



**Training Needs Assessment for Victim Assistance Providers
in the State of West Virginia**

Submitted to

West Virginia State Victim Assistance Academy Steering Committee

July 20, 2008

Dr. Gail A. Flint
Research Coordinator
West Virginia State University
Department of Criminal Justice - Chair

And

Mark J. Addesa
Research Assistant
Assistant Professor
West Virginia State University
Department of Criminal Justice

And

L. Larry Nelson
Project Coordinator
WV SVAA
West Virginia State University

This report is supported by a grant **2007-4035-WV-VF** awarded by the Office for Victim's of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice, to West Virginia State University. Opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the United State's Department of Justice, Office for Victims, of Crime, West Virginia State University, or the member agencies of the West Virginia State Victim Assistance Academy Steering Committee.

Introduction:

Recognizing the need for comprehensive, standardized, academic and skills based training/education for victim assistance providers in West Virginia, the West Virginia State Victim Assistance Academy Steering Committee authorized the Regional Community Policing Institute at West Virginia State University to seek grant funds from the Office for Victims of Crime to fund the development of a West Virginia State Victim Assistance Academy.

In November of 2007, the WVSVA Steering Committee instructed the authors of this document to conduct a training needs assessment for victim assistance providers throughout the state of West Virginia. Dr. Gail Flint served as the research coordinator with assistance from Mr. L. Larry Nelson and Mr. Mark Addesa for this assessment. With input from the entire team, a survey instrument was created to facilitate the collection of data on training needs of victim service providers in our state. On January 11, 2008 a live demonstration was presented to the Steering Committee. The content of the survey was approved at that time. A final distribution list was developed. On February 15, 2008 the assessment survey was distributed. Access to the survey was posted on the websites of the Regional Community Policing Institute, the West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and the Division of Criminal Justice Services. An e-mail invitation to participate was sent to approximately 400 individuals across West Virginia to provide for a cross-state response. The survey closed on May 1, 2008. We had 138 (34.5% of solicited participants) individuals respond to the survey with 133 totally completing the assessment (96.4%). Data analyses began on June 1, 2008 and were completed on July 14, 2008. The results of this survey are intended to aid in our assessment of the training needs of victim service providers in the state of West Virginia. This empirical evidence of training needs will allow us to create an academy that best meets the needs of victim service providers in our state. The results of the survey were reviewed by the Steering Committee and provided to the Curriculum Development & Design Committee for review and assessment

Methodology

In order to engage in this assessment, we conducted a statewide online survey of victim service providers. We surveyed administrators/supervisors as well as paid and volunteer staff. Through this survey, we sought to obtain information on the following topics:

- The field of concentration that best describes the respondent
- Type of agency respondent's are employed with
- Agency position description held by the respondent
- Paid or volunteer status of respondent
- Length of time respondent has worked for this agency
- The service area of the respondent
- Rural, urban or suburban setting of respondent
- The need for standardized training
- The assessment of benefit of a SVAA to the respondent
- Number of service providers working for the respondent(Supervisors Only)
- Size of respondent's agency
- Services provided by respondent's agency
- Areas of experience of the respondent
- Areas of knowledge that respondent felt was most relevant and needed by entry level victim service providers
- Areas of skill that respondent felt was most relevant and needed by entry level victim service providers
- Barriers of respondent to attending a SVVA

Our target population included government and nonprofit victim service providers in the state of West Virginia. The following agencies were included in our survey:

- West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information & Services
- WV CASA

- WV Department of Corrections
- WV Crime Victims Compensation
- U.S. Attorneys Office
- County Persecuting Attorneys Offices
- West Virginia State Police
- Sheriff's Departments
- City Police Departments

Findings:

Q1. Which of the following best describes the field in which you work?								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Victim Advocacy	41.40%	55						
Victim Services	19.50%	26						
Law Enforcement	17.30%	23						
Corrections/Probation	6.80%	9						
Other (please specify)	5.30%	7						
Prosecution	3.80%	5						
Health/Human Services	3.00%	4						
Education	2.30%	3						
Victim Compensation	0.80%	1						
Medical	0.00%	0						
Answered Question		133						
Skipped Question		5						

Q2. Which of the following best describes your agency?								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Private non-profit agency	34.60%	46						
County Prosecuting Attorney's Office	12.80%	17						
State Agency	12.00%	16						
County Sheriff's Department	10.50%	14						
Other (please specify)	10.50%	14						

City Police Department	6.80%	9						
CASA	5.30%	7						
State Coalition	4.50%	6						
MADD Program	1.50%	2						
State Police Department	0.80%	1						
Federal Agency	0.80%	1						
Tribal Agency	0.00%	0						
Faith-based organization	0.00%	0						
Private, for profit	0.00%	0						
Answered Question		133						
Skipped Question		5						
Q3. Please check the best description of your position within your agency.								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Domestic Violence Advocate	22.60%	30						
Administrator(Supervisor)	18.00%	24						
Other (please specify)	15.00%	20						
Victim Service Provider	12.80%	17						
Law Enforcement(Non-supervisor)	8.30%	11						
Advocate Covering All Crimes	6.80%	9						
Counselor	6.00%	8						
Sexual Assault Advocate	3.80%	5						
Educator	2.30%	3						
Prosecutor	2.30%	3						
Social Worker	0.80%	1						
Victim Compensation Case Worker	0.80%	1						
Adult Protective Services	0.80%	1						
Child Protective Services	0.00%	0						
Medical Care Provider	0.00%	0						
Answered Question		133						
Q4. In this position, you are:								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Paid	98.50%	131						
Volunteer	1.50%	2						
Answered Question		133						
Skipped Question		5						
Q5. How long have you been in this position?								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
6 to 10 years	27.80%	37						
Less than 2 years	27.10%	36						

3 to 5 years	21.80%	29						
11 to 15 years	12.00%	16						
Over 20 years	7.50%	10						
16 to 20 years	3.80%	5						
Answered Question		133						
Skipped Question		5						
Q6. Which of the following best describes your service area:								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Victims within the limits of one county	36.10%	48						
Multi-county service area	36.10%	48						
Statewide Service area	16.50%	22						
Other (please specify)	6.00%	8						
Victims within the limits of one city	5.30%	7						
Answered Question		133						
Skipped Question		5						
Q7. Your service area is primarily:								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Rural	69.90%	93						
Urban	15.00%	20						
Surburban	15.00%	20						
Answered Question		133						
Skipped Question		5						
Q8. Are victim assistance providers, or any individuals within your agency who work directly with victims, in need of comprehensive and standardized training in the area of victim services?								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Yes	85.00%	113						
No	15.00%	20						
Answered Question		133						
Skipped Question		5						

Q9. Do you think that you would benefit by attending a statewide victim assistance academy that focuses on the basic skills and knowledge that all victim service providers should have?								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Yes	90.20%	120						
No	9.80%	13						
Answered Question		133						
Skipped Question		5						
Q10. Approximately how many direct service paid providers work for your agency at any given time?								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
1 to 5	43.40%	23						
None	20.80%	11						
11 to 15	15.10%	8						
Over 15	11.30%	6						
6 to 10	9.40%	5						
Answered Question		53						
Skipped Question		85						
Q11. Approximately how many direct service volunteers work for your agency at any given time?								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
None	43.40%	23						
1 to 5	28.30%	15						
Over 15	15.10%	8						
11 to 15	7.50%	4						
6 to 10	5.70%	3						
Answered Question		53						
Skipped Question		85						
Q12. Please check each of the following services in the category of EMERGENCY AID/FIRST RESPONDER that your agency provides:								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Information on victims' rights and services	86.40%	38						
Referrals for emergency shelter	75.00%	33						
Emergency restraining or protective orders	52.30%	23						

Accompaniment to hospital for rape examination and/or treatment	50.00%	22						
Referrals for emergency financial aid	47.70%	21						
Information and assistance on security options	40.90%	18						
Information and assistance on recovery of stolen property	38.60%	17						
On-scene crisis intervention	36.40%	16						
24-hour crisis hotline	36.40%	16						
Interpreter services	31.80%	14						
Local emergency compensation claim	29.50%	13						
Sensitive death notification	25.00%	11						
Information and assistance on document replacement	22.70%	10						
Child care services	13.60%	6						
Crime scene cleanup	6.80%	3						
Answered Question		44						
Skipped Question		94						
Q13. Please check each of the following services in the category of COUNSELING AND ADVOCACY that your agency provides:								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Access and referrals to self-help support groups	78.60%	33						
Crisis intervention	61.90%	26						
Intervention with public agencies	59.50%	25						
Intervention with employees, creditors, and landlords	47.60%	20						
Access to counseling during criminal and juvenile justice adjudications	45.20%	19						
Short-term counseling	38.10%	16						
Community crisis response	28.60%	12						
Long-term counseling	21.40%	9						
Group counseling	21.40%	9						
Answered Question		42						
Skipped Question		96						
Q14. Please check each of the following services in the category of INVESTIGATION that your agency provides:								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Basic information on the criminal justice system	97.10%	34						
Regular updates on status of investigation	60.00%	21						

Compensation claim filing	60.00%	21						
Notice of suspect arrest	45.70%	16						
Interpreter services	40.00%	14						
Notification of pretrial release of accused	40.00%	14						
Answered Question		35						
Skipped Question		103						
Q15. Please check each of the following services in the category of PROSECUTION that your agency provides:								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Accompaniment to court	88.20%	30						
Victim consultation in plea decisions	64.70%	22						
Safe and secure waiting area	55.90%	19						
Notification of plea negotiations	52.90%	18						
Transportation/parking assistance	50.00%	17						
Employer intervention services	35.30%	12						
Child care services	23.50%							
Answered Question		34						
Skipped Question		104						
Q16. Please check each of the services in the category of SENTENCING that your agency provides:								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Notification of right to submit a victim impact statement	85.20%	23						
Assistance in writing, audio taping or videotaping of victim impact statement	77.80%	21						
Notice of sentence	59.30%	16						
Answered Question		27						
Skipped Question		111						
Q17. Please check each of the following services in the category of POST DISPOSITION that your agency provides:								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Notification of parole hearing	53.80%	14						
Notification of violation of parole/probation	50.00%	13						
Information/notice of appeal	46.20%	12						

Victim impact statement at parole	46.20%	12						
Name of probation officer or other supervised community release officer	46.20%	12						
Advance notification of release	34.60%	9						
Collection of restitution	26.90%	7						
Restitution payment as condition of probation or parole	26.90%	7						
Notification of custody location	26.90%	7						
Audiotape or videotaped victim impact statement at parole	23.10%	6						
Notification of application for clemency, pardon, or communication	15.40%	4						
Answered Question		26						
Skipped Question		112						
Q18. Please check your primary area(s) of experience/focus.								
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count						
Domestic Violence	69.20%	92						
Sexual Violence	51.90%	69						
Intimate Partner Violence	40.60%	54						
Crimes Against Persons	33.80%	45						
Elder Abuse	29.30%	39						
Other (please specify)	21.10%	28						
Investigation	20.30%	27						
Property Crimes	18.00%	24						
DUI/DWI	17.30%	23						
Homicide	17.30%	23						
Hate/Bias Crimes	16.50%	22						
Prosecution	12.00%	16						
Corrections	9.80%	13						
Probation/Parole	6.00%	8						
Answered Question		133						
Skipped Question		5						
Q19. The following section lists knowledge areas. While all the areas are important, we are asking for your input about the areas that you feel are most relevant and needed for entry level victim service providers.								
Space does not permit full description of each topic so only titles are listed.								
Answer Options	No Need	Very Little Need	Some Need	Needed	Highest Need	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Domestic Violence	2	5	10	43	73	0	4.35	133

Sexual Assault	2	5	12	42	71	1	4.33	133
Child Victimization	2	3	8	65	55	0	4.26	133
Substance Abuse and Victimization	0	7	12	57	55	2	4.22	133
Victim's Mental Health Needs (Short term)	3	7	21	40	62	0	4.14	133
Stalking	3	8	13	51	54	4	4.12	133
Victim's Mental Health Needs (Long term)	3	9	18	47	55	1	4.08	133
Ethical Issues (including Confidentiality) in Victim Services	4	8	18	48	55	0	4.07	133
West Virginia Crime Victims Legal Rights	2	9	21	55	46	0	4.01	133
Rural Victims	2	7	30	48	46	0	3.97	133
Funding for Victim Services	4	9	25	49	44	2	3.92	133
Coordinated Community Response	2	7	28	58	37	1	3.92	133
Criminal Legal Remedies	2	9	23	67	30	2	3.87	133
Elder/Dependent Adult Abuse	5	6	20	71	28	3	3.85	133
Professional Responsibility & Integrity	3	10	34	48	37	1	3.8	133
Financial Assistance for Crime Victims	5	5	32	61	29	1	3.79	133
Respecting Diversity	6	12	25	53	37	0	3.77	133
Technology and the Information Age	4	14	22	63	28	2	3.74	133
Stages of the Criminal Justice System	2	14	32	56	27	2	3.7	133
Victimology	5	11	31	59	27	0	3.69	133
Homicide	5	11	31	55	27	4	3.68	133
Civil Legal Remedies	4	13	34	58	22	2	3.62	133
Juvenile Justice System	7	17	30	55	23	1	3.53	133
Campus Crime and Victimization	3	15	36	64	10	5	3.49	133
Investigative Techniques	9	19	35	39	27	4	3.43	133
Case Termination & Boundaries	2	17	46	50	12	6	3.42	133
Workplace Violence	8	21	36	46	20	2	3.37	133
Restorative Justice/Community Justice	7	15	43	54	10	4	3.35	133
Extent and Nature of Crime in our State	7	17	42	53	11	3	3.34	133
Drunk Driving/vehicular manslaughter	8	22	33	43	19	8	3.34	133
Financial Crime/Identity Theft	5	14	51	47	9	7	3.33	133
Hate and Bias Crimes	9	17	49	46	11	1	3.25	133
Media Coverage/Media Relations	7	27	39	40	17	3	3.25	133
Federal Judicial System	11	13	55	39	11	4	3.2	133
Role of Corrections	6	33	39	40	11	4	3.13	133
History of Victim's Rights	6	28	53	37	8	1	3.1	133
International Victimization Issues (Human Trafficking)	11	33	50	32	3	4	2.87	133
Terrorism	15	31	41	33	6	7	2.87	133
Gang Violence	14	35	43	34	6	1	2.87	133
Answered Question	133							
Skipped Question	5							

Q20. The following section lists skill areas. While all the areas are important, we are asking for your input about the areas that you feel are most relevant and needed for entry level victim service providers.								
Space does not permit full description of each topic so only titles are listed.								
Answer Options	Not Needed	Very little Need	Some Need	Needed	Highest Need	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Communication Skills	1	0	17	44	71	0	4.38	133
Listening Skills	1	3	13	44	72	0	4.38	133
Crisis Intervention Skills	0	2	14	49	66	2	4.37	133
Active Listening/Empowerment	1	3	15	49	65	0	4.31	133
Verbal Skills	2	3	13	61	54	0	4.22	133
Assessment Skills	1	4	11	70	46	1	4.18	133
Basic Advocacy Skills	1	4	17	68	43	0	4.11	133
Intervention Skills	3	8	16	61	45	0	4.03	133
Professional Development and Self Care	2	4	29	52	45	1	4.02	133
De-escalation of Violence Skills	2	8	27	51	44	1	3.96	133
Writing Skills	5	5	26	57	40	0	3.92	133
Case Management	3	5	20	79	26	0	3.9	133
Dealing with Grief	0	13	29	55	36	0	3.86	133
Intake Skills	5	8	23	64	32	1	3.83	133
Suicide Intervention	4	11	30	53	32	3	3.75	133
Facilitation Skills	2	15	32	60	24	0	3.67	133
Volunteer Management	9	13	37	52	20	2	3.47	133
Death Notification	12	19	40	37	20	5	3.27	133
Answered Question	133							
Skipped Question	5							
Q21. Barriers to Accessibility								
We are committed to making the West Virginia State Victim Assistance Academy as accessible as possible so that a variety of law enforcement advocates and other victim service providers from anywhere in the State will be able to attend. You will find below several identified barriers which might make it difficult to attend the academy. Please indicate to what extent these might effect you. "								
Answer Options	No Effect	Moderate Effect	Significant Effect	Critical Effect	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count	
Cost of Training	9	36	42	45	1	2.93	133	
Location of Training	16	37	48	29	3	2.69	133	
Staff Coverage while Attending Academy	31	43	36	22	1	2.37	133	

Time Away from Work	32	47	33	20	1	2.31	133	
Transportation to and from Academy Location	71	25	25	6	6	1.73	133	
Academy Accessibility for People with Disabilities	85	13	10	7	18	1.47	133	
Availability of Interpreters for non-English Speakers	85	19	8	2	19	1.36	133	
Availability of ASL or Sign Interpreters	88	16	9	1	19	1.32	133	
Translation of Materials into Languages other than English	89	17	8	1	18	1.31	133	
Answered Question	133							
Skipped Question	5							
Q22. Additional Comments or Suggestions								
Answer Options	Response Count							
	16							
Answered Question	16							
Skipped Question	122							

The top ten areas of knowledge based training most relevant and needed by entry level victim service providers were: domestic violence; sexual assault; child victimization; substance abuse and victimization; victim’s mental health needs (short term); stalking; victim’s mental health needs (long term); ethical issues including confidentiality; and rural victims.

He top ten areas of skill training most relevant and needed by entry level victim service providers were: communications skills; listening skills; crisis intervention skills; active listening/empowerment skills; verbal skills; assessment skills; basic advocacy skills; intervention skills; professional development & self care skills; and de-escalation of violence skills.

Recommendations:

As stated in the introduction, this report focused on assessing the training needs of victim service providers in the state of West Virginia so as to inform the creation of a West Virginia State Victim Assistance Academy that will best meet the needs of providers in our state. Therefore, the following

recommendations are intended to aid in the decision making process informing the creation of this Academy.

- (1) 85% of the respondents indicated that comprehensive and standardized training for new victim service providers was needed.
- (2) 90.20% of the respondents indicated that a statewide victim assistance academy providing a skill based curriculum would benefit all providers.
- (3) The acquisition and development of new skills was the number one expectations of respondents skill based training should be the underlining basis in the development of the Academy curriculum.
- (4) The content of our academy should include a focus on rural victims, as approximately 69.9 of providers work in a rural environment.
- (5) As cost was the most important factor that would serve as a barrier to attending the academy, we should make all necessary efforts to minimize our costs, while still maximizing the quality of our academy.
- (6) The results of this assessment should be used by the Curriculum Development Committee as a tool to assist in the development of our core curriculum.
- (7) The following areas were identified highest among respondents and therefore, should help to form our core curriculum:
 - History of the Movement
 - Trauma of Victimization
 - Crisis Intervention
 - Cultural Sensitivity/Competency
 - Ethics/Confidentiality

- Case Management
- Crime Victims Compensation
- Civil/Criminal Justice System (Navigating the Justice System)
- Victim's Rights
- Child Abuse
- Adult or Child Sexual Assault
- Advocacy/Role of the Advocate (Direct Services)
- Developing Resilience
- Communication/Listening Skills
- Dealing with Grief/Death
- Substance Abuse & Victimization
- Victim's Mental Health Needs (Short & Long Term)

Conclusions:

The state of West Virginia has many agencies that work directly with and provide services for crime victims. The current entry level training for these providers is not standardized nor in most incidents skill based. It is often dependent on the individuals themselves to find and acquire this knowledge and skills. The West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence is the only program now that offers to and requires direct service providers to complete an entry level program. As our findings indicate, there is a widespread need for and interest in obtaining standardized and comprehensive training among the vast majority of victim service agencies in our state. The West Virginia State Victim Assistance Academy will fill this vital need and its successful implementation will have a major impact on victim services in West Virginia, ultimately positively impacting crime victims.