The FBI's Preliminary Annual Uniform Crime Report released in June showed the first increase in violent crime in 15 years. From 2004 to 2005, violent crime rose 2.5 percent, representing more than 1.4 million crimes—and at least that many victims—throughout the United States. Murders were up 4.8 percent, overall, and 12.5 percent in mid-size cities.

While it is too early to discern a clear national trend, the recent surge in violent crime in many American cities shows a widespread problem: Birmingham's murder rate jumped by 76 percent, Cleveland's and Milwaukee's by 38 percent, and Houston's by 25 percent. Boston, San Francisco, and Prince George's County, Maryland, recorded their highest murder rates in a decade. The District of Columbia, with 15 murders in July, declared a crime emergency. Philadelphia held a citywide summit to confront what seems like an unstoppable wave of murders.

What are we, in the victim services field, to make of all this? What does a rise in the crime rate mean for our work, for our communities, and for victims of crime, themselves—and their families?

In one sense, it doesn't mean a great deal. Fluctuations in crime do not change what victims need from us on a day-to-day basis: help to cope with trauma, access victim compensation, make safety plans, find emergency housing, learn about their legal rights, prepare for court proceedings, and rebuild their lives. Whether crime goes up or down 2.5 percent, victim service providers will continue to play a critical role in helping victims rebuild their lives.

Yet, in another sense, these statistics are quite meaningful and represent a unique moment in time for victim advocates. Alarming headlines about rising murder rates remind the public about the violent impact of crime. They announce that crime rates may not continue to fall as seen over the past decade, that successful anti-crime programs—such as community policing—require a long-term commitment, and that everyone has a stake in keeping violence at bay. These headlines can—and should—serve as a reminder that even low crime rates require awareness, commitment, funding, and action from our society.

The latest spate of violent crime provides us with an opportunity to educate our communities about the critical services we provide victims and to galvanize our public officials to create a web of support for victims. During the fall election season, we can remind candidates about victims' needs. We can ask what programs they support, what progress they envision, and what policies will ensure that victims get the help they deserve. And when the FBI publishes its final report in October, we can be ready to explain why victims of crime should remain a national, state, and local priority.*

Crime statistics do matter. They inform public policies and influence funding decisions. Let's be part of that discussion.

I want to take this opportunity to welcome our new National Center members from the FBI—the more than 100 victim specialists who work alongside FBI agents and provide a critical resource to victims of federal crimes. I'm especially pleased that Kathryn Turman, program director of the FBI's Office for Victim Assistance, has agreed to provide an insider's view of how victim assistance has come to the FBI in our NETWORKS cover story, "The FBI Experience: Bringing Victim Assistance into a Law Enforcement Agency."

I'm also delighted to have Ollie Cantos, associate director on disabilities for the White House Domestic Policy Council, share with National Center members his unique insight on the needs of victims with disabilities. "We Can Do Better: Supporting Crime Victims with Disabilities" provides a reality check on the many hurdles facing victims with disabilities and challenges all of us to do much more for this group of victims.

I hope you enjoy this issue of NETWORKS.

Mary Lou Leary
Executive Director

Despite knowing that law enforcement officers are often the first officials to encounter victims in distress or shock following a crime, we have not always recognized the importance of these interactions. Victimization can shake the very foundation of an individual or a family, and the treatment victims receive at the hands of officials can either help or cause further hurt. When this contact is respectful and helpful, victims are better able to assist investigators and their cases. Unfortunately, many victims do not report crimes because they do not believe they will be treated well by law enforcement.
Not only are law enforcement officers the first officials to interact with victims following a crime; they may be the only ones. It is estimated that less than one-third of crimes ever result in a prosecution. The impact on victims and cases is why a victim assistance component is more than simply a “must do” or “nice to do” function for law enforcement agencies. How victims are treated may also have a long-lasting effect on how well those victims cope over time.

The FBI Experience

Although the Federal Bureau of Investigation was established more than 75 years ago, victim assistance is a relatively recent development in the agency. The first efforts at developing a victim assistance program in the FBI involved a handful of staff located in the Washington, DC, headquarters and about 30 employees in field offices around the country who handled victim assistance as a collateral—or secondary—duty. Originally housed with unrelated offices and programs, the FBI’s victim assistance program often consisted of simply mailing a very general brochure about rights to victims.

“When I went through the Academy, we did not receive any training on dealing with victims,” said Thomas Pickard, former FBI deputy director. “Certainly, the FBI did not have full-time victim assistance specialists. We thought the best thing we could do for victims was to bring the perpetrators to justice. For the most part, we did not think about how victims coped. As a result we often did not do the best job we could for victims because we did not understand what they were going through or how to help them.”

Robert S. Mueller, III, became FBI director a week before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. As a former federal prosecutor and the Justice Department official who headed the initial investigation into the bombing of Pan Am 103, he wanted the FBI to do more to assist victims.

New FBI Office for Victim Assistance

In December 2001, Director Mueller established a separate Office for Victim Assistance (OVA) and hired an experienced individual to head the office, revamp the program in the field, and establish a special program for assisting victims of terrorism. Around the same time, the FBI received funding from Congress for 112 full-time victim specialist positions in field offices across the country. Building upon the extremely limited existing program required a comprehensive, multi-year strategy.

From the inception of the FBI Office for Victim Assistance, the program received visible support from the FBI Director and other senior management. The program director is a Senior Executive Service level position and reports to an FBI assistant director. The program works across all operational divisions, with the exception of counter-intelligence activities.

Establishing a program that would have credibility with FBI agents, victims of federal crimes, and other victim assistance professionals required a restructuring of
the program and workforce both at FBI headquarters and in the field—a process which took several years. The capacity to create and maintain an effective program had to be expanded. Staff size increased from four employees with relatively little victim-assistance experience to 15 employees with extensive experience working with victims and managing programs. The FBI Office for Victim Assistance now includes an assistant program director, a victim notification system manager, forensic child interview specialists, terrorism victim specialists, regional program managers, program analysts, and a financial analyst. The program is in the process of creating a formal agent advisory committee to ensure that the perspective of FBI agents is represented in all victim assistance activities.

Establishing a solid program foundation involved developing service components that reflected legal requirements, needs of victims, and operational realities. To ensure uniformity and consistency of victim assistance across the FBI, the Office for Victim Assistance developed policies, standards, and protocols that were incorporated in the FBI’s internal operations manual. These guidelines form the basis for evaluating program compliance and efficacy across the agency. Victim specialists are now required to have direct interaction with victims, respond to crime scenes, conduct psycho-social assessments, provide immediate crisis intervention, and work effectively as a team with case agents. The office drew on the expertise of internal and external experts to establish sound and effective practice standards for victim services employees.

The FBI victim assistance program carefully evaluates anyone who will work closely with traumatized victims and members of the public for the appropriate level of knowledge, skill, experience, and professional judgment. The victim specialist workforce evolved from 30 employees who handled victim assistance as an ancillary duty to 112 full-time, professional positions, including 31 dedicated to victim assistance in Indian Country.

FBI Victim Specialists

The FBI’s strategy involved developing a new victim specialist position that required the knowledge, skills, and competencies to conform to program and practice standards. The position requires a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree in the social and behavioral sciences and at least three years of work experience providing direct services to victims of crime. Concurrently with the development of the new position, the Office for Victim Assistance negotiated a larger role in hiring victim specialists to ensure that highly qualified candidates are recruited and selected.

Because victim assistance issues fall outside the FBI’s traditional training programs, the Office for Victim Assistance established a professional development program that included advanced training, mentors, and university credits. Victim specialists were added to the list of employees who are eligible for FBI tuition assistance and reimbursement.

Even though the FBI has victim specialists to handle victim assistance, agents also play an important role in this area. Working effectively with victims as part of
an investigation requires some understanding of what crime does to victims and how it affects their ability to comprehend, cope, and cooperate. Building trust and rapport with a victim is not just about being “nice”: it requires understanding how crime affects people. It is about remembering what is important to victims, especially respect and information. It also requires knowing about and using victim assistance resources.

Office for Victim Assistance employees participate as faculty for new agent training at Quantico and ensure that agents receive information on basic victimology, victims’ rights and assistance requirements, and program resources. Each year, the victim assistance program presents four to five intensive clinics on forensic interviewing of children and makes special presentations at training conferences for agents who are involved in evidence recovery teams, crisis and hostage negotiations, counter-terrorism investigations, crisis management, civil rights and human trafficking investigations, crimes against children, and cyber crimes. Field office victim specialists are required to provide training for agents in their offices and are often invited to participate in training for other agencies and non-governmental organizations.

**Helping Victim Specialists Do Their Job**

Perhaps the most important function of the Office for Victim Assistance is to ensure that field office victim specialists have the tools and resources they need to assist victims. The office makes emergency funds available on a regular basis to assist in the reunification of abducted children and other kidnapping victims, handle crime-scene cleanup, and provide temporary housing for victims. Two years ago, the office provided access to vehicles for all victim specialists through a special leasing arrangement so they can go to victims when they need immediate help. The vehicles have made a critical difference in the FBI’s ability to serve victims in Indian Country and other rural areas.

Victim specialists have significant access to professional training and tuition assistance and receive continuing education credits for annual in-service training. Recognizing that secondary traumatic stress and burnout is a common issue for victim specialists, and that many of them have more training in mental health issues than do field office employee assistance contacts, the Office for Victim Assistance created a specialized program designed to support and retain victim specialists.

Other program resources are designed to enhance the capacity of the FBI to meet special victim needs. The office selected and trained a cadre of experienced victim specialists to function...
as victim assistance rapid deployment teams to handle victim assistance in criminal aviation disasters, and highly sensitive or major cases, and to support other agencies in multi-victim crimes and disasters. FBI forensic child interview specialists are deployed on a regular basis to handle particularly difficult or sensitive child interviews, testify as expert witnesses, and provide training to law enforcement professionals in the United States and other countries.

The Office for Victim Assistance maintains victim information in child pornography crimes and serves as the clearinghouse for federal, state, and local law enforcement for this information. The office also houses what may be the only full-service terrorism victim assistance unit in existence. FBI terrorism victim specialists are licensed clinical social workers with extensive experience working with victims of terrorist attacks, bombings, and other catastrophic death and injury. Along with providing crisis intervention services, this unit performs a critical investigative and humanitarian function by coordinating repatriation, autopsy, and forensic identification of victim remains with officials and families and coordinating medical evacuation and services for injured victims.

Working with Non-governmental Organizations
FBI victim assistance headquarters and field staff work closely with a range of non-governmental organizations, including child protection programs, rape crisis centers, and domestic violence shelters. These partnerships are happening more frequently around the issue of victims of severe forms of human trafficking. It is critical that both groups understand and respect the other’s role and limitations, especially around the issue of information sharing. An atmosphere of trust and respect can ensure that law enforcement agencies involve non-governmental organizations in providing services to victims and that these organizations feel comfortable passing along information to law enforcement that will help with investigations.

While non-governmental organizations provide excellent, skilled services to victims of crimes and can be an effective partner in assisting victims, they cannot always take the place of victim assistance specialists who operate within a law enforcement agency. Law enforcement investigators must be somewhat skeptical and untrusting individuals. It is easier for them to rely upon and access victim assistance professionals who are part of the same agency, who they see daily, and who can respond to a crime scene with them. FBI victim specialists usually possess the same level of security clearance as agents and will generally have access to sensitive investigative information.

Incorporating victim assistance within a law enforcement setting involves recognizing appropriate parameters. For instance, FBI victim specialists may have mental health training and professional experience, but their job does not involve providing mental health therapy or treatment. They can provide crisis counseling to help victims cope with the immediate aftermath of a crime. They can educate victims on normal reactions to victimization and signs that may indicate a need for more intensive help. They know how to identify when victims need mental health services and to make referrals to appropriate service providers. By necessity, confidentiality of communication between law enforcement and victim assistance agencies is critical.
cations between victims and FBI victim specialists is more limited than it would be with therapists and non-government service providers. If a victim reveals information that is relevant to the investigation or indicates danger or threat to the victim or another person, then that information must be shared with the appropriate entities. FBI victim specialists must coordinate with the case agent on any case-related information provided to the victim. Communication between the victim specialist and the case agent is essential.

Producing Results
Today, the FBI Office for Victim Assistance has more than 100 full-time victim specialists in all 56 field offices, including 31 in Indian Country. These dedicated professionals are making a critical difference. They have extensive experience working with crime victims and other traumatized individuals as social workers, victim advocates, or psychologists. More than half have a master's degree. They work with victims of a wide range of crimes, including identity theft, cyber stalking, child pornography, child abduction, violent crimes in Indian Country, bank robberies, human trafficking, and kidnapping. They provide death notification, crisis counseling, emergency housing and transportation, help with victim compensation forms, return of personal property, and intervention with creditors and employers. They participate in multidisciplinary child abuse teams. They reunite missing children with their families. They keep victims informed of major case developments. They stay in touch with victims to monitor their situation and advise the case agent if there are issues of concern that could affect the investigation. They serve as the victim's primary point-of-contact thus freeing the agent's time to focus on investigative tasks.

The program has yielded a significant and measurable increase in the FBI's compliance with legal requirements for victims' rights and assistance. In 2001, fewer than 15,000 victims were identified and only a fraction received any services. In 2005, FBI victim specialists identified more than 188,000 victims, provided notifications to more than 110,000 victims, and provided direct services to more than 18,000 victims. Of these victims, a little more than 4,600 were Native Americans.

The ultimate goal of building a victim assistance program is to move from being viewed as a "fluff" program to being accepted as an essential component of a law enforcement agency. Acceptance is based on two factors: credibility and value. It takes time to demonstrate competence and build trust. Investigators must believe they can trust and rely upon victim assistance personnel and that they share the same goals: justice and helping victims cope with the impact of crime.

In 2005, FBI victim specialists identified more than 188,000 victims, provided notifications to more than 110,000 victims, and provided direct services to more than 18,000 victims.
helpful and necessary ancillary function that can benefit victims and investigations and build public support for the agency. This is the main selling point for senior managers who may view victim assistance as just one more mandate.

The success of the FBI’s program can be measured by how many agents have become ambassadors for the victim assistance program. Four years ago, one of the most vocal critics of the program said that “this victim assistance stuff is not what the FBI is about.” He now heads one of the FBI’s largest field offices. Recently, he asked, “When can I get another victim specialist for my office? I don’t know what we ever did without them. They make an incredible difference.”

Law enforcement agencies receive much criticism in court, in the media, and from the public. Investigators have a tough and often thankless job, and need to be assured that their work has value beyond a paycheck. FBI agents who become discouraged or wonder why they work so hard become re-inspired after reading some of the letters and e-mails the Office for Victim Assistance receives from victims and their families, whose lives have been touched in deep and profound ways by the FBI victim assistance program.

Law enforcement employees must always remember that no one has a greater interest in the outcome of an investigation or prosecution than do the victims of those crimes. Criminal justice professionals move on to the next case, but victims and their families will live with the impact of the crime for the rest of their lives. They are the reason to bring perpetrators to justice.

Kathryn McKay Turman is program director of the Office for Victim Assistance, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Before that, she served as acting director of the Office for Victims of Crime at the U.S. Department of Justice. She may be reached at kathryn.turman@ic.fbi.gov.
SUPPORTING CRIME VICTIMS WITH DISABILITIES

BY OLEGARIO D. CANTOS VII

Il children and adults who are victimized by crime have the right to receive services and supports to help them confront and resolve the many complexities surrounding the trauma of crime. When serving the significant population of victims of crime with disabilities, however, the deeper issue to address is how can first responders, victim/witness programs, domestic violence shelters, and others better ensure that these victims are not overlooked or otherwise forgotten?

Census figures indicate that there are more than 50 million Americans with disabilities in the United States today (excluding the 2 million who reside in institutional settings); members of the disability community constitute roughly 1 in 5 individuals in this country. It is critical that these individuals gain the same degree of access as is afforded to those without disabilities.

Often, when thinking of a person with a disability, images that come to mind may include individuals using canes, crutches, wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility devices. However, the spectrum of disability is actually far broader. In reality, various disabilities may also be invisible or otherwise not readily apparent. The general types of disabilities include those of a developmental, psychiatric, sensory, or physical nature. But, whatever the disability, it is important for those in the crime victims’ rights and services field to ponder and then confront several basic and practical questions:

- From both a physical and programmatic standpoint, how welcoming is a victim assistance program or facility to those with different types of disabilities? If a crime victim with a disability were to seek services or if the program in any way entails interacting with a person with a disability, to what extent will management and staff be ready?
- What may be done to instill within the staff culture a deep and abiding commitment to serving people with disabilities—some of the nation’s most vulnerable individuals?
- To what extent have program leaders created a network of organizational contacts upon whom to call with specific questions on how best to serve people with specific types of disabilities?
Has staff received comprehensive training on how best to support this population?

Scope of the Problem
The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), in response to the mandates of the Crime Victims with Disabilities Awareness Act, is working to develop the capability to measure crime against people with disabilities. The Act requires enhancement of the National Crime Victimization Survey to collect these data. This information supplements anecdotal evidence of victimization as well as other studies already conducted in the field.

What we do know:

- Among children in the United States, nine to 15 percent have a disability and approximately 175,000 to 300,000 children with disabilities experience maltreatment each year.
- Children with disabilities are 4 to 10 times more likely to be abused than children without disabilities.
- Women with physical disabilities in rural settings tend to experience violence and abuse over a longer duration and have fewer options for leaving an abusive relationship than victims with disabilities in urban settings.
- Family members perpetrate more than half of the abuse against people with disabilities; other perpetrators include care providers such as paid or unpaid caregivers, doctors, and nurses.
- Approximately 67 percent of perpetrators who abused individuals with severe cognitive disabilities accessed them through their work in disability services.

Legal Protections
For-profit, nonprofit, and governmental entities within the victims’ rights field are subject to federal civil rights laws which protect members of the disability community from discrimination. Although traditional notions of discrimination pertain to intentional acts that bar equal access, discrimination in a disability rights context also frequently entails instances in which policies, programs, services, or activities deny full and equal participation by members of the disability community, even if such results were not intended.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits discrimination within the areas of employment, state and local government programs and services, places of public accommodation, transportation, and telecommunications. In addition, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities by any entity receiving federal funds. Also, programs providing temporary housing to crime victims are subject to the Fair Housing Act (as amended in 1988), which also contains anti-discrimination provisions on the basis of disability.

The Victim Experience
Both children and adults with disabilities must be supported at every stage of the criminal justice process. Such support begins with providing people with disabilities and their families with information about various ways crime may be prevented. This includes a working knowledge of personal safety techniques and an understanding of what constitutes a crime and what does not.

Both children and adults with disabilities must be supported at every stage of the criminal justice process.
tion, fear of loss of care (in cases where the perpetrator is actually a service provider), shame (especially if the perpetrator is a family member, spouse or significant other, friend, or someone else known to the victim), or a perception either by loved ones or the person with a disability himself or herself that nothing will be done to address the situation anyway. Victims also may have feelings of powerlessness stemming from the misperception that the incident or series of incidents are somehow their fault.

Some domestic violence victims with physical disabilities may also feel helpless due to the physical and program inaccessibility of domestic violence shelters which should meaningfully serve all victims of domestic violence but do not. Further, for domestic violence victims with developmental disabilities (such as mental retardation), shelters are generally unfamiliar with and often unresponsive to their particular needs and concerns. Shelter workers need training and experience to provide this population with the same level of care as victims without disabilities.

An added dilemma is that even when frontline staff of service provider organizations or governmental agencies suspect an individual with a disability may be the victim of a crime, they may not report it. Often, even if people understand their obligation to report suspected cases of abuse or neglect, nothing is done because of the mistaken belief that one must know for certain if a crime did, in fact, occur. In such cases, victims with disabilities begin to fall even further through the cracks.

Moreover, within an in-home dependent-care environment or community care facility, if abuse by an employee is suspected, agencies may redress the problem by firing the suspected perpetrator (freeing him or her to go somewhere else to commit the same crime in a different setting) while refraining from reporting the employee to law enforcement.

In other cases, when people with disabilities seek victim-related resources from social service providers and other organizations they trust, these groups often have limited knowledge of the different resources available to people with disabilities who are victims of crime. Many service providers merely direct them to the local district attorney’s office where personnel are not always knowledgeable about where to direct people with disabilities seeking help.

The Criminal Justice Response

Once a crime is reported, law enforcement first responders must know how best to interview victims, particularly if a disability impairs verbal communication enough to hinder the investigative process. Here, if first responders either misperceive the words or actions of a per-
son with a disability or if the alleged vic-
tim is not believed, the report is summar-
ily filed away, generally not to be pursued.
As a result, victims with disabilities may
be short-changed by the system.

Even if law enforcement decides to
investigate the validity of criminal
charges, another hurdle awaits. A prose-
cutor who does not understand the nature
of an individual’s disabilities may not per-
ceive the victim as a credible witness. This
can lead to a decision not to file charges
or to drop a case.

Finally, even in the most ideal of cir-
cumstances, if a perpetrator is successful-
ly convicted and sentenced for his or her
crimes, victims with disabilities often do
not know about victim/witness programs
within a disability context. For instance,
they should be advised of the effect of vic-
tim/witness restitution funds on personal
eligibility for continued government bene-
fits such as Social Security, Supplemental
Security Income, or other government aid.
Victims and their families may feel
deterred from seeking assistance to which
they are entitled, not knowing the system
that has been put in place to protect
their right to receive such help without
affecting government benefits’ eligibility
determinations.

Where We Go from Here
When striving to meet the needs of people
with disabilities victimized by crime, there
is no such thing as a “one size fits all”
solution. Indeed, different disabilities
require alternative approaches. Yet, as
daunting as these cases may first appear
to some victim service providers, any feel-
ings of trepidation should abate once
advocates realize the vast array of
resources that are already available to
assist them in expanding accessibility as
they strive to serve every segment of the
community, especially the most vulnerable
among us.

Over the past year, the Civil Rights
Division of the U.S. Department of Justice
(USDOJ), as part of its successful “Project
Civic Access” initiative which works with
local governments to help bring them into
compliance with Title II of the Americans
with Disabilities Act, has emphasized the
accessibility of programs, services, and
facilities for victims of domestic violence.
Lessons learned from ongoing program
implementation are appropriately incorpo-
rated into the technical assistance docu-
ments posted regularly on the Department’s ADA
Web site at www.ada.gov, which now receives more
than 38 million hits per year and is one of the
Justice Department’s most heavily-visited
pages.

The Civil Rights Division continues to
expand efforts to protect the civil rights of crime
victims with disabilities and their families, work-
ing in conjunction with other components within
the USDOJ, including the Office for Victims of
Crime and the Office for Violence Against Women.
The Division will also con-
tinue to collaborate in partnership with the
National Center for
Victims of Crime whose significant work
in the victim/witness field will lend itself
well to new innovations as they come on-
line and are expanded nationwide.

Together, we can do much better for
crime victims with disabilities.

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cle when he was serving as special counsel
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Since 2000, BJS has initiated several activities to lay the foundation for Public L. 105-301. Diane King Akers, “Balancing the Power: Creating a Crisis Center I See...2 Census Bureau, which conducts interviewing for the National Crime Victim...and other disabilities, and developing procedures to accommodate, as necessary, interviews with such people. BJS and the agencies to develop survey questions to identify people with disabilities. In July 2000, BJS added to the NCVS Crime Incident Report a test of supplemental items designed to obtain information from victims of crime on any health conditions, impairments, or disabilities affecting their everyday life. In fall 2001, BJS, together with the Census Bureau, fielded a test among known persons with development disabilities in California to test further questions related to disability and to determine what types of interview techniques work best with different types of populations with disabilities. Joye Whaley, “Violence against Women with Disabilities: Policy Implications of What We Don’t Know.” Impact 13, No. 3. (Fall 1998). Institute on Community Integration, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota, http://cci.umn.edu/products/impact/133/over3.html. 6 M. B. Cross, E. Kay, and A.C. Rathnawal, “R Report on the Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities,” (Washington DC: Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1993).
Supporting Crime Victims with Disabilities

Be proactive! Learn how to support victims of crime with disabilities before they need your assistance. Some suggestions for getting started:

1. Make training on disabilities an integral part of your staff training program.
   Training should address issues related to the needs of individuals with different types of disabilities. Resources:
   - SafePlace’s disability awareness training for victim service professionals covers disability awareness, outreach strategies, best practices for serving abuse survivors, and how to design physically and programatically accessible services. www.austin-safeplace.org
   - Speaking for Ourselves, run by and for people with disabilities in Pennsylvania, provides awareness training for victim service organizations. www.speaking.org
   - Blue Tower Training Center, a division of Macon Resources, Inc., provides training and resources to individuals with disabilities, their families, and service providers throughout the country. www.maconresources.org/bluetower

2. Recruit and train individuals with disabilities to become victim assistance volunteers or paid staff members. Resource:
   - Job Accommodation Network is a free service that helps organizations hire, retain, and promote qualified individuals with disabilities. You’ll be connected with a specialist who knows employment issues, public access issues, and ways to modify facilities to provide access for persons with disabilities. http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu

3. Distribute information about victim rights and services through local disability service organizations. These groups have built-in constituencies that would welcome brochures and fact sheets about the criminal justice system and victim assistance programs. Local government agencies that serve persons with disabilities may also allow you to distribute material through their offices. Resource:
   - GuideStar operates a comprehensive database of non-profit organizations—including many that are disability-related—located throughout the United States. www.guidestar.org

4. Develop coalitions of disability and victim service organizations to increase awareness and coordination within your own community. Examples:
   - Carolina Legal Assistance established the Victims with Disabilities Project, which created a task force that regularly brings together crime victim advocates, disability advocates, and government representatives.
   - The North Carolina Office on Disability and Health conducts meetings between disability organizations and local domestic violence and sexual assault providers to improve working relationships, strengthen communication, and coordinate referrals.
   - The Building Partnership of the Massachusetts Disabled Persons Protection Commission, a collaboration between law enforcement and human service agencies, works to ensure that crimes against people with disabilities are promptly reported, investigated, and prosecuted. www.state.ma.us/ dppc
   - The Victims of Crime with Disabilities Resource Guide project works to bridge the information gap between victim assistance and disability professionals. It is a collaborative effort between the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime, the Association for University Centers on Disabilities, and the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities. The following Web site offers extensive outreach and collaboration development materials. http://wind.uwyo.edu
5. Acquire technology that can be used by crime victims with disabilities to access information about their rights and the criminal justice system. Provide information in a variety of accessible formats including Braille, large print, and TTY. Resources:
- A good place to start is learning everything you can about Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires Federal agencies (and federally-funded agencies) to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. www.section508.gov
- WebAIM provides resources and training programs to help organizations make their Web sites more accessible to people with disabilities. www.webaim.org

6. Learn the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and support its vigorous enforcement. Resource:
- The U.S. Department of Justice, the federal agency responsible for enforcing the ADA, operates a comprehensive Web site. www.ada.gov

7. Establish education and outreach programs for crime victims with disabilities. As a victim service provider, you are uniquely suited to educate victims about the nature of criminal victimization, the criminal justice system, where and how crimes should be reported, strategies for increasing personal safety, and support services. Examples:
- Wake Technical Community College, located near Raleigh, North Carolina, offers a program to help students with developmental disabilities decrease the risk of victimization and learn what to do if they are victimized.
- The Arc of Tucson, Arizona, provides training for individuals with developmental disabilities to help increase their environmental awareness (especially in public restrooms, on public transportation, and in shopping centers), learn appropriate interaction with law enforcement, and recognize dangerous or unsafe situations.
- Safe Place in Austin, Texas, offers personal safety workshops for men and women with cognitive disabilities to enhance their assertiveness skills, danger avoidance, abuse recognition, and safety practice.

The National Center for Victims of Crime is the nation’s leading resource and advocacy organization dedicated to helping individuals, families, and communities harmed by crime. The National Crime Victim Helpline, 1-800-FYI-CALL, offers crime victims supportive counseling, information about crime and victimization, referrals to local community resources, and skilled advocacy in the criminal justice and social service systems.

For additional information, please contact:
National Center for Victims of Crime • 2000 M Street, NW • Suite 480 • Washington, DC 20036
National Crime Victim Helpline: 1-800-FYI-CALL • TTY: 1-800-211-7996 • www.ncvc.org • gethelp@ncvc.org
Crime exacts a heavy toll on its victims, costing millions of dollars annually in medical, counseling, and funeral expenses; lost income; property losses; and other expenses. Most expenses are paid by private or general governmental insurance (such as Medicare/Medicaid), but for victims with no other way to pay the bills, crime victim compensation becomes an important resource.

How Does Victim Compensation Work?

Victim compensation is one component of the broader victim support system, which also includes direct victim service assistance in justice-based or non-governmental programs, as well as agencies that may not focus exclusively on serving victims, but serve victims as part of their broader mission (e.g., the medical and mental healthcare systems). Victim compensation operates within this broader context and is interdependent with the other components.

Authorization and Funding

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three of the five U.S. territories have victim compensation programs established by state law to compensate victims and families for financial losses caused by crime. The federal government helps support victim compensation—as well as direct victim services—through the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) which established the Crime Victims Fund, a revenue stream funded entirely by offender fines, fees, and penalties—not by tax dollars.

Federal funds are allocated annually to states to help support victim compensation programs and victim assistance agencies. The compensation allocation is based on expenditure of state funds such that a federal match of 60 percent is provided for every state dollar spent on victims. This means that compensation programs receive 37 percent of their funds from the federal government and 63 percent from state resources. State funds also draw on offender-generated revenues in 80 percent of the states, with only a handful of states depending entirely on general revenues for their state funding, and a few states drawing funds from both sources.

Annual compensation payments have reached as high as $450 million paid out in as many as 165,000 claims in recent years (averaging about $2,500 per claim). Recent years have also seen an increase in the amount of compensation funds distributed to victims, their survivors, and those who provide crime-related services (e.g., medical providers), as well as an increase in the number of claims paid. (See Figures 1a and 2.)

Regulations and Requirements

Compensation programs must operate within both federal and state regulations and requirements. Federal guidelines specify that:

- Victims and survivors of criminal violence—including drunk driving and domestic violence—are to be given priority status, although federal funds can also be used for certain expenses for victims of property or economic crimes, attempted or threatened crimes, and crime witnesses. Federal funds cannot be used to pay for property losses for any victims or survivors of any crimes.
- Programs must encourage victims to cooperate with the reasonable requests of law enforcement officials (generally interpreted as reporting the crime to police).
- Compensation is to be used for medical and dental expenses, mental health...
counseling, lost wages attributable to physical injuries, and funeral/burial expenses. Many other types of expenses may also be allowable at the states’ discretion under the 60 percent federal match, except for property losses.

While each state has its own unique set of laws and regulations governing compensation, broad similarities exist across the programs. (For a state-by-state overview of compensation programs, visit www.naccvcb.org.) Generally, state requirements specify that:
- Only victims injured by the crime—and their survivors or family members—are eligible for compensation. Some states require physical injuries, but many allow claims from victims with emotional trauma but no physical injuries.
- Crimes must be reported to the police or other authorities within time frames that vary from 48 hours to one year, with 72 hours being typical. Deadlines can be extended for good cause, such as age of the victim at the time of the crime. An arrest or conviction is not necessary.
- Victims must file a claim for compensation within a specific period of time from the crime, most often one year, but extensions are often offered to victims of child abuse.
- Compensation is the payer of last resort, so that no expenses are paid for which collateral resources (for example, private insurance, public benefits, or restitution) are available. States vary in whether they treat insurance co-pays as compensable and life insurance benefits as collateral resources.
- Victims must be innocent of substantial wrongdoing or contributory misconduct in the crime. States differ on how they define misconduct and whether it reduces or excludes compensation.
- Payment amounts are capped at a certain overall amount and/or at a certain amount for each type of expense paid. Overall caps range from $5,000 to $220,000, and are typically about $25,000. Twelve states have minimum loss requirements, ranging from $25 to $200.

Aside from the basic federally-required expenses, many states also provide compensation for crime scene clean-up expenses; forensic sexual assault exams; moving or relocation expenses; certain transportation expenses; replacement services for household work or childcare that the victim can no longer provide; modifications to accommodate disabilities caused by the crime; rehabilitation thera-
replacement/repair of windows and locks; replacement of clothing or bedding held as evidence; financial counseling; and attorney fees for helping victims apply for compensation. A handful of states also provide some very limited property loss compensation, and three pay at least a nominal amount for pain and suffering.

Half of all compensation funds are used for assault victims, and nearly half of all funds are used for medical/dental expenses. (See Figures 3 and 4.)

PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

Compensation programs are located in a wide variety of state agencies, and some function as independent executive branch agencies. About half these agencies also administer federal VOCA assistance grants. The budgets of compensation programs vary a good deal, with 10 programs paying $1 million or less in total claims per year, and 18 paying more than $5 million; a handful of the largest states have budgets many times that amount.\(^6\)

OPERATIONAL STANDARDS AND EVALUATION FINDINGS

Despite the policy, administrative, and resource differences across state compensation programs, they share a common mission of assisting as many eligible victims as possible through fair, consistent, and timely claims processing and decisionmaking. The National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards issued program standards that specified four fundamental operational areas, goals and objectives to improve operations in each area, and strategies to achieve the goals and objectives. The four areas are outreach, training, and communication; claims processing; decisionmaking; and financial planning.\(^7\)

A recent Urban Institute national evaluation of compensation programs concluded that programs were generally functioning in accordance with these standards, and over 450 claimants in a six-state survey were generally satisfied with the compensation experience.\(^8\) Recommendations for further development included continued expansion to serve more victims more completely.

New Directions from the Field: Victims’ Rights and Services for the 21st Century, a landmark report by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), recommended that compensation programs coordinate with victim assistance programs to increase public awareness about compensation so that all victims have knowledge of and access to compensation benefits.\(^9\)
The Role of Compensation in Victim Support Systems

Compensation programs rely on victim service providers to inform victims about compensation and help them with the claim process. In fact, the great majority of states have laws requiring criminal justice officials to inform victims about the availability of compensation, and VOCA-funded assistance providers also are required by federal regulations to do so. Many compensation programs provide training and resources to victim service providers to enhance their ability to serve their clients more effectively on compensation issues.

Aside from becoming aware of compensation, other factors related to eligibility requirements may also affect how many victims are served by compensation. Figure 5 proposes a theoretical model of how victims learn of compensation, decide whether to file a claim, and have their claims approved and paid. It also illustrates how interdependent the various components of the victim support system are, with direct service providers dependent on compensation for outreach and training, compensation programs dependent on direct service providers to generate claims, and claims eligibility and payment dependent on the availability of free services or collateral resources to pay for services that are not available for free.

Expanding the Reach of Compensation

Assuming the program’s budget can support additional payments and the staff to process more claims, there are essentially two ways to expand utilization. One is through policy changes to open compensation up to additional types of benefits or to relax eligibility requirements so that more victims can be served. This would require a legislative process and the political will to expand the original legislative intent. Another, perhaps more feasible, route is through aggressive outreach efforts to make sure that the largest number of victims eligible under current policies are served. This approach requires (1) determining the current reach of compensation to eligible victims, and (2) identifying currently unserved victims.

HOW WIDELY IS COMPENSATION USED?

The Urban Institute evaluation found that the large majority of compensation program directors believe that too few victims apply for compensation, most often because they’re not aware of it. The evaluation included a survey of nearly 600 clients of 17 VOCA-funded victim assistance programs in six states, which found that only 45 percent had ever heard of compensation, including many who were potentially eligible. Another survey of just over 100 victims who reported crimes to police, including many who had potentially compensable expenses, found that only 29 percent had ever heard of compensa-

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**Victim Compensation Process**

- **Influencing Factors:**
  - Availability of victim service providers
  - Free services and collateral resources
  - Outreach, training, and coordination
  - Type and frequency of crime

- **Influencing Factor:**
  - Cost vs. benefit to the victim of filing a claim

- **Influencing Factors:**
  - Eligibility policies
  - Range of benefits available
  - Priority pattern of payments

- **Influencing Factor:**
  - Budgetary pressures

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Figure 5
Earlier research has also shown underutilization: one study estimated that the proportion of violent crime victims who requested compensation ranged across states from one percent to 31 percent; and another found that from 22 to 45 percent of potentially eligible victims received compensation.

Another way to measure utilization is by comparing compensation statistics with crime statistics. In 2003, the National Center for Victims of Crime held a national forum on victim compensation, which resulted in a policy report the following year. The report presented a preliminary analysis of how widely compensation reaches assault victims by comparing the number of assault claims paid in 2002 with the number of aggravated assaults reported by the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reports in 2001. This article expands on that analysis by comparing claim payment and crime data averaged across three years, and by including homicide, sexual assault, robbery, and child abuse payment rates as well as assault payment rates.

Figure 6 presents payment rate quartiles for each type of crime, and shows that state payment rates vary widely across the different types of crime. However, a close examination of these data raises serious doubts about their validity, leaving us with little solid statistical data to assess how widely compensation is used.

Homicide Payment Rates. Obviously, there is something very much amiss with comparing claim payment and homicide data: over half the states have payment rates exceeding 100 percent, up to a high of 415 percent. These percentages likely occur because while some states count all claims originating from a single crime as one claim, many states count claims from different survivors of the same crime as separate claims. In addition, some states make supplemental payments over a number of years (for example, for lost income from a murder victim), so that they may report paying claims for crimes that occurred in earlier years than those in the crime data. While these operational procedures are perfectly acceptable, they clearly present problems for analyzing overall compensation utilization.

Other Crime Payment Rates. The data on assault, sexual assault, child abuse, and robbery payment rates are less obviously problematic, but significant questions remain about the findings. Most programs’ payment rates cluster around fairly low levels, with a few states having payment rates many times higher than the average or median (midpoint) levels. Does this indicate that some states are reaching unusually high proportions of victims, or that there are problems in these data as well?

Reporting issues. Initial explorations indicate that claim payment data reported to the U.S. Department of Justice by state
compensation programs are unsuited to utilization analysis. For example, a number of states with very high payment rates have, on further examination, been misreporting their payment data through computer errors or incorrectly reporting forensic exam payments in the wrong categories, inflating the number of claims paid. In addition, some states count multiple claims from the same crime separately, report claims paid for crimes from earlier years, and report claims for crimes other than those included in the Uniform Crime Reports crime categories in the claim category with which the crime data are compared. For example, at least one state pays many domestic violence claims for what are really simple assaults or even protective order violations, which are reported in the assault category. Other states categorize crimes that are robberies in crime data as assaults in their claim payment data because they pay medical expenses associated with the assault element of the crime, but not property losses associated with the robbery element. When these claims are compared with the crime data on aggravated assaults, the payment rate is incorrectly inflated.

Eligibility rates. The conclusion that payment rates for at least some states are incorrectly inflated is bolstered by comparing the percentage of crimes potentially eligible for compensation with these payment rates. Adapting an approach used earlier, the major eligibility criteria to be considered are whether victims reported to police; incurred eligible expenses (many crimes don’t produce the types of expenses that compensation can pay); have no access to free services or other resources to pay expenses; and are not culpable for their own injuries. When we compare eligibility rates with payment rates, we see that quite a few states report paying claims for more crimes than eligibility factors would allow.

Homicide Eligibility Rates: Virtually all homicides produce uninsured expenses, funeral expenses if no others. Crime data on homicide circumstances indicate that about 13 percent occur in situations that suggest victim culpability (e.g., during drug law violations, brawls due to the influence of alcohol or drugs, gang-related killings, and so on). It would therefore be expected that approximately 85 to 90 percent of homicides are eligible for compensation; perhaps somewhat lower in states that consider life insurance benefits to be collateral resources, and somewhat higher in states that reduce awards for misconduct but do not exclude these crimes altogether. It is difficult to see how payment rates much higher than this range, even those under 100 percent, could be valid.

Other Crime Eligibility Rates: For assaults, sexual assaults, and robbery, National Crime Victimization Survey data suggest that approximately nine percent to 13 percent of these victimizations are reported to police and incur medical expenses. Many of these victims have health insurance coverage, but may still be eligible since most states cover co-pays and deductibles (which can be substantial). Contributory misconduct does not apply to sexual assault, but some...
unknown, probably fairly small percentage of assaults and robberies may involve victim culpability (perhaps in a similar neighborhood as the 13 percent of homicides). In states that have more liberal eligibility criteria (no minimum losses, coverage of co-pays and deductibles, reduction rather than exclusion for contributory misconduct, payment of other expenses than medical care for victims who aren’t physically injured), eligibility rates may be on the high side of this 9-to-13 percent range, or perhaps even higher. It therefore seems quite unlikely that payment rates of 20 percent or more for these crimes can be accurate.

The available child abuse data shed very little light on the percentage of these crimes that produce compensable expenses not covered by other payment sources (contributory misconduct considerations do not apply). Assuming the majority of child abuse incidents will produce the need for some sort of medical intervention and mental health care, the primary unknown is the availability of free services and other payment sources.

Looking to the Future

To expand access to compensation to unserved victims, it is critical to first know who isn’t being served and why they’re not being reached. A detailed analysis of crime data and claim data in at least a few sample states would help illuminate true payment rates and patterns for various types of crimes. It would also give a better understanding of claim reporting practices so that findings could be more accurately interpreted and errors could be identified and corrected to provide more accurate federal performance data. It would then be possible to identify states with different payment rates and explore what that means for payment of victims’ expenses. The theoretical model proposed earlier could serve as a guiding framework for, and be tested and refined through, this research. State victim support systems that meet most or all of victims’ financial needs may have valuable lessons to share with other states seeking to improve how well they serve victims.

It is critical that any study of utilization examine the role of compensation within the broader victim support system, including direct victim service providers and collateral resources, and focus on all elements that affect and are affected by compensation. Some of the questions that need to be addressed are: How well are victims’ financial needs being met, regardless of the payment source? What are the most effective strategies for direct service providers to help victims access compensation? How does the availability of free services affect the need for compensation? What is the role of other programs and entities that pay crime-related expenses? A seamless web of support to meet victims’ financial needs can only be realized once compensation and other payment resources are best utilized and leveraged.

Lisa Newmark is a crime victim consultant. She was the principal investigator on the Urban Institute’s national evaluation of VOCA programs, and its evaluation of Maryland’s compensation program. She may be reached at lnewmark@cox.net.

1 The three territories with victim compensation programs are Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam.
4 The drop in amounts paid from 2002 to 2003 is due to declines in two of the largest states that account for a disproportionately large share of the national totals; most states saw increases across the years.
10 Lisa Newmark and Megan Schaffer, Crime Victims Compensation in Maryland: Accomplishments and Strategies for the Future, Research report to the Maryland Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2013.)
14 These crimes account for 83 percent of compensation funds awarded. Claim payment data were obtained from OVC’s Web site for claims paid in federal fiscal years 2002, 2003, and 2004. UCR data were obtained from the FBI’s Web site for crimes reported to the police in calendar years 2001, 2002, and 2003. Since the same time frame was not available across the two sources, these lags were chosen because it usually takes about four to six months from the time a crime occurs until compensation payment is made (Newmark et al., 2003). For child abuse, which is not included in the UCR, data on abuse and neglect cases substantiated by child protective service agencies were taken from 2001, 2002, and 2003 Child Maltreatment reports of the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data Systems of the Department of Health and Human Services.
15 Ibid.
16 Parent, Auerbach, and Carlson estimated that only about three percent of all violent crime victimizations in 1987—including those reported to the police and those not reported—are compensable. Because the present analysis considers only reported crimes, the earlier approach was adapted and applied to more recent data to estimate the percentage of reported violent victimizations that are compensable.
As president of Appriss, I often meet people who ask, “What exactly does your company do?” When I explain that we’re the providers of VINE®, the National Victim Notification Network, I often see a look of recognition. While we’re not yet a household name, people are increasingly aware that VINE allows crime victims and other concerned citizens to track the custody status of their offenders and to register for notification by phone or e-mail when the offender is released, transferred, or escapes.

Appriss has spent more than 12 years building this life-saving service, which is now offered in more than 1,500 communities across 40 states. We anticipate even more growth on the horizon. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance has provided grants for additional states to implement victim notification systems.

For us, this growth translates into more opportunities to help victims and those who serve them. One way we’re working to achieve this goal is by partnering with the National Center for Victims of Crime in a variety of ways: sponsoring the National Center’s national conference and Training Institute events, providing scholarships that allow practitioners to attend these valuable learning opportunities, collaborating to provide resources to crime victims, and participating in the advocacy process at the federal, state, and local levels.

This history of serving victims—both through our innovative products and the relationships we’ve developed with advocates—is the foundation of our company. Appriss and VINE exist today in response to a tragedy. The community of Louisville and Jefferson County, Kentucky, was outraged after the 1993 murder of Mary Byron, a local woman who had been stalked, assaulted, and raped by a former boyfriend. He was jailed for those crimes, but someone posted his bail without Byron’s knowledge. This man shot and killed Byron on her twenty-first birthday.

Local officials sought a way to prevent others from suffering Mary Byron’s fate. My former business partner, software developer Yung Nguyen, and I proposed to build the community its first automated notification system. We spent a year collaborating with police, prosecutors, victim advocates, and survivors to make it happen. VINE was launched in Louisville exactly one year after Byron’s death.

Appriss continues to operate and manage the national system from its Louisville headquarters.

Mary Byron’s story and her legacy motivated the Appriss team to help establish a public charity in her honor. The Mary Byron Foundation was launched six years ago with seed money from Appriss and with the involvement of her parents, Pat and John Byron. We’re proud to continue housing and assisting the Foundation as it supports programs that address the crushing epidemic of domestic violence.

Today, we’re building on the success of VINE by helping petitioners track the status of their protective orders. VINE Protective Order™ notifies petitioners by phone when a protective order is served,
when a hearing date is scheduled or changed, and when the order is about to expire.

We believe this service is crucial because the time immediately after a protective order is served can be particularly dangerous for crime victims. Far too often, the respondent reacts violently when served. A call from VINE Protective Order allows the petitioner to activate a safety plan or call police to arrest the respondent if he violates the terms of the order.

In addition, VINE Protective Order helps courts and law enforcement agencies increase offender accountability. Officers can access information about protective orders while in the field by radioing their dispatcher, who can locate the information quickly in the VINE system. Also, because judges can access and update the system from the courtroom, a change in the status of the order is reflected immediately for all key stakeholders.

VINE Protective Order is already in place in several communities, including DuPage County, Illinois, where the system helps the sheriff’s department manage the 2,400 temporary and permanent orders it serves each year. We’re also offering VINE Protective Order as part of a pilot project administered by the Mary Byron Foundation and funded by a $1 million grant from the U.S. Office on Violence Against Women.

The project involves the court, law enforcement, and victim service agencies at each pilot site, including the Commonwealth of Kentucky and three counties each in Texas, North Carolina, and Arkansas. The Foundation’s primary goal for the project is to build a set of best-practices for handling protective orders and, ultimately, keeping victims safe from further violence.

Even with the successes we’ve experienced and a bright future ahead for Appriss, we intend to keep our company rooted in the victim service community. We will continue to use the best talent and resources available to ensure our services meet the needs of victims. To that end, we will soon form an advisory board among victims, survivors, and victim service professionals to learn from their experience and use it to improve the effectiveness of our services.

As the field of criminal justice changes and the needs of crime victims evolve, Appriss will be ready to address those needs quickly. That’s the nature of our work. We’re thrilled to have a valued partner in the National Center for Victims of Crime as we move forward.

Mike Davis is president and co-founder of Appriss, Inc., headquartered in Louisville, KY. He may be reached at mdavis@appriss.com.
Cruise Ship Crime Victims
Unite for Change

The stories are heartbreaking.

- A woman disappears during a cruise. Her family is not informed, and, when they inquire, it takes several days for the cruise company to acknowledge that she had been a passenger. The family learns she had been reported missing daily for the last five days of the cruise; nothing was done to search for her, and the cruise line disposed of most of her belongings.

- A woman is drugged and raped by a crewmember. No action is taken against him until a civil suit is filed against the cruise line.

- A young man disappears on his honeymoon after a night of drinking with fellow passengers. Neighbors report hearing an argument and a loud “thud.” Passengers two floors below his cabin notice that a metal overhang above a lifeboat was covered with blood. No one has ever been charged in his disappearance.

For years, crime on cruise ships has been all but invisible. No accurate statistics are available about crime on cruise ships. In too many cases, the crimes are never reported to authorities or are poorly investigated. They are rarely prosecuted.

Complicated jurisdictional issues surround such crimes. Cruise ships are generally owned and operated by foreign companies, flying under the flag of yet another country such as Liberia or the Bahamas. These ships spend large amounts of time in international waters or the territorial waters of numerous ports-of-call. Passengers are of many different nationalities.

The dearth of accurate statistics about crime on cruise ships, shortage of trained personnel to protect and process crime scenes, and lack of information about where to turn for victim assistance provide additional barriers to justice.

Determined to change this lack of accountability, a multinational group of victims and surviving family members of cruise ship crimes have banded together to form International Cruise Victims (ICV), an organization dedicated to changing cruise line regulations and procedures, and serving as a resource to anyone who has experienced crime on a cruise ship.

International Cruise Victims has developed a 10-point plan designed to increase passenger safety and victim response aboard cruise ships. The plan calls for a variety of measures, such as upgraded video monitoring on ships, background checks on crew members, improved investigation of crime and missing persons reports, training on conducting forensic sexual assault exams for ship medical personnel, and GPS bracelets for passengers.

In the United States, ICV members have met with representatives from the FBI and the Coast Guard, as well as leaders in the cruise line industry. Members in Australia and England have presented the plan to government officials in those countries. The organization has also reached out to the International Maritime Organization.

Members of Congress are starting to take an interest in this issue. Earlier this year, Representative Chris Shays (R-CT) held two hearings in the House.
Congressman Shays, with Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), also introduced the Cruise Line Accurate Safety Statistics Act (H.R. 5707), which would require the following:

- Cruise ship operators that call at a U.S. port must report any crime, man overboard, or missing person incident involving an American citizen to U.S. authorities within four hours.
- Cruise ship operators must submit a quarterly report of crimes, missing persons, and man-overboard incidents to the Department of Homeland Security, which in turn must post the information on the Internet.
- The Department of Homeland Security must inspect cruise ships that dock in the United States to ensure that they have adequate equipment and trained workers to investigate crimes.
- Cruise companies must refer potential ticket buyers to the Internet site where crime statistics will be posted. Also, they must give them the name of each country their ship will visit along with the location of the U.S. embassy and consulate.

The National Center for Victims of Crime supports the Cruise Line Accurate Safety Statistics Act, which is currently before the House Transportation Committee, and is working with ICV to ensure its passage. For more information about International Cruise Victims, visit www.internationalcruisevictims.org.

**PUBLIC POLICY PIPELINE**

**Victim Assistance at the U.S. Postal Inspection Service**

The U.S. Postal Inspection Services (USPIS), the national law enforcement agency for postal matters, has greatly expanded its crime victim response in recent years. The USPIS Victim/Witness Assistance Program now provides important assistance to victims during investigations of mail fraud, foreign lottery scams, identity theft, child exploitation, work-at-home scams, crimes against postal workers, and other offenses involving the U.S. mail.

While crime victim response has been a part of the USPIS mission since 2000, it first became an agency priority in 2005. Since that time, there has been a whole-scale strengthening of victim services, growing to more than 60 full-time and collateral-duty personnel who notify more than 93,000 victims annually of their rights.

The USPIS comprises 18 regional offices located across the country, each of which has a victim/witness assistance program. The three largest regional offices, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, have permanent, full-time victim/witness staff. The remaining offices provide services to victims through collateral duty personnel who are trained in victim assistance. Victim assistance is provided from the time charges are filed until the case is transferred to the U.S. Attorney’s office or other prosecutor’s office.

Like other system-based victim assistance, victim services personnel provide information and referrals, support during the criminal justice system, and victim advocacy. They also coordinate victim notification through the automated Victim Notification System, and help identity theft victims and elderly victims of fraud recover from the effects of the crime.

The USPIS victim/witness program has developed a number of excellent resources for community education. These include free DVDs on topics such as telemarketing fraud, identity theft, foreign lottery scams, and work-at-home scams. All DVDs include a Spanish-language option. The National Center uses many of these DVDs in its staff trainings.

For more information and materials for consumer education, see www.usps.com/postalinspectors. Regional offices and victim/witness coordinators can be located at www.usps.com/ncsc/locators/find-is.html.
National Center Examines Use of Technology in Community Policing

Community policing is embracing technology in new and exciting ways, and the National Center for Victims of Crime is leading the effort to ensure that community values are protected and promoted as the technology develops.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has funded the National Center to convene a panel of criminal justice, civil rights, Internet/privacy, and community-police relations experts to explore the ethical and other implications of using the Internet, cell phones, and other technologies to expand communications between police and residents.

“We are honored to have been selected by the MacArthur Foundation to help ensure that technology is used in an appropriate way in community policing,” said Mary Lou Leary, National Center executive director. “This initiative could have a tremendous impact on expanding the community’s role in crime prevention and enhancing a community’s sense of safety.”

The project, which originated with a proposal by the Chicago Police Department to expand its Web site to encourage greater communication with community residents, will examine a range of questions, including:

- Will the on-line technology invade anyone’s privacy?
- Will it risk the safety of people communicating with the police?
- Will it endanger the due process rights of those arrested or of defendants?
- What are the implications for community-police relations?
- Will poorer communities have access to the technology necessary to participate?

The National Center will issue a set of guidelines, based on the panel’s deliberations, that communities and law enforcement agencies across the nation can use as they consider whether and how to use technology to prevent and solve crime. The guidelines will be available by the end of this year.

National Center Honors “Central Park Jogger” with Leadership Award

The National Center for Victims of Crime presented its 2006 Annual Leadership Award to Trisha Meili—known worldwide as the Central Park Jogger—for her extraordinary courage and inspiration to others in the aftermath of a brutal attack that left her near death. The award ceremony was held at Bryant Park in New York City.

On April 19, 1989, Trisha Meili went for a run in New York’s Central Park and was discovered hours later brutally beaten, raped, and bound. In a coma with 75 percent blood loss, a fierce blow to the head, and the
effects of severe exposure, she was not expected to survive. Fourteen years later, Ms. Meili revealed her amazing story of survival and recovery in her best-selling memoir, *I Am the Central Park Jogger: A Story of Hope and Possibility.*

“Trisha Meili’s heroic recovery teaches us that it is possible to triumph over tragedy,” said Mary Lou Leary, executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime. “Trisha shows us that we are all connected in our challenges and can deeply inspire others—in fact, change lives—by sharing our stories of overcoming adversity.”

Ms. Meili donates her time to organizations vital to her healing, including the Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program at Mount Sinai Hospital; Gaylord Hospital, where she did much of her rehabilitation; and the Achilles Track Club which helped her run the New York City Marathon in 1995.

Today, Ms. Meili speaks about her journey of recovery and healing to businesses, universities, brain injury associations, sexual assault centers, hospitals, and other organizations. Through her book and lectures, she offers lessons on how to manage unpredictable change, whether personal, professional, economic, or spiritual. Her story has encouraged people worldwide to overcome life’s obstacles and traverse the road to recovery.

“On behalf of the nearly 24 million Americans who become victims of crime each year, we pay tribute to this remarkably brave and honorable woman,” Leary said.

**A Focus on Youth Witness Intimidation**

In partnership with the Police Foundation, the National Center for Victims of Crime is conducting research on youth, gangs, and witness intimidation. The research, specifically, will identify (1) the critical factors that deter youth witnesses from reporting gang crimes and testifying in court and (2) programs and policies that could enhance reporting rates and witness cooperation in Massachusetts. Study methods include an on-line survey of youth at Boys and Girls Clubs around the state and individual interviews with youth, police officers, and prosecutors. Study findings, which are expected in November 2006, will help policymakers and practitioners in developing anti-gang strategies.

**Attorney General Gonzales Honors National Center Staff Member**

United States Attorney General Alberto Gonzales honored Jeff Dion, director of the National Center’s National Crime Victim Bar Association, with the Ronald Wilson Reagan Public Policy Award during the annual National Crime Victims’ Rights Week ceremony in Washington, DC. The award recognizes outstanding individuals whose leadership, vision, and innovation have led to significant changes in public policy and practice that benefit crime victims.

“We are so proud of Jeff, and I am delighted that the Attorney General has chosen him for this prestigious award,” said Mary Lou Leary, executive director of the National Center. “The Crime Victims’ Rights Week Awards are the highest honors in the crime victim services field.”

Dion began advocating for crime victims as a teenager in 1982 when his sister...
Paulette was murdered by a serial killer. Dion pressed the police for information on the case and, after it was solved, decided to pursue a career in law to help other victims of crime.

“I had to find a path to honor my sister’s memory,” said Dion. “I soon learned that the most important things I could do to help victims were to offer them my hand for guidance and support and offer my voice on behalf of those who have been silenced.”

Dion has scored a series of important victories for victims of crime. As a private practice attorney and volunteer advocate in the mid-1990s, Dion led a coalition of crime victims that convinced the Virginia legislature to pass 13 pro-victim laws. These measures expanded the legal definition of victim and ensured victims’ rights to be present in the court room, offer oral impact testimony, confer with prosecutors, and testify by closed-circuit video.

“Without Jeff’s powerful advocacy, these bills would not have become law,” said Virginia Senator Toddy Puller, who played a leadership role in passing the legislation.

In 1998, Dion began working full-time on victims’ issues when he joined the National Center for Victims of Crime, where he served as a senior attorney before being promoted to his current position. After the September 11 terrorist attacks, he worked with more than 1,500 victims and surviving family members to help them understand their rights and trained more than 2,000 attorneys on working with survivors.

In 2002, Virginia Governor Mark Warner appointed Dion to serve on the Virginia Criminal Justice Services Board, where he chairs the Victim-Witness Issues Advisory Committee. Last year, he was named Champion of Justice by the Northern Virginia Victims’ Alliance and one of the most influential advocates for crime victims’ rights in Virginia over the past ten years by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. Dion also played a key role in defeating legislation that would have diminished crime victims’ rights in Florida.

Stalking Resource Center Partners with American Idol Finalist

Jessica Sierra, a 2004 top-ten finalist from American Idol, is partnering with the Stalking Resource Center, a program of the National Center for Victims of Crime, to help educate Americans about the risks of and responses to stalking.

After appearing on American Idol, Sierra was stalked by a fan who has since been
arrested. The suspect followed Sierra around the country, showed up at her family’s home, and left her and her grandmother dozens of voicemails. The stalker, who was previously arrested for two violent crimes, misrepresented himself as a producer to obtain Sierra’s contact information, told her he believed she was going to have his baby some day, bought a house in Nashville to be closer to her, and repeatedly told her “I love you” and “if I can’t have you, nobody can.”

Sierra and the National Center launched a national public awareness campaign that features a specially-designed poster for use by high schools, college campuses, and police departments. She has conducted a series of media interviews to talk about the dangers of stalking, what actions victims may take, and where they can turn for help. The campaign also provides information and resources to stalking victims through a new Web page available at www.ncvc.org.

“We applaud Jessica for transforming the trauma of being stalked into an opportunity to reach out to other victims,” said Mary Lou Leary, executive director of the National Center. “We’re proud to be her partner.”

Learn more about the National Center’s campaign with Jessica Sierra and download the new stalking poster at www.ncvc.org.

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Upcoming Training Institute!
The National Center for Victims of Crime is pleased to announce the 2006 Training Institute, offering the best in high-quality training for victim service providers, law enforcement professionals, mental health professionals, youth workers, and others involved in supporting victims of crime. Join us in Seattle, Washington, September 25-27, 2006, for training with a special focus on trauma and victims of violent crime, or in Cincinnati, Ohio, October 3-5, 2006, for a special focus on supporting victimized youth.

The Training Institute has been approved by the National Board of Certified Counselors for continuing education units for professional counselors. Registration is $180 for National Center members and $235 for non-members. For more information, visit www.ncvc.org.

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