



Confidential referrals for crime victims



855-4-VICTIM

VictimConnect

Operations

Summary

December 2020



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I. Introduction to VictimConnect

Since its launch in July 2015, the VictimConnect Resource Center (VictimConnect) has served as a leading resource for victims of crime nationwide. As a technology-based referral helpline, VictimConnect provides resources and information confidentially and anonymously to crime

VictimConnect services survivors of all crimes.

victims and their support networks. Through its services, VictimConnect strives to empower victims to regain control, navigate their options, and determine their next steps.

VictimConnect is a program of the National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC). Its funding has spanned multiple Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) awards from October 2014 through September 2021. Currently, visitors¹ can contact a Victim Assistance Specialist (VAS)² from 8:30am to 7:30pm EST. VictimConnect offers three modalities for visitors to communicate with a VAS: (1) telephone, (2) online chat, and (3) text. Visitors can also learn more about VictimConnect and about different crimes types/remedies to crime victimization by visiting the VictimConnect website at victimconnect.org.

Since its inception, VictimConnect's overarching goal has been to ensure that victims of all backgrounds and crime-types have access to secure, high-quality resources supportive of recovery and empowerment. VictimConnect functions as a referral helpline—as opposed to a crisis hotline—connecting victims and their support networks to local and national resources. In the most recent iteration of its logic model, NCVC outlined five short-term objectives necessary to meeting VictimConnect's overarching goal.³ These objectives are as follows:

1. Assemble and make accessible resources and assistance supportive of the recovery and empowerment of victims of all backgrounds and crime-types in communities nationwide.
2. Develop an innovative and reliable VictimConnect technological platform that provides secure access to resources for all crime victims.
3. Maintain a VictimConnect infrastructure of knowledgeable, compassionate, motivated, and trauma-informed staff and volunteers.
4. Operate a resource center widely known and accessible to service providers in diverse communities. Conduct outreach efforts and collaborate with other programs.



¹ "Visitors" refers to anyone that contacts VictimConnect (e.g., victims/survivors, friends, family members, professionals).

² "Victim Assistance Specialists" (VASs) refers to VictimConnect helpline advocates.

³ Please see Appendix A for the Logic Model.

5. Continually evaluate VictimConnect's implementation fidelity and outcomes, making program improvements in response to evaluation findings.

II. Grounding Principles

VictimConnect acknowledges five underlying values that help guide its mission and goals. These values, along with a short description, are as follows:

1. **Demonstrate Dependability:** VictimConnect demonstrates accountability among its staff and to those it serves by sharing reliable information, modeling professionalism, and communicating openly and honestly.
2. **Support Personal Resiliency:** VictimConnect promotes victim and staff wellness by recognizing the importance of self-determination, balance, and commitment to self-care.
3. **Engage in Continuous Learning:** VictimConnect encourages continual staff learning and improvement by evaluating service gaps, recognizing trends, and incorporating best practices.
4. **Advocate Passionately and Intentionally:** VictimConnect supports fairness and respect by expanding services in underserved communities, participating in active listening, and ensuring that interactions are visitor-guided.
5. **Build a Collaborative Environment:** VictimConnect fosters partnership among its staff and between providers and visitors by acknowledging personal experiences and encouraging the exercise of unique strengths.

In addition to these five values, VictimConnect is also grounded by numerous research-supported best practices. At its core, Victim-

Connect reflects the service delivery standards outlined by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), including "accurate, comprehensive and unbiased information provided in a confidential and/or anonymous, nonjudgmental manner" (Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, 2016, p. 1).

Victims may be hesitant to report a crime to police due to the risks typically associated with reporting or due to feelings of shame and self-blame.⁴ By providing another avenue for victims to connect with needed services—outside of reporting to the police—VictimConnect works to expand victims' access to resources. Other obstacles that victims face when attempting to access resources include a lack of knowledge of what resources are available to them and a

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lack of resources in their area. An evaluation by Kalafat et al. (2007) found that hotlines can act as a "safety net" for callers when resources are not available in their communities. In addition, hotlines can help increase victims' knowledge of the options that are available to them in their area (Colvin et al., 2016).

Victims who speak languages other than English can face systemic barriers to accessing vital victim resources. VictimConnect upholds research-supported standards of practice by making a concerted effort to provide services that are accessible to non-English speaking and limited-English proficiency (LEP) individuals. For instance, VictimConnect employs both English and Spanish-speaking VASs. If a visitor calls who speaks a language other than English or Spanish, VASs can access a telephone

⁴ See Planty et al. (2013) for more information on barriers to reporting crimes and Colvin et al. (2016) for a case study that demonstrates how hotlines can address such barriers.

⁵ Along with employing bilingual VASs and offering phone interpretation services, VictimConnect accepts third-party calls from 211 and other providers who serve deaf and hard-of-hearing and/or visually impaired victims.

interpreter for more than 200 languages. Although VictimConnect's web chat and text options are only available in English at this time, VictimConnect aims to expand its language accessibility in order to support chat and text interactions in other languages.

In addition to ensuring that its services are accessible⁵ to all victims of crime, VictimConnect strives to provide services that are survivor-

VictimConnect aims to provide services that are not only survivor-centered, but also trauma-informed.

centered and guided. For instance, in line with the findings from a 2018 evaluation of the National Domestic Violence Hotline and loveisrespect, VictimConnect offers multiple technological modalities for visitors to communicate with a VAS. Thus, if a visitor does not feel ready to speak with someone over the phone about what happened to them, they can instead choose to web chat or text with a VAS.⁶

VictimConnect aims to provide services that are not only survivor-centered, but also trauma-informed. For example, VASs are trained to

understand the various impacts of trauma, to ensure visitor safety, and to maximize visitors' autonomy.⁷ Additionally, VASs aim to prevent the retraumatization that can occur when a victim must recount their story to multiple providers by offering a phone "warm transfer" to the referred resource whenever possible.⁸ Along with preventing retraumatization, VictimConnect aims to prevent vicarious trauma. VictimConnect recognizes that staff who experience vicarious trauma cannot adequately serve visitors. Thus, looking forward, VictimConnect plans to focus more efforts on preventing staff burnout and secondary trauma.

VictimConnect acknowledges the complex interrelationships between the individual and society and that, as explained by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2012), "culture is closely interwoven with traumatic experiences, response, and recovery" (p. 5). With this underpinning, VictimConnect strives to provide culturally-informed services by underlining the needs of underserved populations in its staff trainings and partnership development. Furthermore, VictimConnect works to keep abreast of the unique needs of, and resources available



⁶ See McDonnell et al. (2018) for more details on the evaluation's findings.

⁷ See Wilson et al. (2013) and Reeves (2015) for information on the components of trauma-informed care.

⁸ A "warm transfer" occurs when a VAS speaks with the provider first, giving any relevant background information, before connecting the visitor.

to, specific cultural groups and underserved communities. VictimConnect plans to continually enhance its services in order to provide culturally-informed services and uphold the ever-evolving research-supported standards of practice.

III. VAS Training

VictimConnect VASs are required to complete 80 hours of initial training and coaching, along with 20 hours of ongoing education/professional development per year. During their initial training, VASs engage in presentations led by NCVC staff, shadow current VASs, and practice interactions by way of role-plays. After completion of the initial 80 hours, helpline supervisors continue to coach the VASs and periodically monitor their interactions with visitors. With the adoption of an updated technological platform in July 2020 for VictimConnect calls, chats, and texts, supervisors are now able to monitor calls (in addition to chats/texts) between VASs and visitors. Additionally, VictimConnect supervisors recently developed a standardized rubric to use when shadowing interactions and providing VASs with feedback.

A core component of the initial VAS training consists of what is called the “stages of a session.” VASs learn about the four core stages of a VictimConnect interaction, including what typically comprises each stage and how to carry out each stage in congruence with VictimConnect’s values and grounding principles. The stages are as follows:

1. **Introduction and “Required Topics:”** The VAS introduces the helpline to the visitor and communicates the relevant “required topics.” The required topics include: Ensuring that the visitor is safe to talk, providing the visitor with a callback number for the helpline, informing the visitor of the helpline’s anonymity assurances, and—if relevant—describing the helpline’s mandated reporting requirements.⁹

2. **Listening and Connecting:** The VAS uses a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach to actively listen to the visitor, validate the visitor’s feelings, and build trust with the visitor.
3. **Problem-Solving and advanced information:** The VAS assists the visitor with prioritizing their needs, identifying their options, assessing the pros and cons of their options, thinking through the potential outcomes of their options, and then deciding on a course of action/supporting the visitor’s decision.
4. **Summarizing:** The VAS summarizes the interaction for the visitor, makes sure that the visitor has the contact information for the resource(s) discussed, and asks the visitor if they would like to be warm-transferred to their resource of choice. If the visitor wishes not to be warm-transferred, the VAS asks the visitor if they would be willing to complete an anonymous feedback survey at the end of the call.

Learning the stages of a session is just one element of the VAS’s helpline training. VASs also learn and practice basic helping skills to use when assisting victims and other visitors. These soft skills include active listening, paraphrasing and reflecting, asking open and close-ended questions, conveying empathy, validating feelings, promoting self-determination, and building trust. Additionally, VASs are imparted the hard skills necessary to navigate the helpline’s technology platform with ease (e.g., how to answer calls/chats/texts, how to transfer calls, how to fill out the demographics information).

Another portion of the initial VAS training covers how to work with specific populations of victims and survivors. For instance, VictimConnect trainers coach VASs on how to best support victims of certain types of crime. The types of crime covered include those that, historically, have been most frequently discussed

⁹ Mandatory reporting requirements apply to abuse and/or neglect of a child, older adult, or vulnerable adult, as well as expressed intent to harm oneself or others. If the visitor provides the necessary personally identifying information to instigate a report (i.e. the name of the individual, their location, and their age), then the VAS is mandated to report the crime to the appropriate local reporting agency.



during VictimConnect interactions. These include stalking, identity theft, harassment, intimate partner violence, and assault or attempted homicide. Trainers also coach VASs on how to best support victims from underserved populations, such as older adults and American Indian/Alaskan Native individuals.

As a referral helpline, VictimConnect helps victims understand and access their options. Thus, the initial VAS training also comprises sessions on a range of crime remedies, and trainers coach VASs on connecting helpline visitors with such remedies. The remedies covered during training include those that have been most frequently requested by VictimConnect visitors, such as crime reporting, case management/advocacy, legal services, and financial compensation. While supporting a victim in recovering from a crime can sometimes consist of providing that visitor with the relevant and necessary information (e.g., outlining the steps of reporting a crime to local law enforcement), it often entails connecting the victim with high-quality resources. Thus, VASs are coached on how to identify and connect visitors with high-quality local resources that can provide them with the support that they need. VASs are

encouraged to seek help from a supervisor or another VAS if they cannot locate a high-quality resource or if they need any other type of assistance during their interaction.

VictimConnect has developed and updated several helpline protocols over the years. For instance, during the initial training, VASs learn about the helpline's mandated reporting protocol. Such protocol outlines when, and

VictimConnect aims to ensure the safety of all helpline visitors.

how, VASs are to report instances of child abuse and abuse of an older and/or vulnerable adult. VASs also learn when and how to carry out the helpline's suicide/self-harm protocol. With these protocols, VictimConnect aims to ensure the safety of all helpline visitors.

During its most recent training, new VictimConnect VASs were also trained to operate the DC Victim Hotline (DCVH)—NCVC's local victim resource helpline. Moving forward, VictimConnect VASs will be trained to also operate

DCVH, and vice versa, so that VASs can provide coverage for the other crime victim helpline when needed (e.g. if one of the helpline's is short-staffed). Additionally, in order to expand the accessibility of VictimConnect's trainings to other providers in particular, VictimConnect is converting some of its training sessions into online modules.

VictimConnect strives to continually revise its trainings to reflect developments in the victim services world. In order to ensure that VAS's skills remain current and that VASs are provided with ample professional development opportunities, VictimConnect is working on incorporating more advanced, ongoing professional development opportunities. For instance, by 2021, all VASs will be trained on the topic of vicarious trauma.

IV. Staff-Visitor Interaction Basics

When a visitor contacts VictimConnect, they can expect to be connected to a VAS who will listen to them, discuss their concerns in a nonjudgmental and compassionate manner, help them understand their rights and/or options, and assist them with drafting next-steps by connecting them with appropriate resources. VASs cannot make decisions for a visitor, file reports or conduct investigations, or provide therapy or legal advice. Additionally, since VictimConnect serves the entire nation, the helpline does not have the capacity to provide referrals for individual providers (e.g., specific advocates, therapists, lawyers). Instead, VictimConnect can direct

Victims can contact VictimConnect at any stage of their recovery process.

visitors to local service providers for more specific referrals. In fact, VASs can directly connect visitors to local service providers via a warm-transfer.

Distinct from other national crime victim hotlines, VictimConnect serves victims of any crime-type. The most common crime-types observed in the first six months of 2020 were stalking, identity theft/fraud/economic crimes, harassment, intimate partner violence, and assault/attempted homicide. While over 80% of visitors that contact the helpline are victims

themselves, victims' support networks (e.g., family, friends, professionals) can also contact VictimConnect for assistance.

Victims can contact VictimConnect at any stage of their recovery process. For instance, a victim who calls the helpline may have just experienced



a crime, or they may already be connected with certain recovery resources. Additionally, helpline visitors may have experienced one type of victimization or multiple victimizations ("poly-victimization"). VictimConnect visitors' needs vary, ranging from locating a victim advocate to understanding how to navigate the civil justice system.

Visitors can connect with a VAS by calling 1-855-4VICTIM (1-855-484-2846), by texting this phone number, or by visiting victimconnect.org to chat online. VictimConnect has operated its anonymous phone and chat modalities since its launch in 2015. In February 2016, texting was adopted as the third anonymous modality. Furthermore, in October 2016, VictimConnect incorporated Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), allowing for the integration of the three modalities along with remote operation of the phone helpline. Currently, the majority of visitors contact VictimConnect by phone, followed by chat, then by text. The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) serves as the helpline platform contractor. This means that RAINN hosts and maintains the phone, chat, and text modalities. In addition to hosting the platform, RAINN provides ongoing technological maintenance for the platform, IT support for the platform, and reporting support for the data the VictimConnect tracks and collects. While RAINN has its own testing protocols, VictimConnect also tests its modalities regularly. By 2021, VictimConnect plans to implement a tracking system for its testing procedures and technology bug reports in order to better understand and address platform performance issues. In collaboration with RAINN, VictimConnect aims to continually advance its platform with the goal of improving visitors' access.

Another effort underway to expand victims' access to services encompasses re-envisioning VictimConnect's resource database. Presently, VASs use an internal salesforce database to locate high-quality resources for visitors. VictimConnect plans to transform this database into an outward-facing online tool for locating frequently used resources by state. This development, which will be featured on the VictimConnect website, will allow visitors who cannot safely interact with a VAS (or who do not feel ready to interact with a VAS) to still be able to access resources.

When contacting the helpline, a visitor can expect safety during their interaction. In fact, at the start of every session, the VAS first confirms the visitor's immediate safety before moving forward. Visitors are able to leave the conversation at any time, and they are encouraged to

do so if they feel that their safety or privacy is jeopardized.

Helpline visitors can also expect confidentiality and anonymity during their interaction. For example, neither VASs nor VictimConnect's platform stores the phone numbers or IP addresses of visitors. Furthermore, VASs do not ask visitors for personally-identifying information during the interaction. VASs only ask visitors to voluntarily share information that is necessary to provide the most appropriate resource(s) (e.g., the city or county where the crime occurred). Anything that a visitor shares with a VAS remains confidential and anonymous. The only exceptions to this occur if a visitor discloses that a child, older adult, or vulnerable adult is being abused and/or neglected or if a visitor discloses the intent to harm themselves or others. VASs are mandated to report these incidents if the visitor provides the necessary personally identifying information to do so (the name of the individual, their location, and their age).

V. Outreach and Collaboration

Most helpline visitors find out about VictimConnect through an internet search, which often lands users on the website. In fact, in the first six months of 2020, 125,862 individuals visited the VictimConnect Resource Center website. Because the website is both an information source and also an access point for the online chat modality, VictimConnect aims to expand its accessibility. For instance, by 2021, VictimConnect plans to improve the website's readability for visitors with disabilities and visitors with limited English proficiency.

In addition to finding out about the helpline via an online search, visitors hear about VictimConnect from online and in-person outreach efforts. In fact, VictimConnect has distributed paper marketing materials at victim services conferences, along with digital marketing materials via electronic mailing lists and social media posts. VictimConnect plans to continue to expand its marketing strategy and update its outreach materials to reach a greater number and diversity of victims of crime.

Visitors are often referred to the VictimConnect helpline from another professional in the field. In order to increase service providers' awareness of VictimConnect—and also increase VictimConnect's knowledge of other service providers—the resource center has fostered partnerships with several agencies. To start, VictimConnect is a partner of the National Compassion Fund (NCF), an NCVC-led initiative that provides a platform for the public to donate directly to victims of mass crimes. As a partner of NCF, VictimConnect has helped connect primary and secondary victims of over a dozen mass violence events to NCF and other needed resources. VictimConnect also maintains a partnership with the NCVC-led National Crime Victim Bar Association (NCVBA). As a partner of NCVBA, VictimConnect refers victims who are seeking civil justice to NCVBA for attorney referrals.

VictimConnect's current partnerships with organizations outside of NCVC include the Cybercrime Support Network and the Department of Justice's Elder Justice Initiative. In addition to these partnerships, VictimConnect is an active member of the National Hotline Consortium (Consortium), a group of leading national victim service and crisis intervention hotlines. The Consortium aims to model best practices and facilitate communication/coordination among member hotlines in order to provide high-quality responses to visitors.

Looking forward, VictimConnect intends to foster new collaborations, especially with organizations that serve underserved communities, agencies that support victims of emerging crimes, and state gatekeepers (e.g., Crime Victim Compensation, state sexual assault coalitions). Furthermore, VictimConnect plans to develop a strategy for providing expanded training and technical assistance to current and future partners. Through its outreach and collaboration efforts, VictimConnect strives to expand its network of resources and increase knowledge of its services among victims and their support networks.

VI. Data VictimConnect Collects

While respecting the confidential and anonymous nature of VictimConnect interactions, certain types of data are collected either by VASs (if voluntarily shared by visitors during the interaction) or through the helpline's technological platform. The data that VictimConnect currently collects can be disaggregated into the following four categories:

- 1. Demographic Information:** Within the helpline platform, VASs record basic demographic information that visitors choose to disclose. This data is recorded by VASs, compiled by RAINN, and then provided to VictimConnect. VASs only solicit information that will aid in the process of helping a visitor find resources. The demographic information that is collected may include the victim's age, gender, ethnicity, state, and crime(s) experienced. It may also include the services that were discussed, whether the visitor was new to the helpline or returning, the visitor's relationship to the victim, how the visitor heard about VictimConnect, and any relevant "keywords" discussed.

- a. Upcoming Changes:** By 2021, the "services discussed" category will be broken down into two distinct categories: "services provided" and "services requested." Additionally, the "keywords" category will be broken down into "special populations" (e.g., LGBTQ+), "crime type trends" (e.g., cybercrimes), and general "keywords" (e.g., COVID-19/coronavirus). VictimConnect plans to operationalize updates that RAINN made to the technology platform in order to track the exact resources VASs refer visitors to.

- 2. Session Statistics:** RAINN, the helpline platform contractor, collects and provides to VictimConnect basic information describing both specific interactions (data points) and aggregates of interactions over time (data sets). Labeled "session statistics," this information includes the length of calls and chats, wait-times for calls and



chats, the quantity of missed calls, and “warm handoff status” (whether or not a call was transferred to another resource by the VAS).

a. Upcoming Changes: By 2021, VictimConnect plans to work with RAINN to track then analyze data on the attempted calls that visitors make to VictimConnect outside of operational hours, along with the dates/times associated with interactions across each modality.

3. **Visitor Feedback Surveys:** At the end of calls and chats, visitors have the option to complete a five-question anonymous feedback survey about their experience with VictimConnect. The survey contains four Likert scale questions and one open-ended question. An automatic message prompts visitors to complete the voluntary survey at the end of chats. At the end of calls, however, the VAS must ask the visitor if they would like to complete the survey. If

the visitor agrees, the VAS will then transfer the visitor to the survey. It is important to note that callers who are warm-transferred to another resource at the end of the interaction do not have the opportunity to complete the survey. The survey data is compiled by RAINN and provided to VictimConnect.

4. **Website Traffic:** Using Google Analytics software, VictimConnect is able to track both real-time data on its website traffic, along with engagement trends over time. VictimConnect’s Google Analytics account collects information including website page views, bounce rates, session durations, procurement of users, user demographics, and devices used.

The data that VictimConnect collects is currently used to identify trends and gaps in services. More specifically, VictimConnect uses the insights gained from the data to update staff training curricula, to shape helpline policies and protocols (such as staff scheduling), to expand the types of resources that make up the helpline’s internal resource database, and to inform partnership development.

VictimConnect aims to more critically analyze the data that it currently collects and establish the infrastructure necessary to collect new types of data. In fact, VictimConnect is currently working with a National Institute of Justice (NIJ)-funded external evaluator, the Urban Institute, to strengthen its capacity for data collection and ongoing performance monitoring. Additionally, in light of a recent update to its technology platform, VictimConnect will soon have the ability to track its most referred resources. This development will ultimately help frame VictimConnect’s strategies for engaging with key provider stakeholders.

VII. Challenges and Successes

VictimConnect has faced both challenges and successes over the past five years. For instance, similar to other victim service providers nationwide, VictimConnect has experienced fluctuations in staffing due to variations in funding

levels and staff turnover. Despite these challenges, VictimConnect continues to respond to survivors' needs daily, fielding approximately 35 calls and 4 chats each operational day in fiscal year 2019, as well as 6 texts across the entire year. In fact, since its launch in 2015, VictimConnect has fielded over 40,000 interactions in total.

Presently, VictimConnect is serving as a national resource in support of victims impacted by COVID-19, along with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) impacted by police brutality. As a helpline for victims of any type of crime, VictimConnect has always served as a resource to victims of law enforcement misconduct. However, in light of increased national attention on police brutality and other forms of racism and white supremacy, VictimConnect aims to uphold its commitment to victims from marginalized communities through the services it provides.

The helpline has established a strong operational infrastructure over the years. Still, in order to better meet the needs of victims and survivors, VictimConnect is exploring opportunities

to expand its operational hours and preparing to implement a VAS volunteer program. With these initiatives, VictimConnect hopes to reach a greater number and diversity of victims of crime. In addition to advancing its operational infrastructure, VictimConnect is also working to more fully incorporate research into its practice. In fact, VictimConnect is partnering with external researchers at the Urban Institute to strengthen the program's research capacity and implementation fidelity. In 2022, if funded by NIJ, VictimConnect and the Urban Institute plan to implement a rigorous implementation and outcome evaluation of the resource center.

As a relatively new program in the field, VictimConnect plans to continue to adapt in order to meet emerging challenges. Ultimately, VictimConnect hopes to serve as a model for responsibly and effectively serving victims of all backgrounds and crime types in support of their recovery and empowerment.



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Appendix A

VictimConnect Logic Model

GOAL: Ensure that victims of all backgrounds and crime types have access to secure, high-quality resources supportive of recovery and empowerment.

OBJECTIVES →	INPUTS →	ACTIVITIES →	OUTPUTS →	OUTCOMES
Visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none">Assemble and make accessible resources and assistance supportive of the recovery and empowerment of victims of all backgrounds and crime types in communities nationwide	Visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Office for Victims of Crime funds VictimConnect’s services to visitors, i.e. victims and their support networks (family, friends, service providers, etc.)	Visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none">VictimConnect uses four modalities to provide resources to visitors: softphones, online chat, text messaging, and web resources	Visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none">Number and percent change of softphone, text, chat, and web search interactions with visitorsPercent change in diversity of visitor demographics	Visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none">Visitors have reliable access to VictimConnect call, chat, text, and website platformsVisitors have access up-to-date, high-quality referralsVisitors are more satisfied with their interactions with VASsA greater number of visitors access resources that VictimConnect sharesA greater diversity of victims are served, including underserved victimsVisitors have increased knowledge about different victimization experiences and available servicesVisitors’ needs are addressed in a streamlined and comprehensive manner Other Service Providers <ul style="list-style-type: none">Other providers have an increased capacity to deliver high-quality services to victims of crimeOther providers turn to VictimConnect as a model for best practices for responsibly and effectively using technology to support crime victimsOther programs are encouraged to integrate research into their practice
Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop an innovative and reliable VictimConnect technological platform that provides secure access to resources for all crime victims	Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none">National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) technology teamWeb-based phone, text, and chat platforms	Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none">Implement an omni-channel, cloud contact centerCodify technology testing protocolsDevelop protocols for updating and expanding online resources	Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none">Technological platforms have 99.999% uptime during operational hoursNumber and percent change of online resources updated	
VictimConnect Staff & Volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none">Maintain a VictimConnect infrastructure of knowledgeable, compassionate, motivated, and vicarious trauma-informed staff and volunteers	VictimConnect Staff & Volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none">VictimConnect leadership teamVictim Assistance Specialists (VAS)NCVC technology teamExisting VAS training materials	VictimConnect Staff & Volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop vicarious trauma action plan (e.g., professional development, staff wellness)Convert training to online modulesDevelop volunteer program	VictimConnect Staff & Volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none">Implementation of vicarious trauma action plan and performance evaluation measuresNumber of online modules createdImplementation of volunteer program	
Outreach & Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none">Operate a resource center widely known and accessible to service providers in diverse communitiesConduct outreach efforts and collaborate with other programs	Outreach & Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none">National Hotline Consortium membersIntra- and inter-agency victim assistance programs/providersNCVC Marketing team	Outreach & Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none">Update outreach materialsPartner with intra- and inter-agency programs/providersDevelop a strategy for providing TTA to other service programs/providers	Outreach & Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of outreach materials expandedNumber of new collaborationsPublication of TTA guiding principlesNumber of agencies that request our TTA	
Evaluation & Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none">Continually evaluate VictimConnect’s implementation fidelity and outcomes, making program improvements in response to evaluation findings	Evaluation & Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none">Existing VictimConnect literature and dataPartnership with the Urban Institute	Evaluation & Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop evaluability, research capacity, and implementation fidelity processesUse evaluation to explore new ways to best support victims via technology	Evaluation & Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluability assessment, evaluation plan, & implementation toolkit createdNew ways to use technology to support victims are tested and implemented	
Assumptions <ul style="list-style-type: none">To best support and empower victims, service providers should be victim-centered, trauma-informed, and protective of victims’ safetyIn the aftermath of crime, victims need access to helpful information, as well as practical, emotional, and financial support			External Factors <ul style="list-style-type: none">Crime rates and trendsPolicies or laws that affect the criminal or civil justice processes (e.g., changes to statutes of limitations)Government operations (e.g., a government shutdown)Funding for victim services generally, including other victim assistance providersVictim access to technology (i.e., internet, phone service)	