



A COMPLETE GUIDE TO

# **Establishing** and **Operating** a **Victim Assistance Academy**

*A PROGRAM OF*  
**THE NATIONAL CENTER  
FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME**

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# About the SVAA Resource Center

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The SVAA Resource Center supports State Victim Assistance Academies in delivering culturally competent, trauma-informed training for diverse victim service providers. We are guided by the mission of the Office for Victims of Crime in the U.S. Department of Justice to: enhance services for all crime victims, elevate the training and educational needs of victim service providers and allied professionals, and assist in professionalizing the field of victim services as a whole. Whether establishing an SVAA for the first time, reinvigorating an inactive academy, or revamping an ongoing one, we hope this handbook on Establishing and Operating a Victim Assistance Academy provides valuable insights and resources.

The SVAA Resource Center is continuously available to the SVAA community of practice and can help in a variety of ways:

- Facilitate steering committee meetings
- Observe and assess academy structure and operations
- Coordinate with funders
- Provide training or help build local capacity on select topics
- Assist with curriculum development

To reach the SVAA Resource Center for these or any other SVAA-related needs, please email [svaatta@ncvc.org](mailto:svaatta@ncvc.org).

Stay up to date with the SVAA community of practice by signing up to receive our monthly newsletters, participating in our quarterly web meetings, using our private social media group Chatter, or by joining us in person at the yearly Leadership Symposium. Our website hosts a number of helpful resources as well, including the SVAA [Resource Library](#) and Dashboard, which provides information about each state and territory's academy.

Thank you to all the states and territories that have contributed to and invested in the SVAA mission. We look forward to continued collaborations and are excited to see how individual academies grow and expand in the coming years.

*This handbook was made possible by the dedication and hard work of our consultant team at [Organizational Resilience International](#) and staff at the [National Center for Victims of Crime](#).*

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# Table of Contents

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<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>PLANNING AND DEVELOPING</b>	<b>1</b>
	Historical Justification of Need	2
	Community of Practice	2
	Leadership	3
	Steering Committees	4
	Comprehensive Training Needs Assessment	6
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>PARTNERING WITH ACADEMIA</b>	<b>9</b>
	Why Partner with an Academic Institution?	10
	Identifying Your Academic Partner(s)	10
	Role and Function of Academic Partners	11
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>DEVELOPING YOUR CURRICULUM</b>	<b>13</b>
	Clarifying the Vision for the Curriculum	14
	Foundational Concepts for Curriculum Development	15
	Curriculum Content	16
	Promoting Professional Resiliency During the Academy	17
	Curriculum Planning Considerations	18
	When to Seek Curriculum Review	19
	Credentialing and Credit	19
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>MENTORING</b>	<b>21</b>
	Goals of a Mentoring Program	22
	Addressing the Emotional Impact	22
	Choosing Mentors	23
	Orienting Mentors	24
	Examples of Mentoring Programs	24

<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>STUDENT SELECTION</b> .....	<b>27</b>
	Developing Specific Selection Criteria	28
	Creating the Application and Submission Process	29
	Outreach and Recruitment	30
	Crafting a Student Body	31
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>ACADEMY OPERATIONS, LOGISTICS, AND FACULTY</b> .....	<b>33</b>
	Academy Leadership and Personnel	34
	Faculty	35
	Operations and Logistics	38
	Student Details	40
	Academic Details	41
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>EVALUATION AND PERFORMANCE MECHANISMS</b> .....	<b>43</b>
	Developing Evidence-based Best Practices for SVAAAs	44
	Step 1: Identifying the Purpose of the Evaluation	44
	Step 2: Selecting the Evaluation Method	45
	Step 3: Designing Evaluation Tools	46
	Step 4: Collecting Data	48
	Step 5: Analyzing and Reporting Results	48
<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT</b> .....	<b>49</b>
	Identifying a Funding Model	50
	Creating a Financial Plan and Developing an Operating Budget	50
	Collaborating with VOCA Administrators	53
	Diversifying Your Funding	54
	Charging a Registration Fee	54
	Sustainability	55
	Record Keeping and Financial Management	55
<b>Bibliography</b> .....		<b>56</b>

# Introduction

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*A Complete Guide to Establishing and Operating a Victim Assistance Academy* was compiled by the SVAA Resource Center team, together with the Office for Victims of Crime, to assist states and territories in developing or refining their State Victim Assistance Academies (SVAAs). As members of the SVAA Resource Center, we have served as SVAA funders, directors, steering committee members, mentors, faculty, and as training and technical assistance consultants to academies for over a dozen years. We have synthesized our experiences and lessons learned from SVAA colleagues in hopes they will benefit you and your academy.

We hope this resource will provide both guidance and affirmation for the hours of preparation that go into developing and operating your SVAA. As you address the many considerations and decisions to be made for your academy, these chapters will assist you in pursuing your vision. This handbook should not be thought of as a manual or how-to guide; rather, it is intended as an accompanying tool when building the varied components of a successful SVAA. Use individual chapters that apply to your work or the handbook as a whole. Because each state and region is different, we have focused on the critical framework elements that we believe are relevant to all academies.

We are here to answer questions or clarify any issues that may arise as you explore this handbook. You can reach the team with any inquiries at [svaatta@ncvc.org](mailto:svaatta@ncvc.org). As fellow members of the SVAA community of practice, we look forward to our ongoing work together in pursuit of effectively serving victims of crime and providing the highest quality training to advocates and allied professionals.

# Chapter I

## PLANNING AND DEVELOPING

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In the diverse and dynamic field of victim services, there is a critical need to provide comprehensive training and education to public and private sector victim service providers, criminal justice personnel, and allied professionals.

The foundational, interdisciplinary training and education provided by state victim assistance academies (SVAAs) helps to ensure that all crime victims and survivors will receive the culturally relevant, trauma-informed services they need to achieve safety, support healing, and promote pursuits of justice.

In this section you will find information and resources to guide you in the process of planning and developing your academy:

- A. Historical Justification of Need**
- B. Community of Practice**
- C. Leadership**
- D. Steering Committees**
- E. Comprehensive Training Needs Assessment**

## Historical Justification of Need

Since 1995, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has provided critical leadership by addressing training needs in the field through the development of SVAAAs. These academies have become central initiatives for integrating cross-disciplinary, interagency trainings that prepare and support early career learning and skill-building, and promote meaningful collaborations among providers.

The need for the quality foundational training that SVAAAs provide has been widely identified through national-scope assessments, including the [President's Task Force on Victims of Crime Final Report](#),<sup>1</sup> [New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century](#),<sup>2</sup> and most recently, [Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services Final Report](#).<sup>3</sup>

The *President's Task Force* report emphasized the need to establish and implement training programs that directly address the needs of crime victims and survivors.

The *New Directions* report discussed five overarching challenges to the field. These included comprehensive training on victim issues as part of a provider's academic and continuing education, and supporting promising practices that are grounded in multidisciplinary partnerships.

The *Vision 21* report suggested that to meet the requirements of modern-day victims, technology, training, and innovative new practices need to be embedded in our work.

A 2010 publication, *Quality Victim Advocacy: A Field Guide*,<sup>4</sup> similarly underscores the need for a set of standards and common training elements in order for advocates to assist victims of crime.

The victims' movement was built by survivors who used their experiences to advocate for other survivors. Survivor-led grassroots organizations were among those at the forefront of system change and the enactment of victim rights. Those with lived experiences were the most informed on the needs of survivors.

There were no requirements that these advocates have college or advanced degrees or professional credentials. As the field evolved, particularly within the criminal justice system, this and other systemic issues contributed, inadvertently, to marginalizing victim advocates. Over time the notion of "professionalizing" the role of victim service providers has gained momentum in efforts to institutionalize this work and ensure it becomes a credible field of practice. Professionalization carries both positive and negative interpretations depending upon the individual provider's or agency's perspective and philosophy. This is important to remember as you guide your academy planning process.

We recognize that, even today, many working in this field are motivated by their own survivor histories. Even as the field becomes more "professionalized," it is our responsibility to keep the voices of survivors at the center of our efforts in training and in the development of best practices and policies. We must also broaden the scope of training and practice to include professionals and occupations that interact regularly with victims and survivors; a coordinated service delivery system is key to ensuring a comprehensive network of support.

## Community of Practice

The term community of practice (CoP) was coined in the early 1990s and is defined as learning from

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1 The Office of the President of the United States. (1982, December). *President's Task Force on Victims of Crime Final Report*. Retrieved from <https://ojp.gov/ovc/publications/presdntstskforcrprt/87299.pdf>

2 Office for Victims of Crime. (1998). *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century*. Retrieved from [https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc\\_archives/directions/welcome.html](https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc_archives/directions/welcome.html)

3 Office for Victims of Crime. (2013, May). *Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services Report*. Retrieved from [https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/vision21/pdfs/Vision21\\_Report.pdf](https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/vision21/pdfs/Vision21_Report.pdf)

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4 Voth, D.L. (2010). *Quality Victim Advocacy: A Field Guide*. Bluffton, OH. WorkPlay Publishing.



a community of individuals who share a common interest but have diverse experiences. The application of this concept has been broadened to reflect more formal and intentional organizational efforts.

Three components are necessary as a CoP:

- **Domain:** a shared area of interest and commitment
- **Community:** members that engage in shared activities and build relationships that enable them to learn from each other
- **Practice:** development over time of shared plans, resources, strategies, and skills.<sup>5</sup>

## SVAA Communities of Practice

The SVAA Resource Center defines a community of practice as a group of people who come together to share expertise and resources around an area of common interest. The focus for SVAA is on the people and the structures that enable CoP participants to learn with and from each other.

SVAAAs strive to utilize, promote, and support both informal and formal communities of practice to maximize the sharing of knowledge and talents and improve practice and performance of SVAAAs, their leaders, stakeholders, faculty, and students.

The following is a framework created to support the development of SVAA communities of practice.

### 1. National Level

The SVAA Resource Center has convened a national advisory board of experts and thought leaders to help inform SVAAAs of current research, practice, and emerging trends. Advisory board members have endorsed a [values statement](#) that defines and promotes the value of training, education, and professional development for victim service providers. This values statement was created to also serve as a guide for a similar statement at the state or territory level.

### 2. State or Territory Level

Ongoing success for SVAAAs is rooted in a strong and diverse state or territory-wide network of victim service providers and allied professionals, and an invested steering committee. All are vital to a thriving victim service ecosystem and act as models to agency leadership and staff regarding the importance of interdisciplinary learning, networking, and coordinated responses to victims and survivors. The SVAA Resource Center's advisory board values statement can be adapted by any SVAA steering committee to guide their vision and implementation of the academy and overall delivery of training for SVAA students.

### 3. SVAA Operating Level

This level's focus is on developing CoPs among students and faculty. These individuals are the "boots on the ground" resource in sharing knowledge, expertise, and resources; networking; and providing direct care to the primary beneficiaries—crime victims and survivors. As part of a CoP, faculty is encouraged to develop their curriculum in a way that fosters and solidifies coordinated, collaborative responses and intervention. This level can establish strong mentoring programs that enable the CoP to continue beyond the SVAA experience and ensure high quality service delivery and peer support.

For more on peer support, see [Chapter 4](#) on mentoring. Visit the [SVAA Resource Library](#) for example documents to help jumpstart your academy planning.

## Leadership

While a diverse and collaborative steering committee is critical to develop and implement a SVAA, it is important for a lead or sponsoring agency to drive the initiative. The type of lead agency varies between states or territories, depending upon funding, resources, capacity, and their existing role in the state- or territory-wide victim services community. Lead agencies may include state or territory VOCA

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<sup>5</sup> Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

administrators, the Attorney General's office, other state- or territory-wide or regional agencies (public or private), or an academic institution.

The lead agency should identify an individual to serve in the director/coordinator/facilitator role. The roles and responsibilities for the lead agency and director should be clearly defined and include an expectation of hours devoted to the SVAA, especially if the designated director has more than one role within their agency or institution. Major responsibilities include facilitation as well as oversight of the planning process and overall operations. The lead agency and director will also conduct outreach to key stakeholders in the state or territory to recruit and maintain balance and diversity in the steering committee.

## Steering Committees

The steering committee is the cornerstone of a vibrant community of practice. The key to a SVAA's success is the convening of a multidisciplinary steering committee that is engaged in the following:

- Development, implementation, and analysis of a state- or territory-wide training needs assessment
- Development of a curriculum model and content
- Identification, recruitment, and development of faculty
- Determination of student eligibility and selection
- Development of a logistical plan for academy operations – e.g. location, time of year/dates, registration fees, scholarships, travel, lodging, etc.
- Execution of plans for sustained financial support

## Composition

In the past, SVAA's have included steering committee representation from many or all of the following:

- State or territory VOCA Victim Assistance agency
- Attorney General's office
- State or territory VOCA Victim Compensation agency or board
- Criminal justice agencies – e.g. federal/state/territory/local law enforcement, prosecution, courts, post-conviction
- Other relevant state or territory agencies – e.g. housing, child and adult protective services, disabilities, mental health, public health
- State or territory coalitions – e.g. domestic and sexual violence coalitions, children's advocacy center state or territory chapters
- Tribal agencies
- Health care
- Education/academic institutions
- Media/journalism networks
- Faith-based organizations
- LGBTQ organizations
- Victim/survivors
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) serving crime victims
- Others that further represent regional, cultural, and geographic diversity

## Expectations

In recruiting steering committee participants, it is important to clearly communicate the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of time and resources. This is best done both verbally and in writing. Once members are identified and successfully recruited, it is important to create a **Memorandum of Understanding** (MOU) that can be reviewed and signed to ensure clarity and agreement regarding expectations.

Expectations may include the following:

- Helping to create an SVAA **mission statement**
- Contributing expertise to the overall SVAA development process
- Supporting SVAA goals and timelines

- Fostering sustainability of the SVAA
- Serving as chair/co-chair of a steering committee subcommittee
- Attending SVAA steering committee and relevant subcommittee meetings

## Recruitment

Identification of potential steering committee members is initiated by the lead agency and initial stakeholders. Together this group will identify potential members while ensuring diversity and inclusivity to create the framework for the SVAA and define its culture, design, goals, operations, faculty, and funding resources. Individual outreach meetings can provide information about the SVAA, the steering committee, and the desired contributions of potential members. Meetings may also generate suggestions for other potential members. Eventually the group will develop an initial list and send invitations to a “kick-off” meeting, understanding that the steering committee membership may continue to evolve.

## Sample Subcommittees and Objectives

Subcommittees should be created to maximize the experience and skills of members to best benefit the larger group as well as provide an opportunity for each steering committee member to lend their particular expertise to the development of the academy.

### extra credit

Consider including the following items on your steering committee “kick-off” meeting agenda:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Impetus and Initial Steps toward Creation of an SVAA
- Discussion of “Communities of Practice”
- History and Current State of SVAA’s Nationally
- Development of an Action Plan
- Goals, Objectives, and Timeline
- Subcommittees
- Meeting Schedule

Subcommittees also involve members of the victim service community who offer valuable knowledge or resources.

Subcommittee examples include:

## Assessment and Evaluation

- Build upon existing information, complete a needs assessment of existing trainings including who delivers and attends the trainings
- Conduct gap analysis
- Develop evaluative instruments to measure the impact of the academy and to guide revisions for future academies

## Curriculum Design

- Design curriculum and educational materials
- Explore certification, credentialing, and course credit options
- Select and prepare faculty

## Outreach and Operations

- Identify student eligibility criteria
- Develop marketing and outreach strategies to recruit students
- Identify site logistics, scheduling, and fee structure

## Sustainability

- Develop a sustainable funding plan
- Identify potential funders and partners within state or territory, federal, and private sectors

## Ad Hoc

*(as determined by steering committee)*

- Activities – informal networking, peer support
- Alumni – networking, continuing education, follow-up consultation after completion of academy

### Guiding Questions for Facilitators

- What are the priority action steps? Do we need additional input/guidance to finalize these action steps?
- Where and how frequently will we meet as a subcommittee to accomplish our action steps?
- What are some obstacles to taking these action steps? How can we address these obstacles?

### Ongoing Assessment and Planning

The steering committee should continue to review SVAA evaluations and consider refinements to curriculum, faculty, and operations and determine implications for next steps with regard to SVAA growth and overall sustainability.

## Comprehensive Training Needs Assessment

Conducting a state- or territory-wide training needs assessment is fundamental to meeting the needs of victim service providers, complementing existing training efforts, filling gaps in training and education, and strengthening communities of practice in the field.

To begin developing your needs assessment, consider the following steps:

#### 1. Create an inventory of existing trainings

The steering committee will compile this information based on their fields of practice and trainings in which they serve as sponsors, trainers, and/or participants. A project leader should gather this information from the steering committee to be combined into a survey for the larger field. The survey will be a starting point for identifying strengths and gaps in training across the state or territory and various disciplines.

#### 2. Survey victim service providers across the state or territory

Implement a short but comprehensive survey that captures input from direct service staff and managers/supervisors state- and territory-wide. An online survey tool can be completed anonymously to encourage openness and honesty. Below are ideas for topics to cover in survey questions:

- The respondent's demographic information, years of service, role and preparedness for performing that role, training needed/not available/not yet received
- The agency's type, victim population and communities served, focus on trauma-informed and culturally relevant practice, understanding of multiple systems of response, integration of vicarious trauma research, examination of how research informs practice, opportunities for networking and developing skills for building collaborations across agencies and disciplines
- Specifics on training, including statutory requirements for training (to identify providers with privileged communications), the availability and provision of introductory training and orientation (including the topics covered and length of training), requirements for continuing education, single discipline vs. interdisciplinary training, availability and quality of supervision and mentoring

Refer to this [sample needs assessment](#) as a guide that can be tailored to your jurisdiction.

#### 3. Analyze the results

Using an online tool, like Google Forms or Survey Monkey, will increase the ease of data collection. The data should be synthesized into a summary report for presentation to the steering committee.

Consider using your analysis to do the following:

- Identify effective training already being provided
- Point out gaps in existing training

- Discuss how resources can be shared to maximize training efforts
- Define the SVAA mission, philosophy, and model
- Inform the structure and content of curriculum
- Identify, recruit, and develop faculty
- Target student populations
- Develop non-educational activities to reinforce learning and practice
- Create an SVAA schedule that fits within an overall calendar of training events within the state or territory

#### 4. **Discuss the results with the steering committee**

The results of the needs assessment and steering committee discussion inform the next steps for SVAA development and can be translated into an action plan, inclusive of steering committee subcommittees and specific personnel responsible for all tasks, and a timeline for completing them.



# Chapter 2

## PARTNERING WITH ACADEMIA

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Cultivating partnerships with academic institutions, initially required by OVC and now strongly encouraged, continues to be a critical asset for academies. OVC originally envisioned this partnership to support an SVAA financially, with operational logistics, and in the pursuit of evidence-based curricula and teaching techniques. OVC believes that an academic partner encourages collaboration on evaluation and curriculum design, faculty and student support, and provision of classroom and residential space.

In this section, you will find guidelines and information on establishing a successful partnership with an academic institution.

- A. Why Partner with an Academic Institution?**
- B. Identify Your Academic Partner(s)**
- C. Role and Function of Academic Partners**

## Why Partner with an Academic Institution?

A partnership between an SVAA and a college or university benefits both parties. For example, a school may gain publicity about its commitment to the victim services field or praise for giving back to community partners by providing rental of free or low-cost space.

The SVAA can gain a myriad of resources including access to state-of-the-art technology and space at lower costs, participation in strong learning environments, connections to researchers and faculty committed to the field, and assistance with evaluation and/or curriculum development.

## Identifying Your Academic Partner(s)

When establishing your SVAA, it is critical to identify an academic partner that aligns with your mission. You may already be working with faculty through their teaching or participation on the steering committee or through an institution with relevant majors, research projects, and community collaborations.

When selecting an academic partner, consider these questions:

- **Does your large state university or community college system have relevant faculty or programming?** Does it have innovative coursework integrating a focus on victims' experiences?
- **Does this institution share the vision of the SVAA?** Does it already share in any joint programs with state, territory, or community-based victim service agencies?
- **Does this institution value skill-building** as well as academic rigor/evidence-based learning?
- **Where is the school located?** Geographic location, especially if the partnership involves the school serving as the academy site, can be a pri-

mary draw for attendees. The benefit of a central location cannot be underestimated, especially in larger states or territories. Consider parking availability and proximity to public transportation.

- **What is the quality of the meeting space** (a conference room or classroom)? As with all aspects of your SVAA, the specific design, including location, should be best suited to your particular needs.
- **Is the institution well-regarded** across the nation or within the state or territory in a relevant field of study? Is it committed to the wider geographic region? Schools with less name-recognition may be willing to offer greater value or assistance and may see the SVAA as an asset for the campus and a potential draw for students enrolling. More prominent schools may not "need" an SVAA in the same way, but its name may attract people to look at the SVAA website and thus underscore the SVAA's strengths by association.
- **Is there a likely director/coordinator** within the institution who would be a logical collaborator? What is that person's role and how are they viewed?
- **Is there an expectation that some or all faculty involved with the academy will come from this institution?**

### extra credit

When considering an academic partnership, research local schools with majors or minors in victimology, victim advocacy/services, social work, social justice, criminal justice, law, or other relevant areas.

OVC has developed a [full program](#) for integrating crime victims' issues into college and university curricula. This online program may help guide your collaboration with potential academic partners. Consider including faculty who are conducting research or programming on advocacy, human services, criminal justice, public health, gender or women's studies, violence, and trauma.



## Role and Function of Academic Partners

As part of selecting an academic partner, the SVAA must determine the expected role of that partner. The role may also evolve over time in response to the needs of the academy.

Below are more detailed examinations of the possible roles for the academic partner.

### SVAA Lead Agency and Primary Contact

One of the advantages to selecting an academic institution as your academy's lead agency is its significant infrastructure. Colleges and universities provide training and professional development, like SVAAAs. As such, they have many of the elements that an academy will need to be successful.

However, infrastructure and logistics are not sole determinants when choosing an academic partner. The lead agency, whether it is a university or a community agency, must be willing and able to commit the time, energy, and funds necessary to consistently coordinate a successful state- or territory-wide effort as well as align with the vision and mission laid out by the steering committee.

To effectively lead an academy, an academic partner will need to identify a faculty member and/or other staff person to act as the director. This individual must have the time available to take full responsibility for the oversight and management of all aspects of the SVAA. This will require balancing commitment to the SVAA and to the academic institution. Balancing these roles can be difficult and a director will need to work closely with their multidisciplinary steering committee to achieve the goals of the SVAA.

When contracting with an academic institution, it is helpful to identify a primary contact that will work alongside you and understand your students, goals, and expectations. This person can be your champion within the institution. Their ability to navigate the school's systems can prove invaluable as you prepare for and operate your SVAA. This contact may be

a dean or school president, the head of residential services, or the chair of the victimology or social work department.

If your contact is an administrator, ask for their help in selecting someone to assist you with day-to-day planning and serve as the main point of contact for any issues. Although it is beneficial to have senior administration support of the academy, it is important to select a distinct staff person who is accessible and responsive to any challenges that may arise.

It is also useful to ask your academic partner how they realistically can contribute to the partnership. They may have ideas that you have not considered such as a team of junior faculty or students who wish to observe the academy or present on a topic of interest. They may offer to oversee a poster session of relevant research by those associated with the SVAA and/or the school, which could add a research aspect into your academy.

### Housing and Classrooms

An academic partner may also collaborate by hosting the academy and providing housing and/or classroom space. Colleges and universities can provide facilities that meet many of the logistical needs of an academy.

Quality living spaces contribute significantly to the academy's success if it is a residential design that requires overnight stays. As many colleges and universities have begun to update and improve their housing to attract new students, dormitory space can be comfortable and financially viable for academies. Colleges and universities also have on-campus dining facilities, which are more efficient than leaving campus for academy students. Keep in mind that state and federal regulations govern how to contract with the school and how to pay for food. However, numerous SVAAAs are able to apply student registration fees to a comprehensive package that includes food and housing, which addresses the major logistical challenge that SVAAAs face of how to provide food within state and federal funding guidelines.

Academic institutions can also provide state-of-the-art technology and classroom space at a reasonable

cost. With the modern tools used in college classrooms, your SVAA faculty could have access to resources unavailable in other locations such as a hotel conference room. These technologies are often campus-wide and are included in the overall cost, unlike hotels which typically charge for each item.

## Faculty and Curriculum Development

One of the most significant contributions of the academic partner may be providing faculty who are committed to victim services education, are experienced trainers, and are up to date on recent research and empirically supported practices. They are likely skilled in developing curriculum and evaluating that training for efficacy. Faculty, curriculum development, and evaluation are discussed at great length in the following chapters. Read more about curriculum development in [Chapter 3](#), faculty in [Chapter 6](#), and evaluation in [Chapter 7](#).

Identifying the best academic partner for your SVAA is a critical component of the success of your academy. Regardless of the final agreement or arrangements, taking the time to build the necessary multi-tiered relationships with administrators, facilities managers, and faculty will be helpful in maximizing the benefits of this partnership.

Visit the [SVAA Resource Library](#) for useful templates, including an MOU, contract with a partner (as a site location or source of faculty), and letter of commitment.

# Chapter 3

## DEVELOPING YOUR CURRICULUM

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Your academy's curriculum is an opportunity to shape your community's victim service providers and guide them to feeling a sense of meaning and commitment to the victims' movement. Additionally, it is an opportunity to demonstrate teaching through a trauma-informed, victim-centered, and culturally inclusive lens.

In this section, you will find information and resources to guide you through the basics of developing the curriculum for your state or territory's academy.

- A. Clarifying the Vision for the Curriculum**
- B. Foundational Concepts for Curriculum Development**
- C. Curriculum Content**
- D. Promoting Professional Resiliency during the Academy**
- E. Curriculum Planning Considerations**
- F. When to Seek Curriculum Review**
- G. Credentialing and Credit**

## Clarifying the Vision for the Curriculum

In bringing your academy's curriculum vision into focus, the steering committee should consult the results of the training needs assessment. This comprehensive assessment should survey existing training opportunities, reveal gaps in training and education, and assemble the collective needs of victim service providers and agencies. It also provides information on faculty, student populations, and schedule, which enables you to focus on the desired outcomes that are unique to your state or territory. For more information on the needs assessment, revisit that section in [Chapter 1](#).

Using the needs assessment, begin to clarify the vision for your curriculum by considering the following:

- **What level of education are you trying to build?** Are you providing foundational education for new students or ongoing education for experienced students?
- **Who will attend the academy?** Will attendees include victim advocates, community-based advocates, justice system-based advocates, and/or allied professionals? Will attendees be limited to those who work directly with victims or expand to include long-term volunteers, law enforcement, those in administration, and any others that interact with victims?
- **What type of learning will you provide for your students?** Will there be both in-person and web-based classes? Is the focus on content knowledge, practical skills, or both?
- **What will your specific learning objectives be?** What do you want participants to take away? How will these be measured? Do these objectives reflect most aspects of the needs assessment?

Clearly identifying the goals and learning objectives for your curriculum will help state the purpose of your training in concrete, measurable terms. Learning objectives also serve as a type of contract with your audience—if participants know the objectives from the beginning, they know what they are expected to learn.

For assistance in writing learning objectives, consider reviewing [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) for assistance. There are extensive resources online which describe this method in detail.

## Foundational Concepts for Curriculum Development

There are several foundational concepts that contribute to the strength of a comprehensive SVAA curriculum.

### 1. Based on Principles of Adult Learning<sup>6</sup>

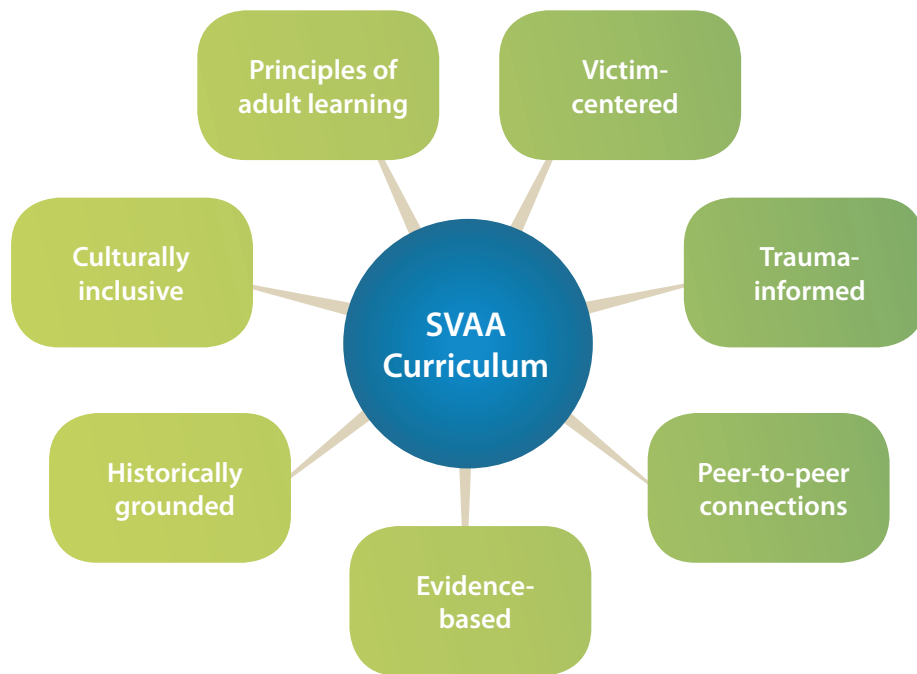
Incorporating adult learning principles will make your curriculum more effective. This [brief publication](#) outlines the principles of adult learning and explains how to apply them in training to engage adult learners.

### 2. Victim-Centered

This approach is defined as the systematic focus on the needs and concerns of a victim or survivor to ensure the compassionate and sensitive delivery of services in a nonjudgmental manner. A [victim-centered approach](#) seeks to minimize re-traumatization associated with the criminal justice process. This is done by providing the support of victim advocates and service providers, empowering survivors as engaged participants in the process, and providing survivors an opportunity to play a role in seeing their perpetrators brought to justice.

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<sup>6</sup> TEAL Center Staff. (2011). TEAL Center Fact Sheet no. 11: Adult Learning Theories. Retrieved from [https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/11\\_%20TEAL\\_Adult\\_Learning\\_Theory.pdf](https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/11_%20TEAL_Adult_Learning_Theory.pdf)



### 3. Trauma-Informed

These **six principles**, outlined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), are able to be generalized across settings and should be incorporated into all aspects of academy planning, including curriculum.

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment, voice, and choice
- Cultural, historical, and gender issues

### 4. Culturally Inclusive

A culturally inclusive curriculum reflects the diversity of attendees and the victims they serve. A commitment to broaden attendees' viewpoints and skill sets can be achieved by challenging language, behavior, and assumptions that are biased and non-inclusive while inviting the multiplicity of expression and experience into the classroom.

### 5. Grounded in the Victims' Movement<sup>7</sup>

A **historical perspective** of the victims' movement provides essential context to help students appreciate the efforts of the early pioneers and recognize the importance of protecting victims' rights. Students feeling like they are part of a movement also emphasizes the larger collective to which they belong.

### 6. Evidence-Based

Including the latest research in your curriculum sets a standard of continual improvement and utilization of proven practices for students' work. This is important both for those receiving services and to demonstrate to funders. Consider reviewing

<sup>7</sup> Young, M., & Stein, J. (December 2004). *The History of the Crime Victims' Movement in the United States: A Component of the Office for Victims of Crime Oral History Project*. Retrieved from [https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc\\_archives/ncvrvw/2005/pdf/historyofcrime.pdf](https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc_archives/ncvrvw/2005/pdf/historyofcrime.pdf)

OVC's [Vision 21 report](#)<sup>8</sup> for additional information about incorporating research into practice.

## 7. Peer-to-Peer

Some of the most valuable learning happens outside of the established curriculum through peer-to-peer connections. In addition to the support derived from others in the same field, advocates have much to gain by getting to know their peers. By creating opportunities for formal and informal learning from one other, attendees may glean important, practical, and applicable information. With personal knowledge of other agencies, systems, providers, and services, advocates are able to make “warm” referrals to those programs and providers. A well-resourced, informed advocate increases quality referrals, enhances service to victims, and improves a trauma-informed practice.

Read more about relevant criteria related to training and education at OVC's page about incorporating their model standards into your academy.

## Curriculum Content

As previously discussed, curriculum content will be largely driven by and aligned with what is revealed in the needs assessment and what best meets your state's or territory's needs. Although there are no required courses, certain topics are commonly offered in most basic or foundational training academies such as “The History of the Victims' Movement.” All classes typically include a mix of information and skill building.

Consider the list of topics below, many of which align with the [National Advocate Credentialing Program](#):

<sup>8</sup> Office for Victims of Crime. (2013, May). *Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services Final Report*. Retrieved from [https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/vision21/pdfs/Vision21\\_Report.pdf](https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/vision21/pdfs/Vision21_Report.pdf)

For an engaging and comprehensive overview of the history of the victims' movement, watch these short videos created by the Denver Victim Services Network.<sup>1</sup>

[Part I](#) | [Part II](#) | [Part III](#) | [Part IV](#)

Also available is [Landmarks in Victims' Rights and Services](#), an overview of the victims' rights movement updated annually as part of OVC's *National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide*.

<sup>1</sup> Unknown. (2010, February 22). *A Brief History of the Victims' Rights Movement, Parts I-IV*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/user/vs2kdenver/videos>

**Foundational content** often includes:

- Advocacy/Role of the Advocate
- Cultural Sensitivity/Competency
- Case Management/Coordination
- Ethics/Confidentiality
- Civil/Criminal Justice System
- Crime Victim Compensation
- History of the Victims' Movement
- Trauma of Victimization
- Crisis Intervention
- Vicarious Trauma

Advanced or **specialty training** topics may include:

- Special Populations
- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Assault
- Child Abuse
- Drunk Driving
- Homicide
- Campus Advocacy

Advanced academy training may include topics specific to **supervisors and managers**:

- Program Development
- Staff Management and Supervision
- Community Relations
- Board Development, Fundraising, and Proposal Writing
- Research
- Trauma-informed Service
- Vicarious Trauma-informed Organization

## Promoting Professional Resiliency During the Academy

Vicarious trauma has long been recognized as a risk for those working in the victim services field. A course that educates advocates about the risk for and normalization of the occurrence of vicarious trauma is important to consider including in your curriculum.

Teaching about and promoting practices to decrease vicarious trauma models self-care and capitalizes on peer support, which is critical in reducing it. For further information on what organizations can do to address vicarious trauma, visit the [Vicarious Trauma Toolkit](#), a project of OVC.

Consider these ways of promoting self-care, also known as professional resiliency, throughout the academy:

- Allowing students to get to know one another through icebreakers and fun activities
- Including opportunities for small group discussion and reflection
- Allowing for unstructured downtime
- Planning opportunities for students to build relationships and expand their professional networks through intentional rooming assignments, seating arrangements, and group exercises

Building professional relationships with colleagues creates an informal support network that is essential to this field. Having a variety of tools and resources reduces the feelings of helplessness in advocates and increases their senses of competence and confidence.

Consider activities in the following domains:

- **Physical:** Plan an optional yoga class, take standing or stretch breaks, offer a walking group in the evening
- **Social:** Coordinate optional activities like group meals, a movie or trivia night, or a tour of a local attraction
- **Spiritual:** Consider the spiritual and religious needs of attendees and schedule academy events based on those, offer a guided meditation session, offer time in nature
- **Emotional:** Offer a structured debrief, make senior staff or faculty available and accessible for private check-ins as needed
- **Intellectual:** Moderate discussions around current topics in the field, discuss post-academy professional development opportunities

Academies should also encourage attendees' employers to exempt them from all but the most important calls and emails during their participation in the academy. Allowing the students to immerse themselves in their classes without distraction prioritizes their learning and amplifies the importance of professional resiliency.

## Curriculum Planning Considerations

There are many practical elements that may influence the format and delivery of your curriculum. These include:

- Length of academy
- Blended learning
- Academy location
- Sequencing of modules
- Number of attendees

## Length of Academy

There is no standardized way to deliver an academy. States and territories have utilized a variety of configurations, but a 40-hour curriculum is a good baseline. While the original mandate and continued “gold standard” for SVAAAs is 40 hours of onsite training spread over several days, states and territories have used a variety of designs to deliver a full curriculum. Explore the variety of SVAA configurations through the online Dashboard.

## Blended Learning

If your needs assessment results have indicated that cost and/or time required are challenges to attending trainings, a blended learning model may be a useful tool for your curriculum. Academies often utilize blended learning to cover the complete academy curriculum, which incorporates webinar participation prior to beginning the academy. An informal 2016 survey by the SVAA Resource Center shows that 75% of responding SVAAAs use [Victim Assistance Training Online](#) (VAT *Online*) courses as supplemental learning for their academies.

## Academy Location

The location of the academy can influence the curriculum as certain venues may offer special technology or events that can be incorporated into—and shape—the trainings offered.

## Sequencing of Modules

An impactful curriculum notes the sequencing of topics covered and divides the content into modules. It also allocates the time required for each module and decides how to present the content using multiple training strategies.

## Number of Attendees

The number of attendees at your academy may be influenced by a number of outside factors (like venue limitations), but a thoughtful decision about the ideal group size based on your content and activities will be beneficial in curriculum design.

For tips on developing effective learning for adults, refer to the [Effective Adult Learning toolkit](#) developed by the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice at the University of Washington and the Network for Public Health Law.

### extra credit

The OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center’s (TTAC) [Victim Assistance Training Online](#) courses offer a no-cost, foundational web-based victim assistance training program that focuses on the essential skills and knowledge professionals need to effectively assist victims of crime. VAT *Online* has four sections (*Basics, Core Competencies and Skills, Crimes, and Specific Considerations for Providing Victim Services*) with various modules in each section. VAT *Online* does not have to be completed in its entirety. Academies can pick and choose which modules or sections best meet their needs.

- The *Basics* section includes information that all victim service providers must know, including victims’ rights and the justice systems, and provides a foundation for victim services
- The *Core Competencies and Skills* section includes modules covering basic communication skills, confidentiality, and advocacy
- The *Crimes* section includes characteristics and prevalence of crimes including sexual assault, elder abuse, and child abuse
- The *Specific Considerations for Providing Victim Services* section includes information and skills to serve populations such as LGBTQ victims, campus/university victims of crime, and victims of sexual assault in the military.



## When to Seek Curriculum Review

Academies supported through VOCA funds are asked to work with OVC TTAC for any newly created or substantially revised curricula to ensure compliance with OVC's Instructional Design Standards. Consultation and support regarding changes to smaller portions of an academy is available via the SVAA Resource Center. Directors should **contact** the SVAA Resource Center for guidance in determining the proper parties to assist in curriculum development for both of these entities.

extra credit

OVC's **Instructional Design Standards** are based on the ADDIE approach to developing training: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. This model is intended to help ensure that:

- Participant needs dictate training content
- The goals of the trainings are met by participants
- The trainings are the same each time they are delivered
- Specific, measurable outcomes are used to evaluate training efficacy<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the Instructional Design Standards support OVC's training mission: to provide information and learning experiences to victim service providers and allied professionals to expand their knowledge and assist in developing their skills to better serve the needs of victims.

<sup>1</sup> OVC TTAC staff. (2018, April 4). *Instructional Design Standards*. Retrieved from <https://www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspCurriculumStandards.cfm>

extra credit

There are extensive additional online learning opportunities that can be useful in a blended learning model. Visit the [SVAA Resource Center](#) for a comprehensive list.

## Credentialing and Credit

Students may be seeking professional recognition for their participation in the academy such as credentialing at the state, territory, or national level; college credit; or continuing education units for professional licensing. You may consider engaging in the process of having your academy curriculum certified if your needs assessment shows that trainees are interested in credentialing or CEU credits.

Consider the following options:

### National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP)

Developed by the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), **NACP** is the first voluntary national credentialing program for crime victim advocates. This program offers online training and credentialing for individual advocates as well as credentialing for programs at the national, state, territory, and local levels, to include SVAAAs.

There are approximately 49 state, local and university credentialed programs (30 of which are through SVAAAs), 7 military programs, and 4 national (online) programs credentialed by NACP. NACP offers four levels of credentialing: Provisional, Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced.

### State or Territory Programs

Some states or territories have their own certification or credentialing that may be required for certain advocates, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, or

trafficking service providers. These usually set a minimum number of hours and require that the training be approved by a state or territory coalition or other entity.

## University Education and Certificates

While there are many colleges and universities that offer individual courses, there are a limited number of schools that offer undergraduate or graduate degrees in victim services or victimology. Often it can be a concentration for another degree such as criminal justice or psychology. There are also many universities that offer college credit or a certificate in victim advocacy through the use of a [curriculum](#) developed by the Center for Legal Studies, a for-profit entity. This curriculum is offered online, through DVD, or via written material.

## Continuing Education Credits (CEUs)

Some academies offer CEUs to their professionally licensed students (i.e. licensed social workers, mental health counselors, or marriage and family therapists) who are required to document their continuing education credits with their state or territory licensing body. Consider having your curriculum approved for CEUs by the following associations:

- [National Association of Social Workers](#)
- [American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists](#)
- [American Counseling Association](#)

# Chapter 4

## MENTORING

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Developing a mentoring program as a component of your academy serves the overall goal of increasing an advocate's professional development in multiple ways. Through a well-designed mentoring program, students are encouraged to think critically, consider how the curriculum content applies in their work, enhance their professional network, and create supportive relationships that can last well beyond the academy.

In this section, you will find information on the following:

- A. Goals of a Mentoring Program**
- B. Addressing the Emotional Impact**
- C. Role of the Mentor**
- D. Choosing Mentors**
- E. Orienting Mentors**
- F. Examples of Mentoring Programs**

## Goals of a Mentoring Program

Providing mentors or a mentoring program as part of your academy achieves three important goals in the overall professional development of academy attendees: enhanced learning, broadening of professional networks, and improved resilience.

The mentor provides the perspective of a seasoned advocate that can supplement the information delivered during the academy. Setting aside focused time for discussion, and potentially debate, is a crucial part of a mentoring program. Students learn from the mentor as well as each other. Through these conversations students come to a greater understanding of how the material applies in their day-to-day job activities while sharpening critical thinking.

Read more information about mentoring in the [SVAA Resource Library](#).

Some goals of a mentoring program during the academy may be to:

- Process and debrief the impact of the days' classes and material
- Provide the opportunity to discuss and ask clarifying questions about course content
- Synthesize course material and consider applications to students' own work life
- Identify potential emotional impact of course content
- Discuss and consider ways that participants might practice self-care while at the academy and at work

## Addressing the Emotional Impact

It is well understood that working in victim services can cause vicarious trauma for even experienced advocates. Research shows that younger, less experienced advocates can be at higher risk for developing

vicarious trauma.<sup>9</sup> In addition, approximately 60% of advocates have a history of victimization themselves.<sup>10</sup>

While attending the academy, attendees are immersed in the trauma of victimization. Students can be distressed and/or triggered by the course material and may have varying emotional and physical reactions. The inclusion of a mentoring program in your SVAA will help academy staff stay alert to students' reactions and needs and provide a trauma-informed, supportive environment in which students learn from the experience and further their professional development.

### extra credit

#### Possible Signs of Vicarious Trauma<sup>1</sup>

- Crying
- Suddenly leaving class or avoiding it altogether
- Nervousness/anxiety
- Increasing withdrawal or isolation
- Oversharing of personal information
- Substance over-use

<sup>1</sup> Unknown. (2017). *What Is Vicarious Trauma?* Retrieved from <https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/what-is-vicarious-trauma>

## Role of the Mentor

A mentor is someone who students see as a trusted confidant and guide. We often think about mentoring as a one-to-one relationship focused on professional development, however, the framework within academies can be focused on group relationships. By

<sup>9</sup> Bonach, K. & Heckert, A. (2012). *Predictors of Secondary Traumatic Stress among Child Advocacy Center Forensic Interviewers*. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 21(3), 295-314.

<sup>10</sup> Pearlman, L.A. & Maclan, P.S. (1995). *Vicarious Traumatization: An Empirical Study of Effects of Trauma Work on Trauma Therapists*. *Professional Psychologist: Research & Practice*, 26, 558-565.

mentoring in a group, the mentor is able to develop one-on-one relationships as well as facilitate the group process. This can enable students to develop supportive relationships with colleagues as well as with the mentor.

The role of mentors is quite different from the role of faculty. Mentors aim to enhance the professional development of the student and support their growth through discussion, reflection, and occasional debate. Rather than teaching skills, the most important skills for a mentor to have are questioning and listening.

If incorporated into your academy, the relationships built between mentees and mentors become an important part of the experience. These relationships vary based upon the individuals, whether a group or individual process is developed, and the availability of the mentor (daily or as needed).

A mentor may be called upon to facilitate an assigned small group that convenes daily or regularly throughout the academy. Mentors may be assigned individual students to meet with one-on-one regularly and on an as-needed basis. Offering individual guidance during the week provides an identified leader for students to seek out in an emergency or for assistance processing something that arose during the academy.

The relationship between mentor and mentee can last the duration of the academy, or it may extend farther as the student continues their professional path.

### extra credit

**The role of the mentor is to foster the professional development of the advocates by:**

- Building rapport
- Asking questions to elicit the students' own wisdom
- Listening
- Encouraging reflection on the students' own experiences
- Respecting the experience and insight of others as well as their own
- Empowering critical thinking
- Providing emotional support as needed

## Choosing Mentors

All mentors should be required to have advanced experience as an advocate and/or counselor, but the group of mentors overall should be diverse in their cultural backgrounds, geography, workplaces, professions, roles, and experiences. Similarly, assigning students to mentor groups should reflect the full diversity of your student body, exposing the students to as many different work environments, roles, and approaches as possible. When assigning mentors to mentees, be sure that current employees and supervisors are not grouped together.

If proceeding with a group model, mentors must engage the members in conversation, reflection, and sharing. This includes balancing participation by encouraging quieter students to share while moderating more talkative students. In mentor selection, academies frequently choose mentors who have attended an earlier academy, senior advocates with experience in an environment similar to the students, and members of the academy faculty or steering committee. No matter the mentor's field, each mentor should be knowledgeable about the class content and process as well as adept at listening for topics raised (or missed) within the group session.

Recruiting mentors is an important task that requires time to find the best fit for your academy. Be clear about the parameters of the roles so individuals can decide if they have ample time to dedicate to this role.

Consider these questions before approaching mentors:

- Will mentors meet one-on-one with mentees or facilitate group processes?
- Will they be on-site for the entire academy or only at certain times?
- Will mentors play a role during or only after the academy has been completed?

If mentors will be on-site for the duration of the academy, consider providing remuneration or coordination with the mentor's agency to provide time off, potentially as an educational or community service. This will allow the mentor to be fully engaged in the academy.

A mentor's consistent presence can help lay the groundwork for trusting relationships with students. If on-site, mentors may need a place to consult with each other regarding their experiences each day or over the course of the academy. Consider regular "check-ins" for the mentors to compare notes, share ideas, provide support, and respond to any concerns or issues among the student body. This forum can also provide all mentors with any important or concerning mentee information, in case of an emergency.

## Orienting Mentors

Becoming a mentor may be daunting for some. They may feel unnecessary pressure to be an expert on all information taught in the academy. Providing guidance on the mentor role and including questions for opening discussions can help mentors feel more confident in their roles.

### extra credit

#### Daily Mentor Group Meeting Guide: On-site Model

The questions below are suggestions for how to review the day's content. Please adapt these questions to your needs to promote a relaxed, reciprocal conversation that encourages reflection, critical thinking, and support.

- What was your overall impression of the day?
- What particular class, or piece of information, stood out for you?
- Was there anything you heard today that you did not agree with?
- Was there anything in the presentations that was particularly upsetting or disturbing to you?
- Can you identify some ways that today's learning will influence your work?
- How do you plan to relax and engage in self-care after today's classes?

An orientation, in person or via conference call/web meeting, can help potential mentors gain an understanding of the role and assess their readiness to participate. If an orientation is given, consider having one or two veteran mentors speak about their experiences in addition to discussing the role and expectations.

## Examples of Mentoring Programs

### The Massachusetts Model

The Massachusetts Victim Assistance Academy's (MVAA) mentorship program was built into each day of the 40-hour residential academy. In most cases the mentors were long-time advocates or part of the administration, faculty, or steering committee. They largely stayed on-site with the students, attended classes, and met with their mentees daily.

Students were assigned to a particular mentor and group that remained consistent throughout the week. The groups met at the end of each day for 45-60 minutes to discuss the classes and any other material that students needed to process. See the [Sample Mentoring Guide](#) at the end of this chapter for more tips. Mentors provided their cell phone numbers and were available to their assigned mentees in case of emergency.

The issue of confidentiality was discussed and agreed upon in the first meeting. All case-specific information was to be anonymized as much as possible and any personal sharing was to stay within the group, unless it was necessary for the mentor to share some of the information with other mentors.

The mentors met together at the end of the day to debrief, discuss the varying reactions to the classes, and check in about any concerning issues. The mentors developed their own supportive peer group to troubleshoot or respond quickly to concerning information or emergency situations.

## The Arkansas Model

The Director of the Arkansas SVAA, Roberta Sick, shares her academy's experience:

During our weeklong academy in 2016, we found several of our students were having some personal difficulties due to the intense nature and content of the training. We realized that while we talk about being trauma-informed, our curriculum was not.

After attending the Leadership Symposium for Victim Assistance Academies at the NCVV conference, the concept of a mentoring program was adopted by the steering committee. For 2017, we changed the schedule to meet from 8:30-4:30 allowing 15 minutes each morning for a "dealing with trauma" tip, and the final 30 minutes of the day were reserved for small groups to meet and process the day's content.

Denoted by a colored dot on their name tag, participants were randomly assigned to small groups, led by a seasoned advocate or steering committee member that remained the same for the week. It was in those groups that they could discuss the content of the classes and workshops, ask questions, and process their experience. Each group had a different discussion as the mentor was able to respond to the group's needs and desires.

By the end of the week, the students were exhibiting positive energy overall and were in a much better place than the year before. While some students were inevitably triggered by some of the content, we were ready and had built in better supports. Next year, we are considering adding on an extra time slot for those who would like to have more discussion about healing or need more time to process their experience of the day."

## The Montana Model: Follow-along Consultation

The following is information from the Montana Victim Advocate Academy, a program of the Institute for Educational Research and Service at the University of Montana.

The goal of the Follow-along Consultation Program is to support the training process and transfer of learning occurring at the annual academy, which will in turn increase the level of professionalism and competency within the victim service field. Students participate in facilitated case consultations with University of Montana Social Work Department faculty, who are licensed clinical social workers, and other academy graduates. Follow-along Consultation is conducted monthly via video conference and spans over a 6-month period. In this way, the academy can (1) create an ongoing supportive network of service providers within the first years of service, (2) provide a forum to support the transfer of learning from the academy into real world application, and (3) provide support that will mitigate vicarious trauma and reduce compassion fatigue. The long-term, ongoing contact serves the development of the academy by laying the foundation for advanced academy curriculum and the creation of statewide standards for victim advocate certification.

## Sample Mentoring Guide

This sample should be used by mentors meeting daily with a group during a residential academy.

### Goals:

- To debrief and process the content of the day and the effects of the material on the participant
  - To provide the opportunity to ask questions about the information presented in the day's classes
  - To synthesize the material from the day and consider applications to their own work
  - To discuss and consider ways that participants might take care of themselves while at the academy and at work
- Explain that the group time is open for debriefing and discussion of all matters related to the academy. You might review the goals at the start of the first session
  - Consider checking in with each member of your group and asking whether they have anything in particular to discuss
  - Consider ending each session with participants describing how they will take care of themselves that evening or during the next day

### Process:

- Mentors will meet with their group of participants at the end of each day for 30-60 minutes. Meetings are mandatory
  - Emphasize confidentiality. All participants should maintain the confidentiality of group members during the week and after the academy concludes. Repeat this at the beginning of the first two meetings and ensure that you receive each participant's agreement to this rule
- ### Questions to consider when meeting with your group:
- What was your overall impression of the day?
  - What new information, topic, or concept stood out for you?
  - How will that apply to or influence the way you do your work?
  - Was there anything you heard today that you did not agree with?
  - Was there anything in the topics or presentations today that was particularly upsetting or disturbing to you?
  - What are you going to do this evening to relax and practice self-care?



# Chapter 5

## STUDENT SELECTION

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Like all academy-planning components, student selection is a process that requires thoughtfulness and preparation. It is an important factor to consider in order to maximize the impact and effectiveness of curriculum and logistical planning. By combining a diverse group of students, representing a variety of disciplines and experiences, you will increase the number of perspectives regarding all aspects of your academy and enrich the experience for all attendees.

The student selection process can be broken down into four steps, each with its own considerations and tasks. This chapter will examine each of the following:

- A. Developing Specific Selection Criteria**
- B. Creating the Application and Submission Process**
- C. Outreach and Recruitment**
- D. Crafting a Student Body**

# Developing Specific Selection Criteria

extra credit

Steve Derene, Executive Director of the [National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators](#), predicts that the increase in VOCA funding in 2015 will result in an estimated 60,000 new victim service providers across the country during the next several years (*personal communication, March 24, 2016*).

## Align with Your Needs Assessment

SVAAAs are rarely the only available training in a state or territory. It is critical that states and territories perform a needs assessment in order to avoid duplicating already available resources. Needs assessments performed at the beginning of the SVAA process or reevaluation period should be designed to inform the direction and development of the SVAA and student selection.

SVAA leaders should review the data collected to help answer the following questions:

- What trainings are already attended by early career professionals?
- How many early career professionals exist across the network?
- Do potential students want or need college credit or credentialing?
- Should the SVAA offer an advanced option for experienced service providers?
- Are agencies interested in training for their staff?

## Examine Vision/Mission Statements

The vision and mission statements of an SVAA set the parameters for its philosophy and also provide guidelines in the student selection process by identifying the target audience for training. For example, if your academy is targeting early career professionals, you will need to define what qualifies as early career. If someone has worked in victim services for a decade but is now in a new position working with an entirely new type of victim, do they qualify as early career? You may want to include college students or others who are not yet fully engaged in professional life. You may want to train only paid staff rather than including volunteers. Must students be providing direct service or are administrators also welcome at your SVAA?

By looking to your vision and mission statement you can find guidance on who your SVAA seeks to train and make the selection process consistent and predictable for prospective students and SVAA staff.

## Review OVC Goals and Objectives for Student Population

Due to the limitations on training budgets, setting priorities for student selection is a necessity. OVC expects SVAAAs to provide training to a diverse student body. When determining who to train in your SVAA, it is valuable to remember that the priorities set out by OVC focus on early career victim service providers and allied professionals. This focus allows for great diversity in your student population by convening a student body that is not only made up of victim witness advocates or community-based advocates. The role of allied professionals in victim services, and their inclusion in your target audience, means that your class makeup will incorporate a wider range of individuals who work with crime victims. There are countless professionals in many disciplines who work with crime victims, like mental health workers, law enforcement, clergy, medical professionals, and journalists. By including these professionals as candidates in your student selection process, your student body will be broadened and deepened.

The overarching goal for SVAAAs is to improve the care and services victims receive as they interact with the many people and disciplines they encounter after victimization. By targeting a broad pool of victim service and allied professionals, you will ultimately improve services to victims and increase the number of potential students who might attend your SVAA.

# Creating the Application and Submission Process

## Methodology

In order to ensure a smooth student selection process, it is important to enlist the suggestions, resources, and time of your steering committee members. Because these members have been integral to the development of the vision and mission of your SVAA, they are in the best position to help design an application that reflects the goals and mission of your academy. Make sure your application includes questions that align with your priorities, such as number of years of experience, direct service contact with victims, and specific disciplines. Members of the steering committee can also be valuable as reviewers when applications begin to arrive.

The application design process should take into consideration logistics for both your reviewers and your applicants. Consider the following questions:

- Do you want multiple reviewers for each application?
- How will you devise a scoring system?
- How much time can reviewers commit to the process?
- Can you efficiently disseminate applications for review from a central receiving point?
- Do reviewers have the necessary technology to review and/or share online applications?
- Will some applicants be limited in their ability to apply if you use an online format?
- Is there a clear and capable system for managing multiple documents associated with a single application?
- How does ability to pay registration fees and other expenses figure into the selection process?

## Setting the Bar for Admission

Applications should be designed to help the reviewer understand whether or not the applicant is an appropriate addition to the incoming class. The questions you choose to ask and/or the information you require applicants to provide should be aligned with your overall goals and mission. Questions examining the demographics, job function, length of experience, and personal goals of an applicant will help you to understand if a particular applicant is right for your SVAA.

Among the many questions and requirements an application can include, it is often helpful to require demonstrated support by the applicant's supervisor. Doing so helps to ensure the applicant will be able to attend if selected. Additionally, by including senior agency members in the application process, it raises the institutional awareness of the SVAA and can help build familiarity and loyalty.

Building a successful class of SVAA enrollees involves, along with a bit of luck, sorting through some of the key concepts, attributes, and questions that are central to the type of group you want to create. There are numerous considerations when designing your application.

- A. Consider asking students to write a personal statement in which they describe why the SVAA is important to their professional development. As part of the personal statement, you can ask for a commitment to attend if selected, similar to the way colleges ask students to commit to "early admission"
- B. If you will require students to stay on-site, the application should confirm that the applicant understands and agrees to this. Exceptions to this type of restriction can always be made for extenuating circumstances
- C. In consideration of the makeup of the overall student body, you should determine if you will encourage or accept applications from teams of providers. Some SVAA's encourage such applications as a way to promote regional networking and service delivery. If this is your approach, outline any parameters you may set

regarding the number of team members and/or the type of agencies they represent

- D. The question of experience is significant in the student selection process. Enrolling a class of students with widely different levels of experience can result in dissatisfaction from all students. New professionals may be confused by references that longtime professionals make and more experienced professionals may feel the discussions with new providers are too rudimentary

- Steering committee member agencies
- Faculty member agencies
- Law enforcement and legal services providers

## Outreach and Recruitment

### Getting the Word Out

Reaching your target audience can be challenging when promoting a state or territory-wide training. If your SVAA is operated more than once per year or is held in different regions, you may need to replicate your outreach efforts multiple times. This step in the process can be particularly difficult when your SVAA is a new entity in your state or territory.

While the process of building an SVAA involves many representatives from a variety of agencies, beginning a new training program means you cannot yet benefit from “word of mouth” endorsements. You will need to rely heavily on the networks built during the process of designing and planning your academy which can now be used to help identify and recruit candidates for your SVAA.

Consider the following outreach options:

- Agencies who participated in the needs assessment
- Listservs/blogs/emails to introduce the SVAA
- Existing training programs/agencies
- State- or territory-wide victim service coalitions
- Professional organizations (e.g. social work associations, nursing associations, clergy groups)

### Getting the Applications In

Once you identify your ideal candidate, you will need to devise methods for getting the applications to them, answering their questions about the process, providing technical support as needed, ensuring deadlines are met, and confirming applications are complete.

It is recommended that academies accept applications in multiple forms: online, paper, or via telephone. It may increase your work initially, but it will help ensure access to a full scope of victim service providers. Consider if an online-only application process will eliminate certain populations from your pool of candidates, as many states and territories do not have consistent and accessible internet access. Some students who are less familiar with the internet or computers may find an online application too difficult, causing it to be a barrier to their application. Students with disabilities may also find certain application methods to be obstacles. For this reason, a variety of ways to accept applications is encouraged.

Your method of application also has implications for distribution and submission. If you decide to offer paper applications, you can use conferences, trainings, and victim services-related events as valuable distribution channels. Whether applications are paper or electronic, sending them to directors and supervisors of victim service agencies, with a request for them to distribute, likely will help increase the number of applicants.

Be sure to highlight scholarships and/or reduced costs, if available. Thanking any agent responsible for a scholarship or reduced costs also encourages that party to further promote and support the academy.

Clearly state submission deadlines anywhere you promote your SVAA. Be prepared to extend your submission deadline, particularly if you are a new academy. Doing so may prove less stressful for organizers and allow for busy agencies and applicants to have a final chance to attend.

## Crafting a Student Body

Once the submission deadline has passed and your reviewing team is in place, it is time to design the actual class of students. Whether or not you have received more applications than you have seats, you will need to make decisions about the overall composition of the class.

At this point in the process it is important to remember that these students will be your SVAA community of practice for that academy session. As such, you should be aware of the many possible aspects that can help your academy be a vibrant learning experience for each student—one in which they learn from both the faculty and each other. Time and again, SVAA students report that one of the most valued aspects of the academy is the ability to build relationships with other providers and to learn about new services and programs.

The value of diversity cannot be overstated when considering the makeup of your SVAA. There are many ways that a diverse student population enhances the learning and overall growth of students while broadening the reach of the academy. Some characteristics that can help maximize diversity in your student body are:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Geographic locale
- Discipline
- Agency type
- System-based/Community-based

Your student selection efforts can pay exponential dividends by creating opportunities for student-to-student learning. Activities such as ice breakers, mentoring groups, and sharing agency or job descriptions are all methods for fostering bonding and creating a community of practice. Another technique to facilitate bonding is to assign course schedules and housing to students in a way that balances characteristics such as gender, region, and/or discipline to ensure a diversity of ideas and experiences in each class. By being mindful and deliberate about

housing and course schedule assignments, SVAA staff can break down social barriers that otherwise might go unchallenged.

The student selection process is a wonderful opportunity to make sure that the planning and effort that go into curriculum design, faculty selection, and other aspects of the SVAA come to fruition for the people it is intended to support.



# Chapter 6

## ACADEMY OPERATIONS, LOGISTICS, AND FACULTY

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This chapter covers information on the overall operation of your SVAA, including details to consider when planning logistics, recruiting faculty, and anticipating student needs.

- A. Academy Leadership and Personnel**
- B. Faculty**
- C. Operations and Logistics**
- D. Student Details**
- E. Academic Details**

## Academy Leadership and Personnel

Standard operating procedures for academies vary widely, yet one component is essential: strong leadership. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the individual(s) providing SVAA oversight and management, and of others collaborating on its implementation, will maximize effective and efficient operations. Each state or territory must determine the best way to provide the necessary leadership that reflects its unique needs and resources.

Leadership and guidance is needed in the following areas and may be the responsibility of one or more people:

- **Logistics:** Considerations include SVAA scheduling; site identification, negotiations, and contracting; meal arrangements and special events; oversight of student recruitment, applications, and acceptance; scholarship development and distribution; oversight of faculty and staff; day-to-day operations; emergency response to students (see Operations Checklist in the [SVAA Resource Library](#))
- **Curriculum:** With the SVAA steering committee guiding selection of the model, framework, and structure, the director will oversee curriculum development, review, and revisions. See [Chapter 3](#) for more on curriculum.
- **Faculty:** Selection, orientation, course development, coordination, and collaboration among participating faculty
- **Role of Academic Partner:** There are multiple roles that the academic partner may play, including academy location, faculty and interns, development of evaluations, and overall endorsement of the academy. See [Chapter 2](#) for more on academic partnerships.

### Director

The primary SVAA leader, often referred to as the director, typically has oversight responsibilities for the logistics, faculty, and curriculum. While the director may oversee all aspects of the academy, they (or

the steering committee) may designate others to manage or assist with certain responsibilities. The lead agency is typically in the position of identifying the person(s) for this role, whether the person comes from within or outside of the agency. If the director is coming from outside of the lead agency, a contract needs to be prepared that lays out the role and expectations. If employed by the lead agency, a specific contract may not exist, but clarification of the role, responsibilities, and reporting structure will be important.

Appointing a director from the steering committee may be a natural transition as they are often SVAA champions with the necessary leadership and oversight skills already fully engaged in the academy's development. If the director comes from the lead agency, a collaborator, or within the steering committee, the role may be an entirely new job or may become part of an individual's existing job, such as the training coordinator. Regardless, the role and person's availability will be important to articulate for all involved.

#### extra credit

**Keep in mind that adding SVAA tasks to a staff person's role results in more work. Leading up to and during the academy, other tasks become lower priority. The leadership team should ensure staff and related interns or volunteers know to whom they report and what tasks take precedence, especially as the academy week gets closer and workload increases.**

Another model of leadership is to hire a consultant from outside the lead agency who carries these responsibilities as a part-time job. This may be a strong trainer, educator, or administrator in victim advocacy, social work, or another relevant field.

Co-directorship is a model that some academies use, with two people sharing responsibilities. This could be a working collaboration between the VOCA administration agency and the agency receiving



the SVAA funding, such as the domestic and sexual violence coalition, or with the academic partner. The co-directors, if maintaining good communication and clearly delineated tasks, can bring unique strengths and skills to their academy. A written contract may facilitate this process, but some academies have found it possible to operate under a more informal model.

The designated director needs the flexibility and availability that academy oversight requires. While most intensive during the months prior to the academy, the director will also need availability throughout the year. It is particularly important that the director is fully available during the academy itself, whether it is a week-long residential format or another format. It can become extremely difficult for others in leadership if the director is off-site during the academy, especially if there is an emergency. If the director is unable to be fully present at the academy, the identification of a clear designee for that period of time will enable decisions to be made smoothly and efficiently. Awaiting a call back from an off-site, otherwise occupied director, can delay important decisions, which, especially in a crisis, can potentially be harmful to all involved.

### Administrative Support (Staff and/or Interns)

Strong administrative support for the overall logistics and day-to-day details results in an efficiently run academy. These tasks need to be clearly delineated for all staff, with the academy director (or designee) providing oversight to ensure completion. The program assistant may schedule steering committee and other SVAA meetings, take and distribute minutes, and attend to other tasks for the academy. An intern may be brought in to assist administratively but also to be involved in the implementation of the academy, development of communications, and preparation and dissemination of materials. The intern may help the program assistant or director to whom they report with other duties as assigned. To read more about the duties of these positions, review examples of job descriptions in the [SVAA Resource Library](#).

While administrative staff, other agency staff, and interns help with academy operations, it is also ben-

eficial for them to attend all or some of the academy. This contributes to their professional development and helps them to gain a deeper understanding of academy and participant needs. Managers will need to articulate expectations of administrative staff and interns to be on-site early for planning prior to the academy.

### Additional Personnel for Academy Operations

Depending on your SVAA model, some additional roles and functions may be necessary. The following roles may be incorporated into some existing staff or faculty responsibilities:

- **Faculty liaisons** provide guidance and oversight to faculty; review, edit, and make necessary modifications to classes; and offer feedback on planned class activities. These individuals must have access to the director and/or curriculum committee for any necessary guidance. Depending upon administrative support, the liaisons may need to track faculty submission of course materials and content.
- **Mentors** may be responsible for facilitating small group discussion and modeling this practice for ongoing professional development and peer support. See [Chapter 4](#) for more on mentoring.
- **Class observers** assist in evaluating the classes with a specific scoring sheet designed for this purpose. See [Chapter 7](#) for more on evaluation.

## Faculty

### Finding and Recruiting Faculty

Once the vision for your SVAA is clear and the leadership team is in place, faculty selection is critical. It takes time to identify, solicit, and secure core faculty, especially if your academy, like many, takes place in

the summer months when potential instructors may be unavailable.

Many SVAA find great faculty through their steering committee, from presentations at conferences or in university classes, or through recommendations from colleagues or peers. First-hand knowledge of such presenters helps the academy leadership to determine whether the presenter is a good fit. Some academies require seeing a presenter training in-person before inviting them to their academy. Another option for locating presenters is gathering recommendations and feedback from conference evaluations and organizers. As they expand their academy, some SVAA send out recruitment letters to recommended faculty. See a sample recruitment letter in the [SVAA Resource Library](#).

Consideration of specific aspects of the SVAA is important in recruitment, including the range of professional disciplines present at the SVAA, their agency distribution (state agencies, community-based programs) and the cultural/racial/ethnic/geographic representation of victim service providers and the victims they serve. A diverse faculty helps facilitate greater understanding of differences and of the importance of interdisciplinary and cross-agency collaboration.

## Optimal Faculty Characteristics

Teaching at the SVAA requires experience and knowledge in victim services, specific subject matter expertise, and demonstration of training skills that reflect core adult learning principles.

Understanding the overall SVAA mission and goals is integral to involvement in teaching at an academy. SVAA leadership needs to provide faculty with a clear, detailed overview of its unique purpose and structure; it is not just another training, but an opportunity to support the overall learning and development of early career advocates and other victim service providers. In supporting this learning, the faculty member needs to be willing to adapt their own content to better address the academy's and participants' needs.

In addition to sharing the SVAA vision and goals, the faculty members need to understand the victim/

survivor experience. This understanding often comes from years of direct service work in the field of victim services in a variety of capacities. It may also come from an academic who is attuned to victim services through research, project work, or work as a volunteer. Regardless of a faculty member's philosophy and experience (i.e. community- vs. system-based victim services, teaching at the college level in relevant field, etc.), they must be able to teach to a diverse group of participants.

Faculty must possess an understanding of adult learning principles which include incorporating short lecture segments, discussion, exercises, and dialogue that will engage the adult learner. It cannot be assumed that academic faculty use these adult learning principles, and therefore, they must be evaluated on this capacity and their willingness to accept feedback. It is essential that all SVAA faculty be open to accepting and integrating relevant feedback and input on curriculum.

### extra credit

#### Characteristics of adult learners:<sup>1</sup>

- **Autonomous and self-directed**
- **Have accumulated a foundation of experiences and knowledge**
- **Goal and relevancy-oriented**
- **Practical**

OVC TTAC offers an [Ultimate Trainer](#) training for improving presentation and facilitation skills. The course provides useful tools including a [Training Strategies for Adult Learners](#) handout and a [Training Activities worksheet](#).

<sup>1</sup> Knowles, MS (1980). *What Is Andragogy? In The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy, Revised and Updated* (pp. 44-45). New York, NY: Cambridge, The Adult Education Company.

## Faculty from Specific Backgrounds

Former students can also be wonderful faculty members. Those who have continued in the field and grown in their professional development truly understand the SVAA student's experience and can provide a refreshing and inspiring point of view.

Integrating faculty who identify as victims or survivors and/or speak specifically from the survivor perspective can bring depth to a class through personal story-telling. Be clear with the survivor on the parameters of the class and their sharing at the SVAA, just as any other faculty is recruited and prepared. Additional support and guidance may be required if this survivor is new at presenting or incorporating their story into instruction. Sharing experiences of working with an advocate—both positive and negative—can enhance advocates' learning.

Finally, there may be important political/strategic reasons for enlisting a particular speaker, either because of their position within the host site, with the academic partner, or in politics. There are meaningful options to consider for such faculty; they could provide an inspiring welcome at the start of the academy or bring additional expertise in a specific class. As with all faculty, these speakers should receive guidance and input from the SVAA leader or other faculty before they present.

### extra credit

**Experienced co-presenters are ideal because they know how to share the stage. It is important for both presenters to coordinate their preparation and delivery and be willing to accept and integrate feedback from SVAA leadership and participant evaluations.**

## Faculty Development and Pre-academy Meeting

Once identified, the faculty needs to clearly understand the extent of their commitment before, during, and after the academy. Writing up the expectations and deadlines in a contract or **MOU** can guide discussion and answer specific questions. Once the requirements for the faculty participation are agreed upon, the process of faculty orientation and class-building can begin.

For many academies, a pre-academy faculty meeting is a requirement for participation in the SVAA. Determine the frequency with which these meetings should be offered, and how they may best meet the needs of faculty orientation and development.

### Agenda ideas:

- Introduce leaders, staff, and faculty (identifying faculty liaisons)
- Promote adult learning models (present and share information)
- Coordinate class material across faculty
- Foster community connections and share classroom exercises

Faculty with previous experience may feel they do not need to attend the orientation session since they know the mission and rhythm of the academy. Consider ways of engaging them by asking them to share their experience or present on a topic of interest related to the SVAA curriculum or format. Get creative—by making the additional effort to engage faculty at all levels, the meeting will more fully meet everyone's needs.

## Preparation and Feedback

The SVAA leadership (director or steering committee) must review the course outline and provide guidance to the faculty to ensure that training delivery meets the overall goals and specific objectives without duplication of material. Providing feedback on their teaching tools and materials is an important part of the SVAA process and can be articulated for faculty as an expectation.

Faculty need time to prepare for the class, create training materials, exercises, and relevant handouts. Early invitation facilitates this process, as does faculty's realistic review of their own work schedule and demands.

## Relationship with Faculty

Outlining the class goals and objectives, whether developed by the SVAA or faculty, fosters a collaborative relationship. In addition, developing a communication system early enables the director (or designee) and faculty members to have easy access to one another for questions, reminders about deadlines, feedback, and support. The faculty and the class itself will benefit from ongoing communication with the SVAA about their class and their deadlines. This facilitates the development of a working relationship; the faculty does not feel that they are working in isolation and the SVAA staff adheres to necessary deadlines. A clear, well-coordinated process, both verbal and written, serves the SVAA and the faculty. Regularly scheduled meetings and methods of shared material review such as Slack, Dropbox, or Google Docs are helpful for efficient communication and streamlined work practices.

In the rare circumstance that a faculty person may not fulfill the stated expectations, or is not the right fit for the SVAA, the director will need to discuss the concerns in a productive and constructive manner. Plans must then be made to replace the faculty member.

## Faculty Remuneration and Appreciation

Budgetary and contractual constraints impact the remuneration of faculty for their preparation and presentation time at the SVAA. Building faculty remuneration into the budget is an important goal. As noted previously, for some staff, payment is not allowed because of their contract or agency policy. But for those working independently, or able to be remunerated, paying a fair stipend acknowledges the faculty person's hard work and contributions to the academy's success. If payment is not possible or allowable, a note or small gift of appreciation is worth considering.

**Do not be afraid to show your gratitude. Showing appreciation for faculty may result in greater commitment to the academy and its mission. Appreciation comes in many forms, including calls or emails expressing thanks (beyond specific class feedback or a shout-out by the director at end of the day or academy).**

## Operations and Logistics

A well-implemented academy is the culmination of significant planning with attention to many details. Bringing together students and faculty for a concentrated time of learning, sharing, and overall professional development is a goal worth the hard work.

### Site Considerations

Identifying the site and timing for the academy is the first logistical step toward scheduling. Site considerations include:

- **Location:** Hosting the SVAA in a geographically central and accessible location is important. Some states rotate their academy around the state, while others use a consistent site that is reliable and accessible. It will be useful to inquire with the facility about any construction planned during academy week in case of impact on classes or quiet hours. Inquire about other groups that will be on-site during the academy and any potential disruptions
- **Facility:** Colleges or universities offer classrooms, lodging, and up-to-date technologies and support at reasonable cost. Academies are also hosted at area conference centers and hotels, which offer meeting rooms, technology and support, and lodging, but often at a higher price point. A cost-benefit analysis is useful to identify and secure the best location for the SVAA

- **Extra-curricular activity access:** Having access to a gym, walking trails, and other natural environments enables participants to relax on their own or together, further process their learning, and expand their communities of practice. A comfortable and inviting meeting space with after-hours access can support informal or planned leisure activities, such as yoga, karaoke, or trivia
- **Timing:** Academies can be offered throughout the year, typically for a full five residential days. They frequently take place during the summer when victim service providers are able to more easily leave work and campuses can more easily accommodate academies. Alternatively, academies also run in the spring and fall, with some meeting in-person for two to three days and supplementing with online coursework

### extra credit

Schedule the appropriate academy for your state's or territory's needs. Rhode Island has historically offered a five-day program, spread across five weeks throughout the summer. Given their geographic demands, the once weekly format meets their needs.

## Collaborating with Your Host Site

A relationship with the SVAA host site develops over time and is important to your academy's success. You want your host site to welcome the academy, believe in its value, and support and help sustain the SVAA. Below are three potential ways in which the SVAA can collaborate with the host:

- **A single identified liaison** with the site should coordinate with SVAA leadership and be responsive in planning and handling on-site emergencies during the academy. This individual may be a site conference planner,

facilities director, dining or residential services manager, or in another role. Aim to have a designated person available for any issues related to the SVAA prior to and during the academy. This person will have designees that can respond to residential emergencies, dietary restrictions, and any other needs.

- **A technology resource person** may be designated to provide critical on-site class assistance. A fruitful learning experience can become frustrating if technology, including essential videos and PowerPoints, does not cooperate. Incorporating access to this resource in the overall contract may serve to keep later costs down.
- **A senior leadership representative's** support and an introduction help the SVAA attendees feel welcome and that their work is valued. Invite this individual to join in the kick-off of the academy week and welcome all participants.

## Site Logistics

Once the site is confirmed, walking through all spaces to be used by academy participants, with the site liaison, is essential. Special consideration should be made for any accommodations needed for students or faculty with disabilities. If any space is reassigned, take the time to confirm that it meets the needs of the SVAA. Make sure that space designated for particular activities such as yoga or a movie night is well-suited to the activity.

Review the dining schedule and access plans, as needed, including any special events. Confirm the access and meal process for faculty and other visitors, securing all necessary passes for each day.

Learning what other programming will be happening on-site can be invaluable. Finding out if any other groups will be on campus for events such as sports or academic camps will remove any potential conflicts of shared spaces like rooms, dining halls, and common areas.

To ensure the process of moving in goes smoothly, have the site or academy staff post directional signs on campus, particularly for registration and residen-

tial locations. Having a few staff or volunteers available to welcome students and faculty and help them navigate the location will help both get oriented to the site and begin to mix with others.

Much like the classes, special activities take planning and may require additional logistical support. Having the director or steering committee members review the logistics for each of these events, well in advance of the academy, will allow for the early ordering of any necessary materials. Further, if student supervisors are to be included in these activities, advance planning facilitates the preparation of invitations.

## Student Details

### Format of Academy and Student Exceptions

Although the initial OVC mandate was for a 40-hour residential academy, some academies have modified their format based on the needs of their states or territories. Some academies are offered over a series of weeks, during two periods during the year, or use a blended learning format combining in-person and online learning. Providing a clear explanation about the academy's format and the expectations of students regarding attendance and behavior is important so that students have a clear understanding of the commitment.

Determine any exceptions to classes and after-hours activities. For instance, a student may have a family member who has medical needs requiring their presence after classes end. These situations can often be handled on a case-by-case basis. If the academy is residential, determine a process for considering factors that necessitate off-site stays, e.g. young children, part-time jobs, and other responsibilities. A student may consider staying on campus for part of the week if they cannot stay all week. Describe the importance of the networking and social connections while accommodating special circumstances as needed.

### Accommodations

Determine any accommodations that must be made for students with disabilities or other particular needs. Lead time may be required to arrange for ASL interpreters or for any materials in Braille, large print, or through assistive technologies. Confirming that audio and visual requirements can be met is also important.

### Medical or Dietary Needs

Discussion with the host site regarding the ability to accommodate for specific dietary requirements will help facilitate a student's participation. Knowing the accessibility of emergency medical care is also important for the director and leadership.

### Student Materials

Alert students in advance of any prerequisite online coursework or readings that must be completed prior to the academy. Provide adequate guidance, a technology resource person for students new to online learning, and ample time for students to review material. Gather and assemble all academy supplemental materials, which may be included in a notebook, packet, or online. Faculty often includes bibliographies, handouts, and PowerPoint copies for their classes to enhance student learning. Set a reasonable deadline for faculty to submit these materials so that they might be sent out prior to the academy or distributed upon arrival. Consider any copyright rules for relevant literature you intend to use.

### Student Confirmation

Having a written process for confirming acceptance and student commitment to attendance will ensure your academy has the number of enrollees you intend. Additionally, requiring signed documentation that states expectations ensures that all students have received and reviewed the same information. A welcome letter may be part of the official confirmation or may be a stand-alone follow-up letter. This welcome can provide more details on the schedule, meals, housing, necessary bedding and clothing, and transportation options.

## Academic Details

Some academies have developed academic partnerships that enable students to apply their academy attendance towards academic credit. Others may offer credentialing through NOVA or another recognized organization. Any requirements for credits or credentialing must be clearly delineated for students applying for the academy and for either of these processes. See the credentialing section of [Chapter 3](#) for more information. The SVAA lead agency will need to determine if they will be responsible for tracking student requirements for credentialing or if that will be the responsibility of the student or credentialing/crediting agency.

As the academy nears, consider re-confirming the faculty and reminding them to arrive 30-60 minutes prior to class start time to review setup and functioning of necessary audio-visual equipment.

Checking each computer/LCD/internet connection at the beginning of the day (or the previous night) and before each class will prevent delays when class begins. Loading PowerPoints for each class onto the desktop or classroom computer is also useful. At the end of class, assist faculty with distribution of evaluations and preparation for the next class.

After the academy, provide a summary of the evaluation feedback to faculty and offer to review via phone or in person. Having an open discussion on what went well and what needs improvement will provide important feedback for the faculty as well as the academy overall. See [Chapter 7](#) for more on evaluation.





# Chapter 7

## EVALUATION AND PERFORMANCE MECHANISMS

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The OVC *Vision 21* report is concerned with improving victim services in all areas of delivery. The report identifies that heightened attention to research, evidence-based measures, and program evaluation should be emphasized. High-quality and effective victim assistance academies must include a strong evaluation component. This section walks through how to design such an evaluation protocol:

- A. Developing Evidence-Based Best Practices for SVAAAs**
- B. Step 1: Creating the Application and Submission Process**
- C. Step 2: Selecting the Evaluation Method**
- D. Step 3: Designing Evaluation Tools**
- E. Step 4: Collecting Data**
- F. Step 5: Analyzing and Reporting Results**

## Developing Evidence-Based Best Practices for SVAAs

The *Vision 21* report urges state VOCA administrating agencies to promote the use of evidence-based practices and program evaluation in the field of victim advocacy.<sup>11</sup>

Evidence-based practice, a term originally coined in 1991 for medical practice as Evidence Based Medicine,<sup>12</sup> is rapidly spreading to other social and psychological fields of practice. It integrates three basic principles: the best available research evidence, clinical expertise, and client preferences and values. These are used to provide the best basis for making client care decisions.<sup>13</sup> In victim services, this approach to practice is also trauma-informed.

The following chapter will walk you through the steps of a training evaluation. Use the graphic on the following page as a guide for these steps and the following discussion.

### extra credit

#### Evidence-Based Practice in Social Policy

**Using an evidence-based approach to social policy can decrease the tendency to run programs that, while socially acceptable, often prove to be ineffective when evaluated. A common example is anti-drug education in schools. Read about the [Alliance for Useful Evidence](#) and the [Campbell Collaboration](#) for more information on the use of evidence in social policy and practice.**

11 Office for Victims of Crime. (2013). *Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services Final Report* (NCJ 239957). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

12 Sur, R.L., & Dahm, P. (2011, October–December). *History of Evidence-Based Medicine*. *Indian Journal of Urology*, 27 (4), 487–489. doi: 10.4103/0970-1591.91438

13 Ross, T. (2012). *A Survival Guide for Health Research Methods*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

### extra credit

Recognizing the need for increased research in the field of victim services, a new OVC-funded initiative is being developed. The [Center for Victim Research](#) will make completed research more accessible to SVAAs. It will be a database of program evaluations, ongoing initiatives, and available researchers, along with many other valuable resources that academies can leverage to make their work more evidence-based.

## Step 1: Identifying the Purpose of the Evaluation

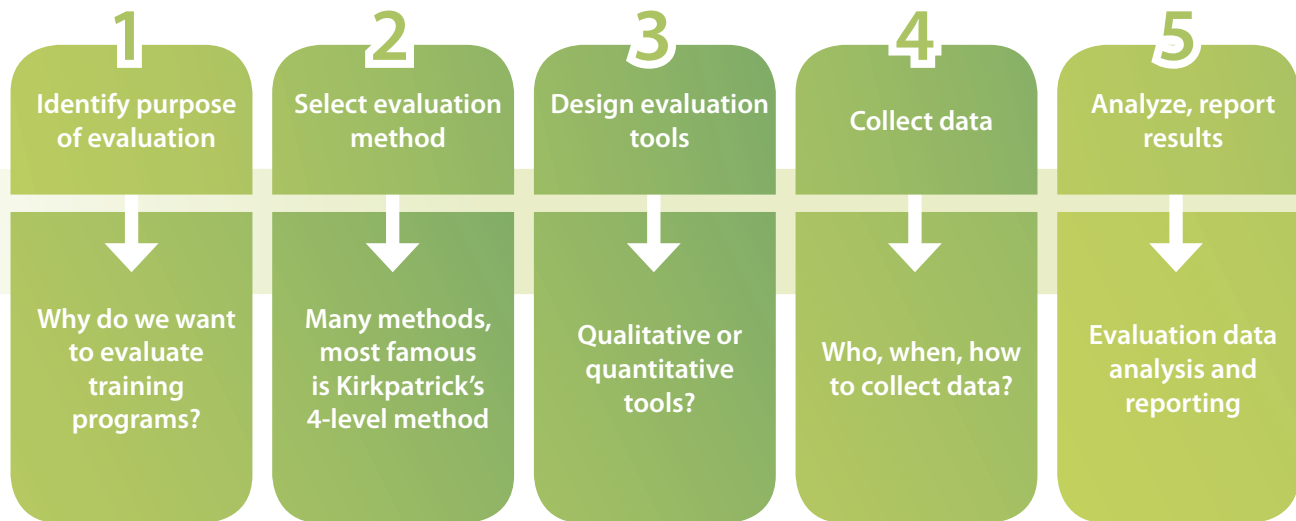
Evaluating your academy is an essential component of your curriculum development, a reflection of your needs assessment, and a valuable first step to measuring the effectiveness of your training academy. A comprehensive evaluation will not only provide feedback to your stakeholders, curriculum developers, and faculty, but will also provide a tool for reflection so students can enhance their skills and the ultimate goal of meeting the needs of all victims of crime.

Determining what you want to measure precedes the development of the evaluation and is part of your curriculum development. By identifying the ultimate goal of your academy, you are prepared for the rest of the process.

There are many opportunities to measure your academy's effectiveness, student learning, and skill building. Some academies use the following methods:

- Class evaluation measures the students' satisfaction with course material and delivery method
- Pre- and post-evaluation of student knowledge based on stated class objectives
- Overall evaluation at the end of the academy to measure student's reaction to curriculum, logistics, effectiveness, increase of resources, etc.
- **Faculty evaluation** of logistics, environment, communication, and areas for improvement

## Steps of Training Evaluation



- Long-term evaluation through follow-up with the students' supervisor to learn about changes that have been made in the students' skill set. This evaluation can be made via a paper evaluation or by phone interview. View an [example](#) of this type of evaluation in the [SVAA Resource Library](#).

### Step 2: Selecting the Evaluation Method

Formative and summative evaluations are among the most common types of evaluation, each with its own distinct purpose. By using both in addition to conducting long-term evaluations, an academy can evaluate its effectiveness in achieving its learning objectives.

#### Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation is generally any evaluation that takes place before or during the academy's implementation with the aim of improving its design and performance. This evaluation is often performed at the start of a newly founded or recently reignited academy. The needs assessment is an example of a formative evaluation. It is an evaluation that identifies prior knowledge and gaps in learning and is used to help shape your curriculum. The goal of a formative evaluation is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback and improve both instructor teaching and student learning.

#### Summative Evaluation

In contrast to formative assessments, summative evaluations are used to evaluate student learning, knowledge, proficiency, and success at the conclusion of an instructional period. Summative evaluations look at the impact of the curriculum. It is most often associated with more objective, quantitative

methods of data collection. Summative evaluations are outcome-focused rather than process-focused.

Formative and summative assessments can be used in tandem and are essential for understanding why a program is effective or ineffective and what other internal or external factors affect the academy. For more information, review an [explanation](#) of both assessments from the Eberly Center at Carnegie Mellon University.

## Long-Term Evaluation: The Kirkpatrick Model of Evaluation

OVC supports the use of the Kirkpatrick Model of Evaluation,<sup>14</sup> one of the most recognized and widely used training evaluation models available. The four levels of evaluation enable an academy to evaluate their training both in the immediate and long term. Planning a long term follow-up evaluation after the students return to work and have the chance to practice their new skills will provide the opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of the training. Supervisor observation and feedback are often included in the long-term evaluation data. Most importantly, you will be better able to determine if academy training reaches the goal of improving victim services.

### What Are You Measuring?

It is important to decide what exactly your evaluation will measure. Consider whether curriculum content is more important than skills and what to include in an evaluation of the faculty. See an example of a [faculty evaluation](#) in the [SVAA Resource Library](#).

Consider the following as categories to measure:

- Content
- Faculty
- Facilities
- Overall course or academy content coordination

- Most favored or worthwhile classes
- Personal goal achievement
- Social/networking environment
- Skills enhancement (self-evaluation or supervisor evaluation)
- Putting new knowledge and skills to use
- Overall academy experience (including suggestions for improvement)

## Step 3: Designing Evaluation Tools—Qualitative, Quantitative, or Both?

An evaluation can use quantitative or qualitative data and often includes both to provide the best overview of the course. Each method provides important information for evaluation and together can improve the delivery of your academy's training.

### Quantitative: Demonstrate What You Have Learned

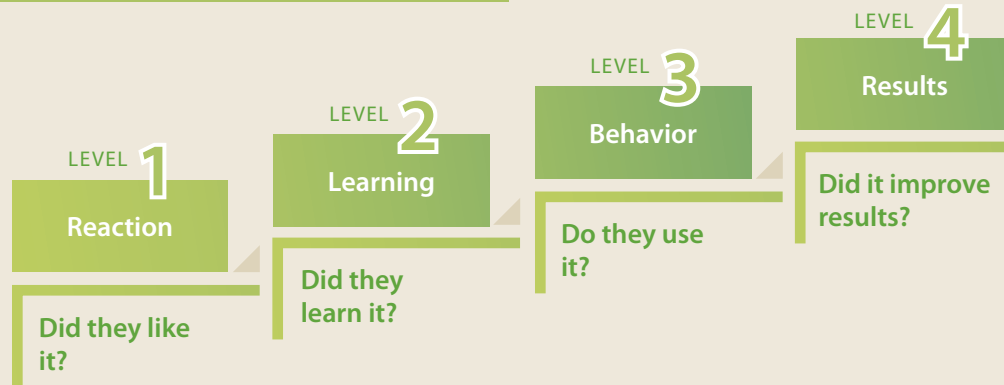
This method evaluates results that can be measured or counted and produces data that shares facts or figures. It uses questions that are matched with outcomes about knowledge and comprehension. Keywords: *define, classify, recall, recognize*

- Tools to use: Surveys, questionnaires, experiments, rubrics
- Sample questions:
  - *The training met my expectations* (Scale 1-5)
  - *The trainer was knowledgeable* (Scale 1-5)

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<sup>14</sup> Kirkpatrick, D.L., & Kirkpatrick, J.D. (1994). *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers

## 4 Levels of Training Evaluation



[Berkeley Lab Training](#), including the New World Kirkpatrick Model update.

### Level 1

- **Reactions:** Measuring participant satisfaction with the training
- **Participant Satisfaction:** Measuring satisfaction with the training. *Key concepts:* Was the training helpful? Worthy? Would you recommended it?
- **Engagement:** The degree to which participants are actively involved in and contributing to the learning experience. *Key concepts:* Responsibility, enhanced learning, interest, involvement
- **Relevance:** The degree to which training participants will have the opportunity to use or apply what they learned in training on the job. *Key concepts:* Application to work, helpful for future, put in use

### Level 2

- **Learning:** How participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence, and commitment based on their participation in the training.
- **Knowledge:** "I know it."
- **Skill:** "I can do it right now."
- **Attitude:** "I believe this will be worthwhile to do on the job."
- **Confidence:** "I think I can do it on the job."

- **Commitment:** "I intend to do it on the job."

### Level 3

- **Behavior:** The degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job. *Key concepts:* Successful application of learning, measurement of performance objectives
- **Required Drivers of Behavior:** Processes and systems that reinforce, encourage, and reward performance of critical behaviors on the job

### Level 4

- **Results:** The degree to which targeted outcomes occur on the job as a result of the training, support, and accountability package.
- **Leading Indicators:** Short-term observations and measurements suggesting that critical behaviors are on track to create a positive impact on desired results. *Key concepts:* Specific outcomes, successes, positive impact, benefit, fulfill the mission

Read more about the Kirkpatrick Model on the [Kirkpatrick Partners' website](#). You can also view and download the [KIRKPATRICK® Hybrid Evaluation Tool Template](#) for use immediately following the training.

## Qualitative: Demonstrate How You Apply What You Have Learned

This method produces subjective data with more depth and description and provides insight into unintended consequences and lessons for improvement. Questions are concerned with why and/or how and seek information about application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Keywords:

- Tools to use: Follow up interviews with students, case studies, focus groups, scenarios, projects, role plays, observations, open-ended survey questions
- Sample interview or survey questions:
  - What did you enjoy most about this training?
  - What is the most valuable thing you learned today (knowledge or skills)?

### extra credit

#### The Role of the Academic Partner

**The collection of data, evaluation of training, and analysis of this information is at the heart of academic institutions. Therefore, academic partners can play a critical role in your SVAA's evaluation plan. Working closely with your steering committee and faculty, the academic partner can be instrumental in consistent evaluation of the SVAA.**

## Step 4: Collecting Data

The collection of data includes pulling together the various evaluative methods you have initiated into a complete product. Paper and pencil forms and online surveys can collect quantitative data. Consider whether anonymity is important as it can contribute to the candidness of the feedback. Finally, decide how you will use this data to assist with a sustainability plan, feedback to your stakeholders, and improve your curriculum.

## Step 5: Analyzing and Reporting Results—Who Needs to Know What?

After completing the academy and gathering evaluation data, analyzing the information is an important step to guide your academy in its growth and improvement.

A comprehensive evaluation report should combine evaluation data in a simple outline that contains the following sections:

- Summary
- Program description
- Evaluation design and method
- Findings
- Results
- Recommendations

Your primary audience for an evaluation report is those with the largest stake in the development of the academy, including the academy director, the funding agency, your steering committee, and other stakeholders you identify.

The director, if not responsible for compiling the information into a report, will need the data to make decisions and to gather or provide more information about the academy. Your funding agencies will be most interested in how the academy successfully achieved its goals using resources they provided. The steering committee will be concerned with the absorption of the content, growth of skills, and satisfaction of the students and their supervisors. Providing feedback to your community of practice is an important and effective way of keeping your stakeholders engaged and supportive of your academy.

# Chapter 8

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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Academies need to remain dynamic and vibrant to accomplish the goal of providing standardized training of victim service providers. Active financial management is an integral component of meeting this goal.

In this section, you will find information and resources to guide you through the basics of planning for and managing the finances of your academy.

- A. Identifying a Funding Model**
- B. Creating a Financial Plan and Developing an Operating Budget**
- C. Collaborating with VOCA Administrators**
- D. Diversifying Your Funding**
- E. Charging a Registration Fee**
- F. Sustainability**
- G. Record Keeping and Financial Management**

## Identifying a Funding Model

Successful financial management and long-term sustainability of an SVAA depends on the leaders' ability to clearly understand what stakeholders want, what the academy is capable of delivering, the value of what the academy offers, how the necessary funds will be obtained, and what is needed to sustain the academy in the long term.

It may be helpful to consider how operating an academy is similar to and different from operating a business. Unlike businesses, SVAAAs do not seek to operate at a profit. For most businesses, the customer is also the primary beneficiary of the service or product and the value placed is used to set the price. For SVAAAs, like most non-profits, the ultimate beneficiary is not the customer. Instead, victims and survivors are the ultimate beneficiary of a high-quality academy, but they do not have a role in supporting the SVAA. Rather, the funding comes from other entities.

Despite the differences in for-profit and non-profit business management, there are lessons non-profits can learn from the operational success of businesses. These include:

- **The importance of demonstrating effectiveness.** Tracking performance and demonstrating effectiveness and value are key to sustaining funding and proving the value of your SVAA. See [Chapter 7](#) for more on assessment and evaluation.
- **The need for branding and marketing.** An SVAA must establish an identity, raise visibility in the victim services community, and establish credibility. Branding and marketing help ensure a steady stream of attendees from year to year as your academy becomes a familiar and trusted resource.

SVAA leaders must identify interested and capable funding resources (funders) and develop a product/service that will meet the needs of the beneficiary (crime victims). These two groups require very different approaches and solutions.

The Bridgespan Group outlines three keys to a successful funding model for nonprofits:

- **Find a natural match.** This involves identifying agencies and funding sources that hope to accomplish the same, or very similar, goals that you seek to accomplish
- **Identify the decision makers.** SVAA leaders should understand who in an organization is responsible for determining how resources are distributed
- **Understand why they support the programs they do.** It is important for leaders to see the funding request from the perspective of the funder. What you see as motivation may not be motivation for the decision-maker.<sup>15</sup>

Read more from The Bridgespan Group on successful funding strategies in the guide [Finding Your Funding Model: A Practical Approach to Nonprofit Sustainability](#).

## Creating a Financial Plan and Developing an Operating Budget

The first step in financial planning is to create an operating budget, which reflects your best estimates of all costs needed to operate the SVAA and the anticipated revenue to support those expenses.

While a budget is a required element of a request for federal funding, creating an operating budget will help you identify how you would use that funding and what additional support you need to fully realize your SVAA.

The components of an operating budget are generally standard. Expenses such as personnel, materials, location costs, and advertising or publicity are all

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<sup>15</sup> Kim, P., Perreault, G., & Foster, W. (2011, August). *Finding Your Funding Model: A Practical Approach to Nonprofit Sustainability*. Retrieved from [https://www.bridgespan.org/bridgespan/images/articles/finding-your-funding-model/Funding-Models-Guide\\_1.pdf](https://www.bridgespan.org/bridgespan/images/articles/finding-your-funding-model/Funding-Models-Guide_1.pdf)



## History of SVAA Funding

While victim assistance academies today are largely funded at the state or territory level, they were originally funded directly by the federal Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). In 1998, OVC co-sponsored a state-level academy in Michigan. Its success led OVC to fund five pilot sites the following year. Over time, 46 states and territories received direct OVC funding for academies.

States and territories who applied were required to work collaboratively with an academic partner, their VOCA administrator, a statewide steering committee, and related victim service agencies in their jurisdictions. OVC funded each academy for three years and established clear expectations for each year of development.

- **Year 1:** \$35,000 to support a planning phase to include establishing a steering committee, conducting a statewide needs assessment, identifying an academic partner, attending grantee meetings, and beginning curriculum design
- **Year 2:** \$100,000 to operate the first SVAA, evaluate its success, identify any changes needed, and develop a sustainability plan for funding
- **Year 3:** \$65,000 to support the refinement and replication of the academy, conduct a second academy, and offer technical assistance to other states

States were required to provide a 25% match each year and obtain a commitment from their VOCA administrator for continued funding after OVC's funding ended. In 2013, OVC extended this funding model to a five-year cycle, which provided funding for a two-year planning phase and three years of academies.

With the dramatic increase in VOCA funds available in 2015, OVC offered discretionary training grants to any state or territory that requested them and encouraged states and territories to use a portion of these funds to support an SVAA. OVC also established a dedicated team of professionals, the [SVAA Resource Center](#), to provide training and technical assistance to SVAAAs and to states seeking to begin, expand, refine, or re-establish their academies.

direct expenses. They are sometimes referred to as specific expenses because they specify costs that the program incurs as part of the overall program needs and operation.

Expenses that are spread across a variety of programs or functions are sometimes known as shared or indirect expenses. These often include costs such as rent or office supplies.

While each SVAA is unique, some of the most common specific expenses incurred by SVAAAs include:

## Personnel

The people involved in your SVAA are the cornerstone of a successful program. Personnel commonly includes a program director, administrative support, faculty members, steering committee members, and communications and fundraising staff. While the number of personnel listed in a budget may be relatively small (often only one or two people), accurately predicting their level of time commitment is very important. Be careful not to underestimate the amount of time needed to plan, prepare, execute, evaluate, and summarize an academy. Each phase of SVAA planning and execution represents significant work and a substantial number of hours.

## Faculty

Faculty time has the potential to be the largest part of the SVAA budget. Fortunately, there are common ways to reduce these costs:

- Steering committee members may serve as faculty on an in-kind basis or offer the services of a staff member of their agency or organization
- Certain government and agency staff may view training as part of their job description and offer it without charge
- Coalitions may offer to provide training
- OVC TTAC may be able to provide a trainer on a specific topic and offer extensive, free web resources
- Some trainers may accept a stipend or a donation of materials or gift certificates as compensation

## Materials

These costs will fluctuate greatly based on the nature and design of your academy. While many SVAAAs provide hardcopy materials, others have moved to electronic resources and distribute thumb drives or post materials on a website accessible by students. Many academy organizers also put together activities and events that promote networking and connection between attendees, like “theme days” that require additional materials.

### extra credit

#### Common Material Costs

- Copies
- Thumb drives
- Easels
- Markers
- Index cards
- Note pads
- Name tags
- Flip charts
- Craft supplies

## Location

Though location costs are a significant component of any SVAA budget, they are also one of the most fluid. Incorporating online training—whether through webinars, mobile apps, or video chats—can reduce the time you need to use a meeting facility, thereby reducing these costs.

SVAAAs have been held in a wide variety of venues, including hotels, colleges, campgrounds, and government training centers. When considering a host location, be aware that each venue will have flexibility in their cost structures and contracting.

Examples include:

- College campuses may be able to provide recreational activities and/or meals as part of a lump sum fee for use of their dormitory space
- Hotels may have flexibility in negotiating the cost of meeting space or on the use of AV equipment and internet access
- Venues may be willing to reduce the cost of rooms if they are guaranteed a certain minimum number will be rented or if you are willing to agree to a multi-year arrangement

## Food and Beverages

Because SVAAAs are often several days in length with full-day agendas, food and beverages for attendees are a large consideration. While food and beverages may not be supported by federal funding, they should be considered when forming your operating budget.

Options for food and beverages:

- Include these costs in the academy registration fee
- Have attendees access allowable per diem funds from their employer
- Find a community partner to sponsor one or all meals
- Allow attendees to go “off campus” for meals (Bear in mind that this may interfere with networking, class flow, or start/end times)

## Advertising and Outreach

While a strong internet presence combined with your steering committee and other partners is a great network to advertise your academy, you may still have costs related to outreach and advertising. Costs may include printing and mailing postcards or other invitations and hiring a graphic designer to develop a logo and outreach materials. As with other budget items, these design services may be donated as an in-kind contribution by one of your partners.

After identifying all the elements of your operating budget, you can develop the budget for any funding

request. Federal, state, territory, local and/or agency regulations will set restrictions or limitations on the funding they can offer. They may also require a match of financial support or in-kind contributions which you will have already identified in your full operating budget. It will be helpful to familiarize yourself with the variations and expectations of each of these sources of funding.

### extra credit

#### Online Financial Resources

The [Wallace Foundation](#), a national philanthropy, operates the [Resources for Nonprofit Financial Management](#) which can assist in calculating the cost of your program, planning for growth, and preparing for financial uncertainty. See a [sample budget](#) in the [SVAA Resource Library](#).

If you need step-by-step instructions, the Wallace Foundation’s video, titled [Program Based Budget Builder Demonstration](#), shows how to use Excel to build a program’s budget, including allocation of personnel and direct and indirect costs. Additionally, consider downloading the Wallace Foundation’s [Program Based Budget Template](#).

The recorded webinar [Introduction to Project Budgets](#) produced by GrantSpace, also shows how to generate a standard project budget.

## Collaborating with VOCA Administrators

In most states, the VOCA administrator plays a critical role in the success of the SVAA through direct funding. Due to the fact that the VOCA administrator oversees the distribution and management of federal funds dedicated to serving crime victims, they have a stake in ensuring the effectiveness of victim service professionals. In many states, the VOCA administra-

tor also plays an important role in identifying and disbursing other federal, state, or territory funds that can support victim services. Therefore, a collaborative relationship is critical to the success and financial stability of your SVAA. Knowing your VOCA administrator and fostering a positive working relationship with them is an important component of SVAA sustainability.

Learn more in the SVAA Resource Center's [FAQ about VOCA funding](#) and find contact information for your VOCA assistance administrator in the [NAVAA directory](#).

## Diversifying Your Funding

While VOCA or other federal funds may be a primary source of funding for the ongoing operation of your academy, they should not be considered the sole source of financial or material support. SVAA's are part of a larger community of practice focused on providing consistent high-quality services to crime victims; other members of this community also have a stake in promoting training. Consider looking to your steering committee members, partners, and community agencies to provide a range of support that contributes to the long-term sustainability of the SVAA.

SVAA's should have Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) in place with their steering committee members and partner agencies that include not only the role of the member, but any expectations of financial assistance. Such assistance can be expanded to include in-kind donations and fundraising assistance. Each of these contributions has a dollar value which should be identified and considered in the overall SVAA budget. See [Chapter 1](#) for more information on steering committees.

### extra credit

#### Possible In-kind Donations

- **Food and beverages:** Federal funds generally cannot pay for food or beverages, but you may have a local partner or supporter who can contribute lunch, a coffee break, or a kick-off dinner where a local official speaks about the importance of victim services
- **Networking event:** A local funder may sponsor a fun evening activity to help participants get to know each other
- **Facilities:** An academic partner or government agency may be able to contribute the use of certain facilities for your event
- **Faculty:** Academic or organizational partners may be able to donate the time of staff members to serve as faculty or advisors or provide assistance in evaluation of your training
- **Scholarships:** Local partners may be tapped to sponsor student scholarships to increase access to your academy. These may cover local travel or the cost of any registration or materials fees you may charge

## Charging a Registration Fee

SVAA's often grapple with the question of charging a registration fee. Receiving VOCA funding does not preclude an academy from charging a fee for the direct costs associated with the academy delivery, including the costs of housing, meals, and activities that are not covered by other funding.

Therefore, if housing, meals, and activities will cost \$450/per person for a weeklong SVAA, and your VOCA funding does not cover those costs, a registration fee of \$450 would be reasonable. However, you may not make a profit from these fees if you also receive VOCA funds.

While it may seem counterintuitive, a registration fee is not always a deterrent to attendance. Agencies may be able to support their employees' participation through unrestricted funds or a portion of their administrative funds if they receive VOCA funding. Charging a registration fee may even work to promote attendance. Many SVAA directors have noted that when no fee is charged there are significantly more no-shows, which not only causes planning and logistical problems for the academy, but may exclude others who wanted to participate.

To ensure that a registration fee does not operate as a barrier for any participants, consider establishing a scholarship program. Scholarships could be funded through a partner agency or community benefactor who supports the training of victim service providers, like a local law firm. See a sample of a scholarship form in the [SVAA Resource Library](#).

## Sustainability

Along with basic financial support of an SVAA, directors must also think about sustainability. Sustainability is future-oriented—an overall goal for the continuation and success of the program objectives. While funding is an essential element of sustainability, it is affected by more than dollars. Sustainability includes factors such as the relationships you have with your stakeholders, the need for and quality of your services, and your approach to managing finances. Nurturing your community of practice, maintaining a high-quality curriculum, and engaging faculty are

also factors that, together with funding, support an academy's sustainability.

Other potential partners or stakeholders may share similar goals to that of the academy and be contributors to your academy's sustainability. Through identifying individuals and agencies who are a natural match, SVAAAs can be creative and identify fruitful ways to pursue supportive funds in addition to their primary revenue streams.

## Record Keeping and Financial Management

Academy record keeping and financial management can be complex as it often involves a variety of funding sources at the local, state, territory, or federal level, from both government and private entities, and in the form of grants, donations, or in-kind contributions. Funders and donors must have confidence in your stewardship of their funds. It is important to have a well-established financial management system to track the revenue and expenses for the academy, as well as a financial officer who is well-versed in the rules and regulations regarding the use of each of these funding sources.

In-person and online resources are available that can assist you in planning and establishing financial management practices for your academy. Your state's or territory's VOCA administrator may offer, or even require, financial management training.

Visit the Bridgespan Group's [collection of research and insights](#) to learn more about strengthening your SVAA program.

### extra credit

#### Potential Sustainability Partners:

- District Attorneys
- Victim service agencies
- Victim coalitions
- Academic institutions
- Law enforcement agencies
- Community organizations

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