Overview of Pilot Site Activity

Parallel Justice

A new vision of justice for crime victims

The National Center for Victims of Crime received seed money to work with three communities: Redlands, California; Winston-Salem, North Carolina; and Burlington, Vermont to explore avenues for implementing Parallel Justice. Without any additional funds, these communities have been experimenting with a variety of approaches to re-orient their communities to be more responsive to crime victims’ needs.

Burlington, Vermont

The team in Burlington is led by the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services, an independent state agency responsible for overseeing victim assistance and compensation funding. From the beginning, the Burlington team has had active support from the Burlington Police Department, Burlington Community Justice Center, and various local social service agencies.

There are many examples of innovative work on behalf of crime victims in Burlington. The Vermont team sought to build on that existing capacity and engage a wider range of government agencies and community partners to develop a more systematic response to the needs of crime victims. To inform the development of their goals and project plans, a member of the Burlington planning team interviewed victims to learn more about the impact of the crime, to understand their experience with the social service and criminal justice systems, and to identify gaps in the community and governmental response. The planning group set the following goals to guide their work:

- Address the short and long-term needs of victims by assessing community capacity to meet those needs and improving their policies and practices.
- Create a greater capacity within social service and community-based agencies so that victim safety and access to resources are made a priority.
- Partner with the Agency of Human Services and their new trauma-focused initiative to assess and expand services and governmental entitlements to victims of crime.
- Create a Generalist Case Management position in a Police Department so that victims are able to access services from many entry points.
- Create a Parallel Justice Specialist position at a Community Justice Center to organize community-based resources to help victims rebuild their lives.
- Marshal resources to expand services that historically have not served victims as a priority population, such as transportation, housing, and childcare.
- Mobilize the community through a multi-tiered media campaign.
- Establish a Victim Impact Forum for victim/survivors to share their victimization experience and receive validation, support, and assistance.
- Create a small board of key city and state officials and service providers who have the authority to respond to individual crime victims’ specific needs.
Redlands, California

The Redlands team is led by Chief Jim Bueermann at the Redlands Police Department. The Redlands approach to this project has been two pronged: (i) to use the Parallel Justice framework to reorient police culture to include helping victims as a core element of their mission; and (ii) to engage other community partners to help victims.

The Redlands Police Department (RPD), has officially embraced Parallel Justice as one of the Department’s five core initiatives. The Department added the language “helping victims rebuild their lives” to the Department’s list of organizational guidelines to send a clear message, both internally and to the public, that this approach comes from the top, and should be taken seriously.

RPD has supported research that bolsters the importance of this new approach. A recent survey found a significant mismatch between police and community perceptions: 89 percent of police surveyed said that they treat victims well, while only 52 percent of the victims said that they were treated well by the police. Second, in a review of crimes reported to the RPD, researchers found that a high percentage of crimes involve the same victims. In other words, repeat victimization is a major driver of crime rates in Redlands. Focusing on victims in Redlands therefore, might not only help them rebuild their lives, it might also have a positive impact on the crime rate.

Chief Bueermann has also used his role as a leader in the community to widen the circle of resources that police can draw upon to help crime victims. He has met with other leaders in local government, like the mayor and district attorney, to discuss the Police Department’s approach to helping crime victims and garner support for designing a larger initiative. He has also reached out to community groups, both in the non-profit service community and in the business community.

Specific activities in Redlands include the following:

- Creation of leadership development programs that includes victim needs, support, and sensitivity as a significant component of the learning.
- Victim advocates from the local rape crisis center have office space at the police department and accompany police on calls for service involving sexual assault.
- Recruitment efforts have focused on recruiting officers interested in service over adventure. In other words, serving the community and all those impacted by crime is emphasized, leading to a new breed of officer.
- Police 911 dispatchers send cards to crime victims a few days after a crime has been reported so victims know that someone is thinking about them.
- RPD is planning to develop a resource database that would list all available community resources to help crime victims. This would be accessible to police, community service providers, and victims. It would include information on available government programs, non-profit organizations that provide services, and donations for services from local businesses.
- In a related effort, RPD is working with the Redlands Chamber of Commerce to develop a marketing campaign that emphasizes local efforts to help crime victims. Knowing that the police and community are very responsive to crime problems would then encourage people to visit and shop in Redlands.
**Winston-Salem, North Carolina**
The Winston-Salem team is led by the Center for Community Safety (CCS) at Winston-Salem State University. Established in 2001, CCS is a community-based center that identifies and analyzes community safety issues and pulls together community-based, social service, and government partners to develop appropriate responses.

The approach they have taken with the Parallel Justice Project follows this model and has emphasized community involvement. CCS launched the project by hosting a community meeting for journalists, foundation executives, government officials, social service agencies where Susan Herman gave a talk about Parallel Justice and engaged the participants in a town hall discussion about the needs of crime victims in Winston-Salem. The meeting brought new ideas and new partners to the table.

The CCS Parallel Justice planning group decided to focus their efforts on one particular neighborhood that had high crime rates and low victim satisfaction with the police and criminal justice system. CCS began by reaching out to the churches in that community to engage their support in the development of the project. With the assistance of the Alpha and Omega Church, CCS conducted a focus group of crime victims to learn more about their specific needs and get their reactions to the proposed project. Victim participants identified the following needs:

- A system for checking in with neighbors after a crime to see that they feel secure;
- Help with fixing damaged property;
- Racial equality-fairness in treatment;
- Police training in how to deal with people and show more concern and sensitivity for victims; and
- Police follow-through on investigations.

Over the past year, the Winston-Salem team engaged in the following activities to promote Parallel Justice in their community:

- Alpha and Omega Church applied for and received a grant to support its Enrichment and Resource Center to provide a range of services to members of the community, including working with male and female victims of sexual assault and family violence.
- The team planned a National Crime Victims Rights Week Community Day on April 14, 2005, the first of its kind, in a Winston-Salem Weed and Seed community. Community representatives and partnering agencies participated, resource material was provided to foster a greater awareness and understanding of victim’s rights.
- With the assistance of the Parallel Justice team, Winston-Salem established a one-stop center near the courthouse and other downtown agencies, called Safe on Seven, for victims of domestic violence. The program fosters greater coordination and cooperation amongst law enforcement, prosecutors, probation officers and not-for-profit agencies through the formation of an integrated team approach. All domestic violence services are co-located in a fully integrated office suite.
- Forsyth County Sheriff’s Office developed a training curriculum on homicide response and crisis intervention. The CCS is working with Winston-Salem State University Continuing Education Department to make CEUs available and market the curriculum to groups such as clergy and chaplains, emergency responders, human resources staff, health care personnel, social workers, school counselors, and students who are training to serve in these professions.