certification standards.

#### **SPECIALIZED TRAINING**

Generally, service providers ranked the psychological and emotional effects of crime as having the greatest impact on victims. Collectively, they listed crisis centers and counseling services as their primary referral for victims. Focus group participants emphasized the need for crisis intervention and mental health counseling services. Almost one-third of the victims who answered the survey question regarding long-term disabling conditions resulting from the crime reported psychological effects. Almost half (48.7%) of the victims responded that the psychological impact of the crime affected them greatly, more than any other area of their lives. These are obviously important training topics, including learning how to evaluate victim needs and making appropriate referrals.

---

*Almost half of the victims responded that the psychological/emotional impact of the crime affected them greatly, more than any other area of their lives.*

Focus group participants emphasized a need for cultural awareness training. Results from the victim survey revealed that the effects of crime are perceived differently by victims belonging to minority ethnic and racial groups. Specifically, Black and Hispanic victims indicated that they were more affected spiritually and financially by crime than did Anglo victims. Black victims also rated ministers and the clergy as being more helpful than did Anglo and Hispanic victims.

# Services

## VICTIM RIGHTS

Many victims indicated that they were not informed of their constitutional rights as victims of crime in Texas. Over one-third (35%) of the victims, for example, were not informed of their right to be informed of court proceedings. At least 40 percent of the respondents said they were never informed of their right to receive protection from their offenders, have their employers notified of absences from work, have their safety considered in setting bail, receive information about crime victims' compensation, provide information for sentencing, or be informed of parole procedures. It is of no surprise that the percentage of victims who did not receive information on certain rights corresponds to the percentage of victims who did not receive those rights. Currently, there are no sanctions imposed on agencies that do not provide victims their constitutional rights.

---

*Many victims indicated that they were not informed of their constitutional rights as victims of crime in Texas.*

## CRISIS INTERVENTION/MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING

The six most frequently accessed services by victims were case information, medical services, spiritual counseling, follow-up services, professional counseling, and education services that focused on victim services and crime prevention. Sexual assault victims were most likely to utilize professional counseling, as were surviving family members of murder and intoxication manslaughter victims.

---

*The six most frequently accessed services by victims were case information, medical services, spiritual counseling, follow-up services, professional counseling, and education services.*

Victims receiving these services revealed that all were useful, but professional and spiritual counseling and medical services were found to be more useful than the others.

## VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS

Crime victims in Texas have the right to provide pertinent information to a probation department conducting a presentencing investigation concerning the impact of the offense by testimony, written statement, or any other manner prior to any sentencing of the offender [*Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 56.02 (a) (5)*]. More than one-third (37.8%) of the victims participating in the survey, however, did not complete a victim impact statement. Of those, more than one-half were unaware of their right to do so. For the remaining victims, 36.4 percent said that they completed a victim impact statement, but, interestingly, 21.5 percent were not sure if they had or had not completed the statement.

---

*More than one-third (37.8%) of the victims participating in the survey did not complete a victim impact statement.*

## COMPENSATION

Crime victims in Texas have the right to receive information regarding compensation [Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 56.02 (a) (6)]. Almost 38 percent of the victims, however, reported that no one informed them of the Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Program. Of those who did receive information, most received the information from crime victims' compensation staff, prosecutors' victim assistance coordinators, and police officers/sheriffs' deputies.

---

*Almost 38% of the victims reported that no one informed them of the Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Program.*

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents stated that they did not apply for compensation, even though most (57.5%) stated that they had expenses related to the crimes committed against them. Of those who did not apply, almost 54 percent said they did not know about the program or did not understand it.

## Information Management

### VICTIM INFORMATION/DATA COLLECTION

During the time that cases were being polled to identify victims for the survey, it became apparent that the District Attorneys' offices maintained case files in different ways. For example, some offices had automated (i.e., computerized) files from which appropriate cases could be identified. Victim data could be printed from these files or recorded directly from computer terminals. Other offices were automated to the extent that appropriate cases could be identified, but staff had to pull hard copies of the case files to find and record victim data. Some counties had no automation capabilities at all. For offices in these counties, hard copies of cases had to be found in warehouses, storage rooms, filing cabinets, boxes, and shelves.

---

*Most victim service providers do not maintain basic demographic data on the clients they serve.*

Most victim service providers do not maintain basic demographic data on the clients they serve. About two-thirds (64.1%) do not keep information on the gender of victims. Similarly, 69.4 percent do not record the victims' race and ethnicity and 58.3 percent do not document ages. Almost 90 percent do not maintain records on victim income or education levels. Only 25 percent keep information on marital status.

Victim service providers that had automated (computerized) systems were found to maintain more victim demographic data than providers with no automation capabilities. Of the providers who said that their agencies and programs had witnessed significant changes in the collection of victim data over the past two years, 70 percent cited the acquisition of computers as the reason for those changes. Nearly all indicated improvements in the quality and quantity of victim information.

---

*Only 7.6% of the respondents said they had automated systems for client data.*

The study found that only 7.6 percent of the respondents had automated systems for client data. Of these, 85.7 percent stated that they received funding for their programs. In other words, funding appears to be related to the acquisition of automated systems. In turn, automation leads to the collection and effective maintenance of more victim demographic information, upon which program service and priority decisions can be based. The Integrated Tracking System, for example, is now being used by family violence and sexual assault programs in Texas.

### DHS/OAG Integrated Tracking System (ITS)

The Integrated Tracking System (ITS) simplifies collection, tracking, and reporting of data for publicly funded sexual assault and domestic violence programs across the state of Texas. The system was developed through funding provided by the Department of Human Services and the Office of the Attorney General. It has established a format that allows for compilation of state-wide data and the ability to identify areas of need in order to direct priorities and funding. The information collected includes:

- Client Information: demographic data, victimization description, offender data, and services provided;
- Education Program Information: participant and delivery data; and
- Volunteer Information: hours of service and training received.

### NOTIFICATION

The rights and services that may be available to a crime victim are meaningless unless the victim knows they exist. It is a basic right and need of victims to be kept informed of criminal justice events which have a major impact upon their lives and well-being [*Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 56.02 (a) (3), (4), (7)*]. Only 41.6 percent of victims reported receiving case information.

---

*Only 41.6% of victims received case information. Of those given case information, more than three-fourths (77.2%) stated it was moderately to very useful.*

Although case information is the third most frequent service offered to victims by providers, only 22.8 percent of law enforcement agencies provide such information. Most community supervision offices (76.8%) and prosecutors' offices (90.6%) did provide this information. Of those victims who received case information, over three-fourths (77.2%) said it was moderately to very useful.

Various victim service offices throughout the state utilize automation to notify victims of court dates, case status, etc. These include sending standardized notification letters to assist in the handling of large case loads. There are presently two large scale automated systems in the state which offer victim notification. These include the Automated Victim Notification System of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the Victim Information Notification Everyday (VINE) System.

## TDCJ Automated Victim Notification System

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice Automated Victim Notification System (AVNS) was implemented in March, 1998 and presently serves over 40,000 victims. The AVNS allows victims to obtain inmate unit location and status information by telephone. Information is provided in English and Spanish, and voice recognition is available for victims who do not have touch-tone phone service. The AVNS has an optional feature that automatically calls a victim to notify him/her that the TDCJ Institutional Division is processing an inmate for release. This service is an enhancement to the system and does not replace written notification letters. Any victim or concerned citizen registered with the Victim Services Division to receive letter notification on an offender may access the AVNS.

## VINE (Victim Information Notification Everyday) System

VINE presently operates in 34 states, providing state-wide systems to Kentucky, Ohio, Arkansas, North Carolina, Nebraska, and Alaska. This system serves more than 500 communities across the United States and Canada. VINE is used by Bexar, Denton, Smith, Tarrant, and Travis counties in Texas. An additional 22 Texas counties are considering the system. The VINE system provides victims with the following information via toll-free telephone numbers: offenders' arrests, custody status, court events, parole hearings, and probation/parole events. Victims can also register to be immediately notified of any change in their offenders' custody or status. VINE now offers several optional features that enhance the services provided by the system:

- Live Operator and Multiple Languages,
- Sex Offender Registration & Community Notification,
- V-NET (Victim Network/Internet Services), and
- Emergency/Temporary Protective Order Program.

## *Recommendations for Policy Makers*

The findings summarized above and the detailed report that follows can be reviewed by administrators, service providers, and policy makers to determine what specific actions may be necessary to improve services to victims. The following recommendations address some of the more important issues related to the research findings.

### RECOMMENDATION ON FUNDING

- **Provide funding for those crime victim services and staff positions required by state law.**

Crime Victims' Institute's research clearly revealed that large numbers of service providers and criminal justice agencies cannot meet even the basic needs of victims or ensure that victims' rights are met due to a lack of funding. Providing funding to service providers should be a high priority.

At the end of FY 98, the Crime Victims' Compensation Fund had a cash balance of approximately \$182 million. The expenditure of this fund is limited by constitutional amendment to victim-related compensation, services, and assistance. A large number of entities in Texas are eligible for these excess funds and will be requesting assistance for their programs and needs.

Although the Office of the Attorney General is authorized by statute to adopt rules to disperse these funds [*see Texas code of Criminal Procedure Art. 56.541(f)*], there are no specific guidelines currently to do so. Funds must first be appropriated.

It is therefore suggested that the Office of the Attorney General be directed to establish guidelines and procedures for the granting of such funds to eligible victim-related services and assistance, and be authorized to expend a portion of the excess funds (e.g. in the amount up to 10% of the fund balance in each year of the biennium) for such grants. Granting of funds should include primary consideration of any research findings of the Crime Victims' Institute, particularly the lack of state funding for law enforcement-based crime victim liaisons and prosecutor-based victim assistance coordinators.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS ON STAFF**

- Encourage law enforcement agencies to designate crime victim liaisons through required annual reporting of the name, address, and telephone number of the liaison to the Crime Victims' Institute and the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse.
- Encourage prosecutors' offices to designate victim assistance coordinators through required annual reporting of the name, address, and telephone number of the coordinator to the Crime Victims' Institute and Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse.

The Crime Victims' Institute, in order to establish a repository for victim-related information and data, needs the cooperation of criminal justice agencies and offices. Contact information is minimally required to establish such a repository. The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse publishes an information and referral directory of victim service providers.

### **RECOMMENDATION ON TRAINING**

- Standardized training curriculum designed for and made available to all criminal justice agencies and victim service providers should be developed.

The development of such curriculum could be a joint effort of the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse and the Crime Victims' Institute. The duties of the Institute specify that the Institute "enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse to provide training and education related to the outcome of research and duties" [*Government Code Sec. 412.012 (11)*].

### **RECOMMENDATION ON SERVICES**

- Establish minimum basic service guidelines for criminal justice agencies and victim service programs receiving state funding.

Crime victims in Texas should be assured that they will receive certain basic services no matter where they are victimized or reside. Guidelines will assist victim service programs to develop according to recognized and accepted standards. Such guidelines could be developed with leadership from the State Agency Task Force on Victim Services.

In November of 1997, a director of victim services was hired by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). One of the director's responsibilities is to develop a statewide victim services network for DPS and other Texas law enforcement agencies that do not have access to victim services. The director is to also establish standardized training for law enforcement personnel so that they can provide a consistent quality of care to victims. The DPS director of Victim Services is a member of the State Agency Task Force on Victim Services.

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- **Mandate that criminal justice agencies use a Victim Information/Data Collection Standard Form that will be developed by the Crime Victims' Institute.**

This standard form is necessary to collect basic information on crime victims in order to recommend improvements to the services that the criminal justice system provides to victims. There is currently no such state-wide standard form being used. The information will be valuable as a data mine for the research and evaluation studies conducted by the Crime Victims' Institute.

- **Take the first step in developing a state-wide automation plan for victim-related information collection and victim notification by designing and initiating a pilot program.**

Making use of the information from existing state-wide and county-based automated victim-related information collection and victim notification programs, a pilot program should be implemented. This pilot program should be a collaborative effort of the Criminal Justice Division of the Office of the Governor, Office of Court Administration, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, Department of Human Services, and Office of the Attorney General.

## *Recommendations for Future Research and Study by the Crime Victims' Institute*

- **The need for state-wide certification or minimum standards for victim service providers should be studied.**

Criminal justice agencies currently planning or developing certification/minimum standards for victim service professionals should be encouraged to cooperate with the Crime Victims' Institute in this study.

- **The feasibility and specifications of a state-wide system for victim notification and collection of victim-related information should be studied.**

The National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) has received a grant from the Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice, to develop a training and technical assistance package for jurisdictions interested in designing, developing, and implementing automated victim notification systems. The "Implementing Customized Victim Notification Technologies" project seeks to identify and assess existing programs that utilize technology to provide notification services to crime victims. The Crime Victims' Institute could participate in this national study. The Institute could also benefit from the project by learning from the project's established methodology and initial findings.

- **The reasons certain rights afforded to victims by the state constitution are not being provided should be studied.**

The reasons related to service providers may include inadequate numbers of staff, insufficient funds, lack of awareness, need for more training, disinterest and disregard, or absence of protocols.

- **The needs of minority racial and ethnic groups and types of services provided to them should be studied.**

Victims belonging to minority racial and ethnic groups reported that they were more affected by crime than did Anglo victims. Are these victims being adequately served and are service providers trained to be culturally competent?

- **The needs of victims of violent juvenile offenders and child victims should be studied.**

The distinct needs and concerns of these victim groups need to be studied. The rights afforded to victims of juvenile offenders are similar but also different than the rights afforded to victims of adult offenders. The study of child victims requires appropriate research design and methodology.



# I. INTRODUCTION

---

## Purpose

The Texas Department of Public Safety reported that an estimated 117,087 violent crimes occurred in the state during 1997 (*Crime in Texas 1997: The Texas Crime Report, p. 11-13*). Violent crimes represented 11 percent of all crimes reported. Violent index crimes (and relative percentages for 1997) were murder (1%), rape (7%), robbery (26%), and aggravated assault (66%). The ratio of these crimes to a fixed time interval revealed that one violent crime occurred every four minutes in Texas.

---

*An estimated 117,087 violent crimes occurred in Texas in 1997.*

To better understand the impact that crime has on victims and survivors, the Crime Victims' Institute (CVI) completed a research project that focused on the services that are available to adult victims of violent crimes. The research project also examined how victims perceived and made use of the available services. A major goal of the project was to obtain a more complete understanding of the types, nature, and benefits of services. The results of the research project can be used to make improvements in services and assist decision makers in allocating resources.

## Literature Review

A review of the general literature on crime victimization research was completed before the research project was designed. Of particular interest were victim-related studies conducted in Texas. The following is a summary of the literature review completed by CVI.

### ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH

How are public administrators and policy makers to understand the experiences of crime victims in ways that allow them to respond with programs that are equitable, efficient, effective, and meet diverse needs over time? One assumption has been that victim advocates (many of whom are victims and survivors) know what victims need and can speak authoritatively for them. Advocates have argued, for example, that Victim Impact Statements are needed if victims are to have a voice in the criminal justice system. Although some surveys suggest that victim satisfaction is not greatly affected by the opportunity to submit a statement (Davis & Smith, 1994), overall victim participation in the criminal justice process is found to be generally beneficial to victims (Winkel, 1991; Erez & Tontodonato, 1992; Erez & Bienkowska, 1993). Moreover, a National Institute of Mental Health research project found that speaking on MADD-sponsored victim impact panels had a positive affect on victims (Lord, 1998).

---

*Overall victim participation in the criminal justice process is found to be beneficial to victims.*

Using relatively small groups of victims and victim advocates as a single source of information does not fully document the impact that crime has on all victims or adequately measure the services needed by all victims. Rajan (1980) has thus emphasized that research and objective measures in policy development and implementation are essential. Accordingly, research can provide a comprehensive view of victim needs and provide policy makers the objective information they need to prioritize core programs.

---

*Research and objective measures in policy development and implementation are essential.*

#### OBSTACLES TO RESEARCH ON VICTIMS

Determining victim needs is difficult. Victims may not readily acknowledge the impact that crime has had on their lives or they may not attribute hardships to crime, even though stressors and consequences are evident. Victims are often disoriented and internally focused after victimization occurs and they may not be prepared or ready to communicate their feelings or concerns. Even when contacted weeks or months after victimization occurred, some victims who reported crimes to police did not disclose their victim status to researchers (see Reiss & Roth, 1993).

Some victimization studies have unique requirements. For example, studies on violence between intimates (e.g., domestic violence) should consider the potential consequences of conducting mail surveys since the proximity of the perpetrator to the victim can influence the victims' responses, or more importantly, the perpetrator might harm the respondent for participating in the survey. Personal interviews might be more appropriate for this type of study. Surveys of specific populations, in other words, often require researchers to utilize different methods of collecting information.

It is also difficult to define the reference period of some studies due to the protracted, episodic nature of some crimes (e.g., family violence). Methodological and ethical problems exist for surveys of child abuse victims. The impact of recounting abuse can be detrimental to a child and it can contaminate his or her testimony. Research may also encounter difficulties in obtaining adequate samples, locating victims, defining terms, and designing scales to measure satisfaction and needs.

---

*Research may encounter difficulties in obtaining adequate samples, locating victims, defining terms, and designing scales to measure satisfaction/need.*

#### VICTIM DEFINITIONS

Victim studies is a relatively new field. As such, definitions have not yet been agreed upon and certainly not codified by the victim services community. For example, the definition of "victim" varies according to individual self-identification and role assignment (Burt, 1998), as well as context and agency mandates (Smith, 1985). Law enforcement agencies typically define "victim" using criminal codes. In Texas, the Code of Criminal Procedure defines victim as a "person who is the victim of sexual assault, kidnaping, aggravated robbery or who has suffered bodily injury or death as a result of the criminal conduct of another." [CCP Art. 56.01 (3)] Mental health professionals may define "victim" as anyone psychologically affected by a crime. Historically, victim compensation programs have not considered victims of property crimes to be compensable victims.

---

*The definition itself of "victim" varies according to individual self-identification, role assignment, context, and agency mandates.*

Inconsistent definitions have made it difficult to construct survey instruments that utilize clearly understood terms (Block & Block, 1984). Zepp (1996) specifically encountered problems

with the definitions of family violence offenses, counting procedures, and measurements of incidents. The authors of these studies point out that much of the discrepancy is rooted in how states statutorily define crimes.

**TYPES OF VICTIMIZATION STUDIES**

For more than 30 years, surveys have been used to measure the incidence of victimization. Initially, surveys were undertaken to improve the estimates of crime rates by the National Crime Panel (Argana, 1975). These surveys did not gather information on victims’ experiences or needs. Crime studies, such as the Texas Crime Trend Survey (St. Louis, 1978) and Crime and Justice in Texas (Teske, 1995), are primarily intended to measure crime rates and occurrences. Even the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) attempts to estimate the “dark figure” (Sparks, 1977) not captured by the National Crime Survey (i.e., cases not reported to police and/or cases not recorded by police). General population surveys on victimization result in better estimates of unreported and unrecorded crimes (Bachman & Taylor, 1994).

There have been numerous reviews of the methodological problems inherent with victimization surveys (Biderman, 1975,1981; Schneider, 1981; Skogan 1975, 1976, & 1978). The problems included:

- the relatively rare occurrence of crime in the general population,
- the non-random distribution of crime in the general population,
- the under-reporting of crimes in which the assailant is known to the victim, and
- the sub-populations which are largely unavailable for most surveys (e.g. males, lower socioeconomic levels).

**TYPES OF VICTIMIZATION STUDIES**

Statistics gathered from the National Crime Survey (FBI Uniform Crime Report)

General population victimization surveys (National Crime Victimization Survey)

Specific population victimization surveys (age, crime type, etc.)

Victim client satisfaction/service delivery surveys (victim participation, satisfaction, recommendations)

Victim needs assessment surveys (self-reported needs, provider-reported)

Some studies have attempted to measure victim needs, services, rights, and participation in the criminal justice system. For example, a recent study (Kilpatrick, Beatty, & Howley, 1998) compared the survey responses of victims living in states where the legal protection of victims’ rights was either strong or weak. The study revealed that victims were more likely to be informed of their rights and to exercise their rights if they lived in states with strong legal protection. Victims in these states, compared to victims living in “weak protection states,” also rated the adequacy of the criminal justice process more favorably.

Other studies have attempted to measure participation of victims in the criminal justice system, victim services, and victim needs. Summaries of victim programs have been done on the national level (Friedman, 1997; Tomz & McGillis, 1997). Friedman (1997) presented a discussion on the lingering debate over the “professionalization” of victim services. On one side of the debate, professionalization of services is viewed as necessary for ensuring confidentiality and developing service standards. On the other side, peer support is viewed as being most important and extremely beneficial to victims. McEwen (1995) surveyed 319 victim assistance programs in the United States and found that the most pressing “need” reported by programs involved serv-

ing multicultural communities with competent intervention by trained staff. McEwen also found that programs were generally concerned with domestic violence and child victims, but particularly concerned with victim protection and case tracking. In that these needs and concerns are those of program personnel, Elias (1986) argued that certain victim services often function to control victims for the criminal justice system rather than provide services that effectively meet their needs. This suggests that victim service programs should be assessed on scales that focus on victims' needs, not just program statistics or services.

---

*This emphasizes the need to assess victim service programs on scales that focus on victims' needs rather than program statistics or services alone.*

“Rape in America” (1992) surveyed both victims and programs to determine the impact of crime and the state of existing services. This study was historic in that it was the first to provide national empirical data on forcible rape of women in America. The study had two major components: a three-year longitudinal study of 4,008 adult women (“The National Women’s Study”) and a survey of 370 rape crisis agencies (“The State of Services for Victims of Rape”).

“Victim Costs and Consequences: A New Look” (1996) was a two-year multi-disciplinary National Institute of Justice study, which attempted to estimate the impact of personal crime on Americans. Information was gathered on medical costs, lost earnings, and public program costs of victimization, as well as pain, suffering, and lost quality of life.

#### RESEARCH ON VICTIMS IN TEXAS

Friedman (1997) indicates that there is a paucity of reliable data on the impact of crime on victims at the state and local levels. Victimization studies in Texas have focused on the incidence and demographics of victimization (Forston & Kitchens, 1974; cf., Martin & Reban, 1976), services for property crime victims (Lein & Rickards, 1991, 1992), victim notification (Criminal Justice Assistance Division, 1995), and restitution collection (Mason, 1995). Although it did not survey victims directly, a case processing study in Harris County examined whether sexual assault cases, compared to robbery and physical assault cases, were prosecuted differently. The results were inconclusive (Triplett & Miller, 1994).

---

*There is a paucity of reliable data on the impact of crime on victims at the state and local levels.*

A National Institute of Justice (1995) study on 547 family violence victims in New York and Texas found that 50 percent of the victims were satisfied with police intervention. Respondents noted that they were satisfied because police “responded in pairs, insisted on seeing the victim when the abuser tried to prevent contact, did not use mediation, and were interested in hearing the victim’s story.” Another survey of police department and prosecutor personnel in Texas (Taylor, Quinn, Fritsch, Caeti, & Walker, 1997) revealed problems with crime victims applying to the Texas Crime Victims’ Compensation Fund. The study, “An Analysis of the Texas Crime Victims’ Compensation Fund: Predictors of Access, Utilization and Efficiency,” made several recommendations: For example, more training for law enforcement and prosecutorial staff was suggested, as was increased support for victim services and funding for victim liaisons and victim assistance coordinators.

Texans have also made contributions to “New Directions from the Field: Victim Rights and Services for the 21st Century,” (Office for Victims of Crime, 1998). CVI provided assistance with research, writing, and final editing for this document. The director of CVI was one of the final signatories for this historic document. Presently, The National Institute of Justice and the Office for Victims of Crime are conducting a multi-year evaluation to determine if compensation and assistance programs funded by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) are meeting the needs of crime victims. It is anticipated that the project, “Effectiveness of Victims of Crime Act Funding in Meeting the Needs of Crime Victims,” will include Texas in its samples of providers and/or victims. The director of CVI serves on this project’s advisory board.



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Crime victimization research, which identifies victim needs, impact of crime, and critical rights and services, is a relatively new field. National studies, and those from other states, provide some direction for Texas. Relevant studies, nonetheless, incorporating the regional and cultural diversity of our state, require our own concerted effort.

---

*Crime victimization research, which identifies victim needs, impact of crime, and critical rights and services, is a relatively new field.*

### Some of the key research questions for CVI and Texas are:

What are the definable primary and crime-specific needs of victims?

What current services are being provided and do they meet the identifiable core needs of victims?

What type of policy, program, and funding changes are needed to improve victim services?

What type of universal definitions, uniform documentation, minimum standards for services, and standardized training should be developed for all levels and disciplines of victim assistance?

What is the impact of regional diversity and cultural issues on service provision?

What level and kind of cooperation and coordination among agencies are necessary to ensure a seamless system of support for victims?

