



CAP TIPs is a series of periodic messages to assist in the planning and implementation of NCVRW Community Awareness Projects. Please feel free to send your individual questions or requests for assistance to Anne Seymour at annesey@atlantech.net

CAP TIP #4

To Improve Public Awareness

The Impact of Crime on Victims and Communities

Introduction

One of the most important aspects of quality victim assistance is an understanding of the impact of crime on victims and the communities in which they reside. While *every victim is unique*, and *every crime and case is unique*, there are some general areas of impact that many victims experience. Similarly, communities are not immune from the impact of crime, and may experience effects that upset the equilibrium of daily life for individuals, neighborhoods, and schools.

During National Crime Victims' Rights Week and throughout the year, victim assistance and allied professionals can promote awareness of the negative impact of crime on individuals and communities to:

- Crime victims and survivors
- Victims' families and friends
- Justice and allied professionals
- Community leaders
- Community members

This CAP TIP provides an overview of the impact of crime on victims and communities, along with valuable resources that highlight the range of such impacts. This information can be easily adapted to victim outreach and public presentations during 2013 NCVRW and throughout the year.

The Impact of Crime on Victims

In general, there are five recognized areas of the impact of crime on victims:

1. Emotional/psychological
2. Financial
3. Physical
4. Social

5. Spiritual

A detailed matrix at the end of this CAP TIP describes the range of impact within these five categories, and addresses issues to consider in determining and understanding the impact of crime on victims.

Resources Relevant to the Impact of Crime on Victims

The Office for Victims of Crime sponsors many written and audio/visual resources that help define the impact of crime on victims:

National Victim Assistance Academy Curriculum

The National Victim Assistance Academy (NVAA) Foundation-level Training Curriculum features many resources relevant to the impact of crime on victims, including Module 4, “Impact of Crime on Victims.” NVAA resources (Module 4) that may be helpful to CAP recipients include:

- Instructors’ manual
- PowerPoint presentations
- Worksheets and handouts
- Participants’ text (this offers a detailed overview of the impact of crime on victims)

You can access the NVAA Curriculum and Module 4 at

<https://www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/NVAA/dspNVAACurriculum.cfm>.

OVC DVDs

“Gaining Insight, Taking Action: Basic Skills for Serving Victims”, a 55-minute DVD, is a valuable learning tool for victim service providers and allied professionals who want to understand the impact of crime on victims; the challenges faced by under-served victim populations; and the relationship between substance abuse and victimization. A detailed discussion guide accompanies this DVD, which can be ordered for free (a \$5.00 shipping charge applies) at

<https://www.ncjrs.gov/app/Search/Abstracts.aspx?id=254873>

“Victim Impact: Listen and Learn” features 14 men and women who have experienced a wide range of victimizations – from burglary, to child sexual abuse, to rape and domestic violence, to homicide – who describe the impact of crime from their personal perspectives as survivors. This DVD includes a Facilitator’s Manual and Participant Workbook, and can be ordered for free (a \$5.00 shipping charge applies) at <http://www.ovc.gov/library/videoclips.html#va>.

OVC Video Clips

OVC has a “treasure trove” of brief video clips that describe the impact of crime on specific victim populations. You can use these clips to promote 2013 NCVRW by:

- Imbedding them in PowerPoint presentations that highlight the impact of crime.
- Featuring clips on your agency website to promote greater understanding of the impact of crime on victims.

Examples of video clips include:

- Keynote address by Attorney General Eric Holder at the 12th National Indian Nations Conference

- Responding to Elder Abuse: What Community Corrections/Judges and Court Personnel/Law Enforcement Should Know (three clips)
- In Their Own Words: Domestic Violence in Later Life
- Faith-based Responses to Crime Victims
- First Response to Victims of Crime
- Victims with Disabilities
- Responding to Victims of Human Trafficking

You can download these and other video clips at <http://www.ovc.gov/library/videoclips.html>.

The Impact of Crime on Communities

The impact of crime on communities and neighborhoods is often described as a “ripple effect” that emanates from individual or chronic crime that takes place within a geographic jurisdiction. When one or a few community members are harmed by crime, its negative impact can result in serious consequences for neighborhoods, schools, and the community-at-large.

A great “icebreaker” for 2013 NCVRW events is to simply ask your audience:

*“When crime occurs within our community,
what is the impact on **our community** itself?”*

This icebreaker encourages community members to examine *how their lives may change* because of crimes that may not *directly* affect them, but can have a significant *indirect* impact.

The range of the impact of crime on communities includes the following:

- Increased fear of crime
- Isolation
- Erosion of community morale
- Detrimental effect on overall quality-of-life
- Decrease in social and leisure activities
- Significant changes in daily habits, rituals and activities
- Increased personal costs resulting from crime prevention strategies (locks, alarm systems, etc.)
- Increased community/taxpayer costs to address crime prevention and community safety (law enforcement, courts, corrections, and victim assistance costs)
- Community members:
 - Feel less safe (due to both an acute and chronic fear of crime)
 - May feel helpless
 - May withdraw from community/social activities
 - May be less committed to activities that define the social fabric of a community or neighborhood
- The business community is affected by:
 - Decrease in occupational functioning
 - Increased insurance premiums
 - Indirect medical costs

- Lower productivity
- Legal liability
- Lost business or decrease in customers
- Damaged property
- Loss of tourism

The Potential Range of the Impact of Crime on Victims*

Emotional/Psychological Impact	Financial Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shock ● Terror ● Feelings of unreality ● Feelings of numbness ● Confusion ● Helplessness ● Fear ● Anger or rage ● Grief or intense sorrow ● Enhancement of particular senses, e.g., hearing, smell, sight, etc. ● Anxiety (including terror, helplessness, and feeling out of control) ● Depression ● Panic symptoms ● Anxiety disorders, e.g., panic disorder, agoraphobia, and obsessive-compulsive disorder ● Inability to concentrate ● Guilt and self-blame ● Shame ● Pre-occupation with the crime ● Concerns about personal safety ● Social withdrawal ● Concerns about being believed ● Concerns about being blamed ● Negative changes in belief system ● Increased feelings of vulnerability ● Increased risk of alcohol or other drug abuse ● Persistent avoidance of things associated with the traumatic event ● Suicide ideation ● Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Medical bills, e.g., emergency transportation, hospital stays, inpatient and outpatient physical care, medical supplies, etc. ● Medication and prescription drugs ● Replacement of eyeglasses hearing aids, or other sensory aid items damaged, destroyed, or stolen ● Rental and related costs for physical mobility restoration equipment, e.g., wheelchairs and ramps, crutches, etc. ● Physical therapy ● Occupational therapy. ● Job retraining ● Mental health counseling and therapy ● Loss of wages due to incapacitation, rehabilitation, and taking time off from work to repair damages due to property crimes; participate in criminal or juvenile justice proceedings; and seek medical or mental health treatment ● Crime scene cleanup ● Loss of or damage to personal property ● Costs of replacing locks and changing security devices ● Child and elder care ● Fees incurred in changing banking or credit card accounts ● Higher insurance premiums ● Relocation expenses ● For homicide victims: funeral and burial expenses and loss of income

Physical Impact	Social Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physiological anxiety (including rapid heart rate, hyperventilation and stomach distress) • Physical injuries (such as gunshot wounds, lacerations, broken bones, sprains, burns, etc.) • Physical injuries that lead to other health conditions (such as heart attack, stroke, fractures from falling, loss of dexterity, etc.) • Increased risk of cardiac distress, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic pain, and sexual dysfunction • Permanent disability • Disfigurement • Immune disorders that increase the potential for infectious diseases • Substantial lifestyle changes, including restriction of activities once enjoyed • Lethargy and body fatigue • Sleep disorders • Loss of appetite, excessive appetite, or eating disorders. • Decreased libido and sexual dysfunction • Inability to work • Increased risk of future victimization • For sexual assault victims: possible exposure to sexually transmitted diseases; exposure to HIV; and unwanted pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detrimental effect on overall quality of life • Acute and chronic disruptions to family life • Disruptions to and negative changes in important relationships • Changes in lifestyle • Isolation • Restrictions on personal behaviors • Negative impact on overall productivity • Increased fear of crime • Increased risk of future victimization • Changes in pre-crime beliefs about the world • Changing view of the world: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As a “safe place” ○ Difficulty in trusting self ○ Difficulty in trusting others ○ Seeking a personal sense of “justice” • “Ripple effect” on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Neighborhoods ○ Schools ○ Workplaces ○ Communities

Spiritual Impact	It’s <i>IMPORTANT</i> to Remember!....
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an attempt to understand events that make no sense, people who do and do not engage in religious practice often turn to the spiritual beliefs with which they were raised. These spiritual insights are sometimes helpful but, more often than not, victims express disappointment in their faith communities’ reactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every <i>victim</i> is unique! • Every <i>case</i> is unique! • Every victim should receive a personal needs assessment, with case planning to address individual needs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All religions accept human suffering as a component of the human experience, but understand its role differently. Hindus and Buddhists understand the role of karma in tragic events and seek to accept what has happened rather than seek justice. Jews believe that God expects human beings to act in kindness to one another, and when they do not, justice is sought and forgiveness must be earned. The wide gamut of Christianity practiced in the United States includes all perspectives from acceptance as “God’s will” and forgiveness of offenders to strong drives for justice in the secular arena. Muslims believe they have a special mission from God/Allah to create a just society. Other than the radical fringe, they condemn violence and willingly participate in the justice system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each victim’s reaction to crime and ability to cope are affected by a variety of factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prior victimization history ○ Prior mental health or substance abuse problems ○ Degree of social support in the aftermath of crime ○ Degree of exposure to the criminal justice system, and the victim’s perception of this experience • A victim advocate may be the <i>first</i> person from whom a victim seeks help, or the <i>only</i> person.....
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* By Anne Seymour and Janice Harris Lord (*updated October 2012*)

For More Information

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