

*Beyond the Basics:  
Partnerships in  
Action*

*Office of Victim Services*



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Office of Victim Services

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## Executive Summary



Fiscal year 2005 continued to be a successful and exciting year for the Office of Victim Services (OVS). Since its establishment in June 2004, the OVS has made significant progress on the recommendations of the 2003 Victim Services Plan designed to build a foundation of care for crime victims. By using these recommendations as the roadmap for laying this foundation, OVS has been able to move forward on each of the specific action steps delineated within the plan. In fact, each action steps has either begun initial implementation, has been completed or has been integrated into the existing responsibilities of the Office of Victim Services.

Achievements in this fiscal year have included the expansion of core services to victims of violent crime; the establishment of model and outreach/education projects specifically addressing the issues of domestic violence, sexual assault, and homicide; the award of funds for new construction projects aimed at increasing the number of emergency shelter beds for domestic violence victims and the creation of a Victim Services Center that will provide for the co-location of community-based, accessible services to victims of violent crime. OVS has also prioritized the development of a satisfaction survey that will create an avenue for victims of crime to provide feedback about their experience with responders and service providers. Obtaining this important information is critical to the successful implementation of services that truly meet the needs of victims.

This report contains an overview of the initial stages of strategic planning, spells out expanded planning efforts and outlines activities accomplished over the past three years.

As referenced by the title chosen for each year's Annual Report, *Moving Forward in Victim Services*, *Building a Foundation of Care*, and finally, *Beyond the Basics: Partnerships in Action*, significant strides have been made in building a basic foundation for improving, expanding and creating new services for victims of violent crime within the city. From the origination of these strategies to the realization of the projects, each step forward has been achieved in partnership with those who respond to and serve victims of crime each and every day in our city. These providers, who have been serving victims for many years and, at times, against formidable obstacles, have remained steadfast in their commitment. The success of the strategic plan could not have been realized without the dedication, commitment and expertise of the existing providers and responders.

These essential partnerships have resulted in the completion of important groundwork from which the District's response to violent crime and the delivery of services to victims will continue to expand and improve in years to come.



## Office of Victim Services

The Office of Victim Services (OVS), created by Executive Order in June 2004, is responsible for ensuring that victims of violent crime are served by District and community agencies. Specifically, OVS serves as the State Administering Agency for Department of Justice funding and the victim assistance fund; advocates on behalf of victims of crime at all levels of government and community; and works to ensure that comprehensive services are available within the District for all victims of violent crime.

In its role as funder, OVS directs resources to areas of greatest need through funding community- and systems-based services for victims, monitoring sub grantees for performance and compliance with federal and District regulations, and working in close partnership with grantees and other community leaders to ensure effective and quality service delivery to victims of violent crime.

In addition to its funding role, OVS continues to implement the action steps of the strategic plan and supports agencies that serve victims by reviewing and evaluating public policy and the District’s response to victims and by making recommendations to the Administration concerning areas of need and strategies for building stronger capacity.

In the past year, OVS has successfully developed, released and awarded multiple grants addressing each area of the Victim Services Plan and continues to work in close partnership with responders and service providers to implement comprehensive services that best meet the needs of victims. OVS works to ensure full accessibility of these services to all victims of violent crime seeking support. The office continues to take a leadership role in implementing the action steps outlined in the strategic plan and has achieved substantial change in the enhancement of existing services as well as the creation of new services to victims.

## Historical Overview

The Crime Victim Assistance Fund (VAF) was created in 2002 through a Congressional designation. Congress enacted legislation that provided the District with one-half (50%) of the surplus funds held at the Crime Victim’s Compensation Program, housed in DC Superior Court. These funds were provided for the express purpose of expanding and increasing services to victims through sustainable and effective means. The allocation process began with an initial transfer in 2003 and continues with each subsequent fiscal year. These funds are housed in the Office of Victim Services within the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice.

### PLANNING GROUP

Following the receipt of VAF funds, the OVS developed a Victim Services Planning Group (VSPG) to provide recommendations on the strategic allocation of resources. This planning group developed a mission to:

*“Create victim focused recommendations for developing and implementing a comprehensive, accessible, sustainable, seamless system of services for victims of violent crime within the District of Columbia”*

The group included representatives from each component of the criminal justice system and community-based service agencies addressing particular areas of violent crime. Specifically, members included the Metropolitan Police Department, D.C. Superior Court, United States Attorney’s Office, Crime Victim’s Compensation Program and a service provider from programs that serve victims of domestic violence, homicide, sexual assault, and child abuse. Additional members were representatives from programs that focused on related legal and medical assistance and services for violence against immigrant women.

The Planning Group considered existing services to violent crime victims, identified gaps

within those services and worked to prioritize the areas of greatest need. They utilized expertise based on day-to-day service delivery, several existing victim service reports and reviews of nationally recognized studies to identify trends and commonalities of need. This information was consolidated, prioritized and incorporated into a twelve (12) step Action Plan which was the culmination of the development of key strategies and served as a blueprint for implementing change through increased services and new initiatives.

The VSPG integrated its own working principles into the development of the 12 action steps to ensure the progression of meaningful implementation and modification. These precepts required that all efforts be victim-centered, seek input from survivors/victims, promote solutions and focus on accessibility for all victims of violent crime.

### LIMITATIONS ON PLANNING

As the VSPG embarked on identifying specific action steps and deliberating over the most purposeful use of the victim assistance fund, the longevity of the fund became the principal topic. Since the fund represents a one-time influx of resources that will continually decrease over the next two to three years, sound planning demanded a prudent, thoughtful and visionary approach.

Undoubtedly, the entire sum of funds could have been absorbed by community- and system-based providers to enhance and expand services to meet the existing demand. However, over time, this approach would have been short-sighted and inevitably created a collapse of services in future years that would be devastating to crime victims. Allocated in this fashion, funds would have only lasted one or two years. Once funds were exhausted, sustainability of the increased services would be impossible and thereby prevent long-term change in services

for victims. The VSPG took this factor into serious consideration as they established recommendations for future projects.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING RESULTS

Throughout the strategic planning process, five prevalent areas of focus consistently emerged. They include, capacity building, training, outreach and education, policies and procedures, and legislation and each represent a key component to building a successful infrastructure of services. Each of these fundamental concepts became the basis for expanding into specific calls to action that became the Victim Services Action Plan.

### EXPANDED PLANNING EFFORTS

Planning efforts have continued beyond this initial group and participation has been expanded to include the broadest range of service providers and responders possible. A variety of planning strategies were utilized to ensure involvement from service providers and allied professionals who work with victims of violent crime. OVS initiated increased participation by:

- Creating the Homicide Services Coordinating Committee.
- Providing community-level planning grants for domestic violence and sexual assault services.
- Continuing one-on-one and group discussions with service providers regarding implementation strategies.
- Researching promising practices across the country that provide similar services.

These planning processes allowed for the inclusion of local expertise from existing service providers, increased collaboration and partnership efforts, reduced the possibility of duplicated services, and provided for community input that ultimately ensures that the needs of victims are being addressed at all levels of planning.

**ACTION STEP #1**

Increase the amount of emergency **shelter** and transitional bed space for victims of violent crime.

- Completion of a community-led planning grant provided specific information regarding the number of emergency versus transitional beds needed to provide optimum support to victims and their children. Results of this planning determined that there is a need for 100 to 150 emergency shelter beds to meet the current demand. A lack of available emergency shelter currently exists and victims are often placed in local hotels that provide little safety and no advocacy to assist them in rebuilding their lives. This is a critical unmet need and continued to be the number one priority for the OVS.
- Implementation continues to move forward and once the community-based planning was completed, OVS released a Request for Application's (RFA) for the purchase, renovation and/or construction of emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence. Through a review of proposals, two programs were chosen for funding:
  - My Sister's Place**
    - Awarded funding for 16 additional beds for victims of domestic violence.
  - House of Ruth**
    - Awarded funding for the development of a new shelter that will provide 48 additional beds for victims of domestic violence.
- Once these emergency needs are more adequately addressed, focus must then be placed on transitional housing that provides longer-term support for victims of domestic violence and their children. While the highest priority must be given to immediate needs for safety, this longer-term transitional housing is necessary to provide victims with enough support to develop a sustainable plan for rebuilding their lives. Often victims must find employment, address legal issues to increase safe-

ty, establish childcare or new schools for children, address medical needs and locate affordable safe housing as they work to create a stable and successful safety plan for themselves and their children. The ability to fully address these issues takes significantly longer than the 30-60 days that are available in emergency shelters, yet these steps are critical to long-term safety. To provide victims an opportunity to develop successful plans to change their lives, long-term transitional housing must also be addressed. OVS is continuing to work with community and district agencies to address this on-going need.

**Recommendation:**

The shelter initiative is a project of significant magnitude and programs will need support to accomplish these projects on time and within budget. To best meet this goal, OVS has developed a partnership with the D.C. Housing Authority-Construction Services Administration and the awarded programs to ensure that projects are successfully implemented. The Housing Authority will serve as the project manager for OVS and will be responsible for approving expenditures, evaluating construction progress, completing inspections, obtaining permits and providing overall support to each project. Shelter projects have a projected completion of February 2007.

There remains a need for additional emergency shelter beds to address specific populations such as immigrant victims of domestic violence and same sex violence within gay/lesbian/bi-sexual/trans-gendered relationships. In the upcoming year, OVS will work with community service providers to build capacity for these additional projects.

**ACTION STEP #2**

Provide a core level of funding for the **expansion of services** to victims. This will include the development of services to victims of robbery/assault; increased services for victims of homicide and re-energizing the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program for adult victims of sexual assault.

- Core funding has been increased to community and government-based programs that serve victims of sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence and homicide.
- Increased services for survivors of homicide have been prioritized. Through the work of the Homicide Services Coordinating Committee, existing gaps in services have been identified and components of an effective spectrum of care outlined. Additionally, this Committee provided recommendations for the structure of the model and outreach/education projects. Each of these new projects will be a collaborative effort between three key service providers and will expand to include responders and other partners.
- Re-energizing of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) program has been incorporated into the creation of a victim services center. Results of planning showed the need to move the SANE program into a community-based model that is more readily accessible by victims, police and other providers. This relocation is provided for in the detailed construction plan for the VSC. Specifics of the VSC are detailed in Action Step 5.
- Services to victims of robbery and assault continue to be included in the RFA process. These services, however, remain limited. The expansion of services to this population will be enhanced by the creation of the VSC. This project will allow for the co-location of offices, shared staff, and reduced overhead costs.

**Recommendation:**

OVS will continue its support and leadership for the successful implementation of these new projects. Sustainability of core funding continues to be a priority for OVS and will become an integral priority of the office.

### ACTION STEP #3

Research, develop and implement a system that provides 24-hour **language access** for victims of violent crime.

- After completing a survey with existing service providers, the highest priority was for printing of additional brochures, materials and information in a variety of languages. Funding was provided to meet this need.
- Additionally, each outreach and education project is required to incorporate the goal of increased accessibility for victims to include language access and cultural sensitivity

#### Recommendation:

Accessibility is a continued focus and will remain a priority for OVS. This action step has been integrated into the existing responsibilities of OVS.

### ACTION STEP #4

Create **model projects** that best serve victims of violent crime.

- Four specific areas of violent crime were considered in the implementation of this action step. Model projects for domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide and child abuse will be developed and implemented over the next three (3) years.

#### Domestic Violence:

- As is true in every community, needs of victims of domestic violence far outweigh resources. This reality demands the development of procedures that bring long-term and global solution to meet the most pressing and commonly experienced needs of victims.

Within the context of addressing domestic violence, there are common barriers that the majority of victims face. Many of these issues have existed for years and must be addressed as a whole, rather than one victim at a time. This is an example of what advocates define as “systems change”. The work of identifying common barriers, looking beyond the needs of each individual victim and seeking solution at the core of the problem results in change that will not only benefit immediate needs but will change the way victims are responded to for years to come.

### ACTION STEP #4, CONT'D.

This type of systems change requires partnerships of key stakeholders, to include those peripheral service providers that have a role in impacting these long-term solutions such as legal and medical care, child-care and other types of support that the majority of victims need. Breakdowns or gaps in these peripheral systems of care inadvertently decrease the safety of victims and create barriers that become insurmountable when coupled with the issues of basic survival.

This model project is designed to address these systemic barriers and gaps and develop effective processes for making effective change that will have an impact on the services that all victims receive. Over the scope of this three-year project, procedures and partnerships will be developed and stabilized that will be maintained well beyond the lift of the grant.

#### Sexual Assault

- The most common concern in addressing victims of sexual assault is that of reaching those victims who have never shared their victimization. Far too many sexual assault victims have not felt safe in reaching out to government or community-based service providers or even in reaching out to their loved ones. Internalizing the trauma caused by sexual assault, makes it difficult to begin the healing process and often affects many areas of the victim’s life.

There are endless reasons why victims keep silent: humiliation that is a direct result of being sexually violated, fear of being blamed or judge by others for having caused the rape, fear of confronting the perpetrator if within the family or a close friend, and often the desperate hope that ignoring what happened will make it easier to cope with. Countless victims have expressed the pain they suffered by keeping the experience inside. Reaching these victims, whether their silence has been for a week, a month or a lifetime, is critical to providing adequate services. It is estimated that less than half of those sexually assaulted ever make a report to the police. There are far too many victims who remain locked away in silence without relief.

This model project will focus on developing methods of reaching out to all victims and continue to bridge the gap between silence and support.

#### Homicide

- Through the work of the Homicide Services Coordination Committee, a model project to address the needs of survivors at a system-wide level was outlined. Homicide survivors have many needs and have, historically, been provided limited services to meet these fundamental needs. They range from the immediate needs of crisis intervention, assistance with long-term support and counseling to help address their grief.

After the initial crisis, survivors need support with obtaining information regarding the status of the case, meeting the varied emotional needs of the family as they attempt to cope with the loss of their loved one, and talking to others who have similar experiences. There are also longer term needs such as court accompaniment, dealing with verdict results, and milestone events such as birthdays and anniversaries. The needs of survivors are unique and require a full range of services.

To ensure that there are effective services at each stage of the process, this model project has been designed to develop standards of care for addressing survivor needs, training of responders and services providers to ensure consistent services and systems change that addresses the impact and incidence of homicide within the District.

#### Recommendation:

These projects are central to the improvement of services to victims. OVS will continue to prioritize these projects and work in conjunction with lead agencies to ensure their success.

### ACTION STEP #5

Develop and implement a Victim Service Center and/or consolidated services model that best serves the victims of the District.

- A planning grant was recently completed that provided recommendations for site location, services to co-locate, building design and projected construction costs for the Victim Services Center.
- Based on these recommendations, OVS released an RFA for competitive bid. After review, a grant award was provided to the D. C. Rape Crisis Center for the construction/renovation/purchase of a Victim Services Center. This Center will provide for the co-location of a various victim service providers within the southeast quadrant of the city. This project will provide needed space for offices, group and individual counseling, common areas and a room for training sessions.

The Center will provide easily accessible services to a high-need community. In addition to the core victim service providers, the Center will offer space for increased collaboration with allied professionals such as housing, childcare, and medical services

often needed in the aftermath of a crime. The goal of this consolidated model is to improve the collaboration and partnerships of existing program services, reduce overhead and administrative costs, and increase services and accessibility to victims for this area of the city.

- The VSC will house the SANE program providing space for the examination rooms, interview rooms and office space for SANE staff. There will be additional on-site office space allotted to the Metropolitan Police Department for their sexual assault detectives.

#### Recommendation:

The implementation of this project will be incorporated into the partnership formed with the Housing Authority to ensure that the construction/renovation of the project is completed on time, within budget and meets all regulations and requirements.

### ACTION STEP #6

Establish an Office of Victim Services within the Executive Office of the Mayor.

- This goal was completed on June 4, 2004 through an executive order of the Mayor. The goals of the Office as established by the order are on-going and will continue to be implemented in the future.

### ACTION STEP #7

Develop training materials and institutionalize training efforts to ensure all personnel who serve victims are adequately prepared.

- This action step will continue to be addressed through the implementation of the three-year outreach and education grants that begin October 1, 2005.
- Increased funding for core services that include the education and training of staff and community members that serve victims of crime was provided directly to programs.
- Funding to the Metropolitan Police Department for the creation of a training video that reviews the protocols and standing orders for responding to domestic violence to be used at roll calls and other training events throughout the year.

#### Recommendation:

This action step has been incorporated into the outreach and education projects for domestic violence, sexual assault, and homicide. These projects will design a consistent outreach message and develop materials and outreach tools for all programs to utilize. OVS will continue to prioritize outreach to victims within their existing responsibilities and will provide on-going conferences and trainings to enhance skills and keep personnel informed on topic areas related to victims of crime.

### ACTION STEP #8

Expand education efforts to the community on crime victim issues.

- This action step is being addressed through the award of outreach and education projects as described in Action Step 7.
- Outreach and Education projects were awarded to:
  - D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence
  - D. C. Coalition Against Sexual Assault
  - Wendt Center for Grief and Loss

#### Recommendation:

The OVS will continue to monitor and support the development and implementation of these city-wide projects over the next three years. Education and training will remain a priority and has been integrated into the existing responsibilities of the OVS.

### ACTION STEP #9

Coordinate and expand relationships with existing community efforts to enhance services to victims.

- OVS continued participation with existing task forces, committees and working groups within the community that directly or peripherally address the issues related to violent crime.
- OVS has initiated additional committees as needed to focus on planning and collaboration for specific projects.
- OVS continues to provide leadership within the Administration and the community on issues related to victims of violent crime.

**Recommendation:**

This goal has been integrated into the existing responsibilities of the OVS. OVS will continue to collaborate with existing agencies and groups to ensure that services are coordinated, effective and non-duplicative. OVS will increase the outreach and community-based activities in the upcoming year to expand community knowledge of its activities.

### ACTION STEP #10

Develop a district wide outreach plan

- This Action Step has been integrated into the three year outreach and education grants discussed in Action Step 7 and 8. These projects that serve each specific area of crime, to create a cohesive and representative message and develop methods for distributing that message and methods for spreading that message throughout the District.

**Recommendation:**

- This goal has been accomplished by incorporating oversight of the projects into the existing work and responsibility of the OVS.

### ACTION STEP #11

Develop cross system policies and procedures to ensure effective services throughout the system's response.

- While this action step has not been formally funded, there has been considerable work on the issue completed by existing sub grantees. There has been a review and update of internal response policies to domestic violence by MPD; assessment and recommendation of existing response to sexual assault by the Rape Crisis Center in conjunction with MPD; and identification of common barriers facing domestic violence and sexual assault victims. These barriers will be addressed through the implementation of the model projects to include continued work on the development of cross-system protocols.
- Continued partnerships and collaborations exist with local non-profits and system based providers and will remain a priority of the OVS.

**Recommendation:**

This goal has been accomplished in part by the on-going collaborative efforts of agencies but should be reassessed once the new shelter initiative, victim services center, model domestic violence, sexual assault and survivors of homicide projects, and the education and outreach grants are completed. The development and creation of new project ideas, services and collaborations will directly affect policies and procedures for response and should be completed prior to making significant change in processes.

### ACTION STEP #12

Develop a comprehensive legislative agenda for best meeting the needs of crime victims within the District.

- This goal has been impacted by the creation of the OVS which developed an avenue for participation and leadership within the administration regarding issues that are pertinent to the lives of victims. By membership on internal policy committees and taking an active role in providing education and insight from the victim's perspective to existing policy staff, this goal has been integrated into the work and responsibility of the Office of Victim Services.

**Recommendation:**

It is important the OVS continue its membership on internal legislative and policy committees and participates in community-led policy work. OVS will continue to bring forth legislative needs identified by service providers and other community members that will serve to improve the District support of and response to victims of violent crime. This is a critical goal of the OVS and is identified as a key responsibility of the office.



## Going Forward

This past year has been one of growth and progress for the Office of Victim Services. Projects have been implemented and a broad-range of services have been addressed. The implementation of the Victim Services Action Plan will result in significant changes in the landscape of service delivery within the District. The next fiscal year will be focused on continued support for major initiatives and the prioritization of core services. Once these new initiatives, model projects and outreach projects are completed, a new assessment of service should be initiated. This new assessment of services will build off accomplishments realized over the next three years. It will time to complete a new analysis of existing services, identify any remaining gaps and develop the next phase of action steps for enhancing and improving services to victims. In fiscal year 2006, OVS will continue leadership and support for the implementation of the:

- Shelter Initiative
- Victim Service Center
- Model Projects for
  - i. Domestic violence
  - ii. Sexual assault
  - iii. Homicide
  - iv. Child victimization
- Outreach and Education Projects for
  - i. Domestic violence
  - ii. Sexual assault
  - iii. Homicide
- Continued improvement of legislation affecting victims
- Maintenance of core funding for services

## VICTIM ASSISTANCE FUND BUDGET

PROJECT	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	TOTAL
<b>Allocated Funds</b>						
Increased Services	1,500,000	1,683,043	1,786,234	2,500,000	2,000,000	9,469,277
Shelter Initiative				3,500,000	500,000	4,000,000
Victim Service Center				3,000,000	400,000	3,400,000
DV Model Project				300,000	300,000	600,000
SA Model Project				300,000	300,000	600,000
Homicide Sur. Project				300,000	300,000	600,000
System-based Project				300,000	300,000	600,000
Children Model Project				300,000	300,000	600,000
DV Outreach				250,000	250,000	500,000
Homicide Sur. Outreach				250,000	250,000	500,000
SA Outreach				250,000	250,000	500,000
Hotel/Shelter Solution				300,000	300,000	600,000
Children's Training			6,427			6,427
Victim Rights Week			7,415			7,415
Bridge Grant			216,092	54,000		270,092
Planning DV grant				50,000		50,000
Planning Shelter grant				50,000		50,000
Planning VSC				50,000		50,000
Child Advocacy Center	616,265	600,000	600,000			
MPD	222,038		223,257	220,000		
DV Fatality Review Bd.				90,000		
Survey				75,000	150,000	225,000
OAG			49,004			49,004
<b>Total grant allocation</b>	<b>2,338,303</b>	<b>2,283,043</b>	<b>2,888,429</b>	<b>12,139,000</b>	<b>5,600,000</b>	<b>25,248,775</b>
<b>Grant Expend. to date</b>	<b>1,236,264</b>	<b>1,611,637</b>	<b>2,888,429</b>			<b>5,736,330</b>
<b>Total admin allocated</b>	<b>350,000</b>	<b>350,000</b>	<b>350,000</b>	<b>350,000</b>	<b>350,000</b>	<b>1,612,998</b>
<b>Admin. Expen.to date</b>	<b>52,257</b>	<b>182,545</b>	<b>218,607</b>			<b>453,409</b>
<b>TOTAL Allocations</b>	<b>3,138,025</b>	<b>2,721,319</b>	<b>3,013,429</b>	<b>12,264,000</b>	<b>5,725,000</b>	<b>26,861,773</b>
<b>Revenue Received</b>	<b>15,794,439</b>	<b>8,765,517</b>	<b>2,352,675</b>			<b>26,912,631</b>
•Administrative funds are available at 5% of actual allocation						
<b>Balance Unallocated</b>						<b>50,858.00</b>

Budget based on current revenue. Continuation of projects in third year are dependent on revenue received for 2006 and 2007.