

2013 Victim Services Needs Assessment
**Volume II: Focus Groups of Victim
Populations**

Conducted for
**The Office of Victims' Services,
Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency**

Prepared by
**Institute of State and Regional Affairs
Penn State Harrisburg
777 West Harrisburg Pike
Middletown, Pennsylvania
December 2013**

**With amendments by the Access to Services
Subcommittee
August 2014**

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) secured federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act/Justice Assistance Grant funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance to implement this Needs Assessment.



About the 2013 PCCD Victim Services Needs Assessment

The Office of Victims' Services of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency engaged a research team at Penn State Harrisburg to conduct the 2013 Needs Assessment of Pennsylvania's Victim Community. The primary goal of this initiative, was to begin to develop a comprehensive understanding of unmet needs and service gaps through the perspectives of both service providers and victims. By documenting this information, this project aimed to increase the stature of victims' needs and contribute to understanding how victims can access core services. The activities undertaken by the Institute of State and Regional Affairs are documented individually in specific stand-alone reports (listed below) and culminate in a *Summary Report of Findings (Volume VII)*.

The individual reports include:

Volume I: In-Depth Interviews of Agency Directors

Volume II: Focus Groups of Victim Populations

Volume III: Administrative Web survey

Volume IV: Statewide Telephone and Web Survey

Volume V: Demographic Background Research

Volume VI: Crime Victim Needs: Insights from Research

Volume VII: Summary Report of Findings

The project team from the Institute of State and Regional Affairs at Penn State Harrisburg included:

Michael Behney, Director, Institute of State and Regional Affairs, Overall project coordination

Dr. Chiara Sabina, Assistant Professor of Social Sciences, School of Behavioral Sciences and Education

Stephanie Wehnau, Director, Center for Survey Research, Survey instrument development

Nicole Sturges, Assistant Director, Center for Survey Research, Focus group moderator

Tim Servinsky, Project Manager, Center for Survey Research, Survey tabulation and analysis

Sue Copella, Director, Pennsylvania State Data Center, Demographic data collection coordination

Jennifer Shultz, Associate Director for Operations, Pennsylvania State Data Center, Demographic research

John Maurer, Project Associate, Pennsylvania State Data Center, Demographic research

Larry Meyers, Project Associate, Pennsylvania State Data Center, GIS/Mapping

Donna Byrne, Advocate in the domestic violence movement and former Executive Director of A Woman's Place in Bucks County, PA.

Special thanks to assistance from a statewide Advisory Group that acted as a sounding board for ideas and questions as well as provided review and comment on methods and findings. Advisory Group members included:

Kathy Buckley, Manager, Victims Services Program, Office of Victims' Services

Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency

Ann Emmerling, Executive Director

Blackburn Center Against Domestic & Sexual Violence

Carole Alexy, Director of Contracts

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Rick Azzaro, Chief Services Officer

York YWCA

Pennie Hockenberry, Director of Victim Services / Office of Victim Advocate

Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

Joyce Lukima, Vice President, Services

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape/National Sexual Violence Resource Center

Michelle Robinson-Ritter, Executive Director

Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern PA

Lee Ann Labecki, Director

Office of Research, Evaluation, and Strategic Policy Development

Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ii
DATA ANALYSIS NOTES	ii
KEY FINDINGS	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
METHODOLOGY	1
Institutional Review Board.....	1
Moderator’s Guide.....	1
Participant Recruiting	2
Procedures	2
Demographic Characteristics of Participants	3
Crime Experiences.....	3
Data Analysis.....	4
Study Limitations	5
DISCUSSION	6
APPENDIX A – DATES AND LOCATIONS FOR QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS	18
APPENDIX B – MODERATOR’S GUIDE	19
APPENDIX C – PROJECT INFORMATION ON CSR WEBSITE	20
APPENDIX D – PRE-NOTIFICATION LETTER TO ORGANIZATIONS	21
APPENDIX E – CSR RECRUITING EMAIL TO ORGANIZATIONS.....	23
APPENDIX F – RECRUITING FLYER	24
APPENDIX G – SUMMARY OF CSR’S RECRUITING EFFORTS	25
APPENDIX H – RECRUITING/SCREENING SCRIPT	29
APPENDIX I – INFORMED CONSENT FORM	30
APPENDIX J – DEMOGRAPHIC INTAKE FORM	32
APPENDIX K – RESOURCES FOR CRIME VICTIMS	34
APPENDIX L – DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS	35
APPENDIX M – LIST OF FORMAL RESOURCES USED BY PARTICIPANTS	37

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1. CRIME EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS.....	4
---	---

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the Needs Assessment of Pennsylvania Crime Victims, the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at Penn State Harrisburg conducted qualitative interviews with various victim populations across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The goal of the discussion was to better understand victims' needs and utilization of resources and organizations from the perspective of different crime victim populations. The findings from the qualitative interviews were used to help craft the other data collection instruments used in the needs assessment.

Qualitative interviews were held with seven victim populations in April and May 2013: 1) sexual assault victims, 2) victims with disabilities, 3) driving under the influence victims, 4) domestic violence victims, 5) senior (55+ years) victims, 6) homicide survivors, and 7) younger (18-24 years) victims. All participants self-identified as crime victims and reside in Pennsylvania.

DATA ANALYSIS NOTES

The following notes should be taken into account during a review of the data:

1. Specific numbers and percentages are reported from information gathered on the intake form (see Appendix J) or through poll questions asked during the discussion.
2. All other findings use more general terms (i.e. most, many, few, etc.) when reporting information from participants. This information was gathered through participant discussions and cannot be quantified with specific numbers or percentages.
3. Prior to reviewing the data, please read the section of this report entitled, "Study Limitations."

KEY FINDINGS

1. Victimization Experiences

- Most participants experienced multiple victimizations. There was an average of 2.32 types of crime experienced by participants, with a range of 1 to 6 experiences.
- Participants noted a history of lifetime trauma and victimization and shared stories of repeated victimization and recurring abuse.
- A number of participants described experiences of re-victimization, including numerous instances of post-crime victimization.
- One cognitively disabled participant was not aware that she was being victimized; however, she described several instances where she was being taken advantage of sexually and was neglected and abused by others.

2. Informal Crime Victim Resources

- Few participants indicated that they utilized informal resources following their victimization. Participants gave the following reasons for not using informal resources:
 - Did not have family or friends available to help them
 - A lack of support from family and friends
 - Felt it was unnecessary to reach out to others

3. Formal Crime Victim Resources

- Almost all of the participants used formal resources following their crime experience. Participants also shared that they never paid for any of the services they received.
- About one-third (31.8%) of participants utilized shelters to escape dangerous situations.
- Participants in every group reached out to a formal resource to speak about their crime experience via face to face group or individual counseling or online or telephone assistance (i.e. web chats, crisis hotlines).
- Most participants (81.8%) interacted with law enforcement as a result of their crime experience. In fact, 75% reported their crime to the police.
- Participants received assistance with the legal system including: court advocates, assistance with victim impact statements, filing for Protection from Abuse orders (PFA), legal representation, and assistance with small claims court.

- Many participants received transportation services through victim service organizations following their victimization.
- Over one-quarter of participants (27.2%) applied for Victims Compensation Assistance; however, only 22.7% received assistance. Of those who did not apply, 40.9% were aware of Victims Compensation Assistance, but either did not feel they needed it or did not even apply. The remaining 31.8% were not aware of Victims Compensation Assistance at all.

4. Help-Seeking Behavior

- Personal safety was a key factor in deciding to seek services following their crime experience. Many participants described the fear of another victimization, especially those who had experienced stalking, domestic violence, and sexual assault.
- Participants described reaching a breaking point, such as recurring nightmares and indescribable grief, where they felt they needed to seek professional services.
- Many participants recognized that formal resources offered specialized services to deal with their specific crime experiences.
- A few participants shared that they were not emotionally or mentally ready to seek and accept help.

5. Contact with Victim Service Organizations

- Many participants indicated that formal victim resources reached out to them following their crime experience. Participants received information about victim services via mail, follow-up phone calls, law enforcement officials, hospitals, mental health services, and even through a representative at the morgue.
- Participants also initiated contact with formal resources following their victimization. Most participants made a phone call to a victim service organization or crisis line for help.
- Some participants described waiting to seek help from formal resources due to shock, shame, and embarrassment following their victimization.

6. Satisfaction with Victim Service Organizations

- Many participants expressed satisfaction with the staff they encountered with formal resources. They described the personal connections they made, feeling safe, and noting the willingness of the staff to help them through their aftermath. Participants also noted the professional

atmosphere at the victim service organizations, and their satisfaction with the confidentiality of services.

- Despite positive comments, some participants felt disappointed with their victim service organization experience. Participants struggled with a lack of services and support, described being overwhelmed by numerous entities following their victimization, and experiencing a lack of faith in the system.

7. Barriers to Receiving Services

- Participants noted a variety of barriers to obtaining assistance following their victimization.
 - Some participants felt like their crime experience was not being taken seriously, especially by law enforcement.
 - Other participants were not aware of services for victims and did not know how to find them.
 - Participants experienced challenges with receiving services including: difficulty entering shelters and the hours of operation for victim service organizations.
 - Several participants described confusion and bureaucracy when applying for Victims Compensation Assistance. Participants shared questions about eligibility, the amount of paperwork involved, the documentation needed, and the length of time to receive benefits as reasons they did not apply.
 - Cognitively disabled participants faced a unique set of barriers to receiving services. Participants noted an extremely overwhelming and difficult to navigate legal system. Specifically, they discussed the need for a specially trained court advocate to guide them through court testimony and questions.
 - Other significant barriers to receiving services mentioned by participants included: having a greater concern for the offender rather than themselves, mistrust of the legal system, and a sense of embarrassment.

8. Improvements to Formal Resources for Victims

- Participants described a number of recommendations to improve services for victims:
 - Collaboration between victim service organizations and local community organizations and churches to help meet a variety of victim needs, some of which are not necessarily related to their crime experience (i.e. food, clothing, etc.).

- Personal follow-up by victim service providers after their crime experience to discuss available services and resources.
- Additional training for those in contact with victims to ensure that they are knowledgeable about victims' rights and services as well as training on working with a variety of victim groups and crime experiences.
- The use of technology to target younger victims including a social media presence and online chats to gain information about services or to speak about their crime experience.
- Peer support programs to assist victims following their crime experience.
- Although many participants recognized that victim service organizations are working with limited resources and funding, they did suggest increasing funding, staffing, and other available resources to provide high quality services to all victims.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Needs Assessment of Pennsylvania Crime Victims, the Center for Survey Research (CSR) at Penn State Harrisburg conducted qualitative interviews with various victim populations across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The goal of the discussion was to better understand victims' needs and utilization of resources and organizations from the perspective of different crime victim populations. The findings from the qualitative interviews were used to help craft the other data collection instruments used in the needs assessment.

Qualitative interviews were held with seven victim populations in April and May 2013: 1) sexual assault victims, 2) victims with disabilities, 3) driving under the influence victims, 4) domestic violence victims, 5) senior (55+ years) victims, 6) homicide survivors, and 7) younger (18-24 years) victims. All participants self-identified as crime victims and reside in Pennsylvania. See Appendix A for details on the date and location of each session.

METHODOLOGY

Institutional Review Board

The study protocol, recruiting materials, consent form, intake form, and final moderator's guide were submitted to Penn State University's Office for Research Protections for review in February 2013 and were subsequently approved under Penn State IRB #42480. As part of the approval process, all members of the Penn State research team completed mandatory training on the protection of human research participants.

Moderator's Guide

CSR staff worked in consultation with other members of the Penn State research team and the Needs Assessment of Pennsylvania Crime Victims Advisory Group (Advisory Group) to develop a moderator's guide of questions for use in the qualitative interviews. Discussion topics included: resources and victim service organizations used after victimization, experiences with

services and organizations, barriers to receiving services, and unmet needs. See Appendix B for a copy of the moderator's guide that was used during the sessions.

Participant Recruiting

Because CSR staff did not have direct access to crime victims, numerous recruiting strategies were utilized to recruit participants representing the seven targeted populations. First, CSR added information on the needs assessment and the sessions to its website so that potential participants could go to a central location for information on the project (Appendix C). Next, CSR identified and partnered with PCCD-funded victim service organizations that could recruit their clients and pass along recruiting materials to other contacts. Before CSR personally contacted these organizations, John Delaney, Chair of the PCCD Victims' Services Advisory Committee, sent a pre-notification letter that outlined the purpose of the study and requested their collaboration with the Penn State research team (Appendix D). CSR then followed up with each organization via emails and phone calls in order to pass along more detailed information about the study as well as a personalized recruiting flyer (Appendices E and F respectively). The organizations were asked to personally contact clients, circulate flyers, and share information about the qualitative interviews with other contacts in the field. To increase participant numbers, CSR also contacted other related organizations that matched the locations and study populations. The research team also asked the Advisory Group for assistance in making contact with organizations and clients. Appendix G outlines CSR's extensive recruiting efforts.

Participants were screened to ensure that they met eligibility requirements (self-identified victim of a crime, Pennsylvania resident) for each qualitative session (Appendix H). After the screening process, interested participants were given final confirmation of the location of the session via phone or email. Reminder phone calls were placed the day before each session to confirm participant attendance.

Procedures

The qualitative interviews were conducted by CSR staff members experienced with qualitative methods and facilitation; one researcher moderated the discussion while the other served as a note taker. Prior to the start of each group, participants completed a consent form as well as an intake form designed to collect demographic information (Appendices I and J respectively). A

sheet of resources for crime victims was also provided to each participant; this included Pennsylvania and location-specific resources (Appendix K). Each group was asked every question on the moderator's guide using a group discussion format, with the exception of the victims with disabilities group. To facilitate the discussion, the cognitively disabled participants each shared their victimization story while the moderator probed for the elements in the moderator's guide. The caretaker for both of the cognitively disabled participants stayed in the room and assisted the moderator with the discussion; she also signed a consent form. At the conclusion of the discussion, a \$20 cash incentive was given to each participant as a token of appreciation for their participation. Each session lasted one to two hours and included between 1 and 6 participants.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

A total of 22 crime victims participated in the seven qualitative interview sessions. With the exception of one male participant, all others were female¹. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 65 years, with an average age of 44 years. The participants were culturally diverse: 12 were white, 8 were black/African American, 1 was American Indian or Native Alaskan, and 1 self-identified as Hawaiian and Mexican; 1 participant was Hispanic/Latino. Education level also varied among participants, where 3 had less than a high school diploma, 4 had a high school diploma or GED, 7 had some college experience, and 8 had earned some type of college degree. Further, over half of the participants (52.9%) noted that their income was less than \$20,000 per year. Also, over half (57.1%) of the participants were disabled. See Appendix L for more information about the demographic characteristics of the participants and review the "Study Limitations" section of this report for more information on recruiting participants.

Crime Experiences

Participants experienced an average of 2.32 crimes, with a range of 1 to 6 experiences. Domestic/Dating violence (47.6%), sexual assault (42.9%), child abuse (33.3%), and assault (23.8%) were the most common crimes that participants experienced. Most crimes occurred either less than one year ago (33.3%) or between one and three years ago (33.3%). Further, three-quarters (75.0%) of crimes were reported. See the table on the following page for more

¹ One participant was transgender: male to female.
Center for Survey Research
Penn State Harrisburg

detailed information about the crimes experienced by the participants and review the “Study Limitations” section of this report for more information on recruiting participants.

Table 1. Crime Experiences of Participants

	Mean	Range
Number of Crime Experiences	2.32	1-6
	Number	Percent
Type of Crime²		
Domestic/Dating violence	10	47.6%
Sexual assault	9	42.9%
Child abuse	7	33.3%
Assault	5	23.8%
Driving under the influence (DUI)	4	19.0%
Homicide	4	19.0%
Stalking	4	19.0%
Other crime (gun shot, theft)	3	14.3%
Robbery	2	9.5%
Identity theft/fraud	2	9.5%
Crime Reported		
Reported	15	75.0%
Not reported	5	25.0%
When Crime Occurred		
Currently occurring	1	4.8%
Less than 1 year ago	7	33.3%
1-3 years ago	7	33.3%
4-6 years ago	1	4.8%
7-10 years ago	2	9.5%
More than 15 years ago	3	14.3%

Data Analysis

A note-based approach to analysis was used for the qualitative interviews utilizing the detailed notes of the discussion. Key themes were identified from the notes taken by the assistant moderator. Also, quantitative information gathered from the intake form was incorporated into the data analysis.

² Participants could select more than one response; the number of responses equals 50. This is the percent of responses (types of crimes noted by respondents), not percent of participants.

Study Limitations

The rigorous qualitative research methods used for this piece of the Needs Assessment are useful for exploration and discovery, for context and depth, and for interpretation of the topics discussed during the sessions. It should be noted that although this type of research provides rich, detailed responses, the results are not generalizable to the populations being studied. Rather, one should think of the concept of transferability, in other words, whether or not the findings can transfer to another environment or situation³.

Further, because the study team relied on victim service organizations to assist with recruiting, there is a greater likelihood that victims who received services (i.e., served victims) participated in the qualitative interviews. Conversely, that means that un-served respondents may be underrepresented in these interviews.

Next, a limitation to the project was the difficulty with recruiting participants. In fact, individuals who assisted with the recruiting process noted that victims were hesitant to attend a group discussion with people they did not know and discuss extremely personal and difficult experiences. In the seven groups, there was a total of 22 participants. Despite the challenges with recruiting, there are several benefits of smaller group discussions. The smaller groups gave the opportunity for participants to share more of their personal story in greater detail. As a result, the researchers were able to delve deeper into understanding their use of services, barriers to receiving services, and unmet needs. Further, in retrospect, large group discussion may not have been as effective given the sensitive nature of crime experiences.

It should also be noted that many victim groups were represented overall in the study. For example, the “sexual assault” group only had three participants, but sexual assault was noted 9 times throughout all of the sessions (42.9%). Further, although only two individuals shared their

³ Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
Center for Survey Research
Penn State Harrisburg

experiences in the “victims with disabilities” group, 57.1% of participants noted that they have a disability. In fact, several individuals were disabled as a result of their victimization experience.

DISCUSSION

NOTE: Specific numbers and percentages are reported from information gathered on the intake form (see Appendix J) or through poll questions asked during the discussion. All other findings use more general terms (i.e. most, many, few, etc.) when reporting information from participants. This information was gathered through participant discussions and cannot be quantified with specific numbers or percentages.

1. Victimization Experiences

Most participants experienced multiple victimizations. In fact, the participants experienced an average of 2.32 types of crime, with a range of 1 to 6 experiences. Domestic/Dating violence (47.6%), sexual assault (42.9%), child abuse (33.3%), and assault (23.8%) were the most common crimes that participants experienced.

Participants noted a history of lifetime trauma and victimization. For example, one participant suffered child abuse when she was only two days old; her parents threw her off the kitchen table because she would not stop crying. As an adult, her husband physically and emotionally abused her and attempted to end her life. Another participant shared that she experienced a series of rapes from her cousin, friends, a boyfriend, and her boyfriend’s father. Further, a participant noted she was “abused her whole life;” she experienced domestic violence as an adult and also discussed a history of child abuse.

Many participants shared stories of repeated victimization. Given the fact that nearly half (45%) of participants disclosed domestic or dating violence, many stories were shared that

detailed recurring abuse. In fact, many participants described going in and out of shelters to escape their abusers. Specifically, one participant noted repeated physical, emotional, and mental abuse by her long-term boyfriend including: threats, isolation from family and friends, and sexual abuse. One participant drove home her struggle with domestic violence when she said she was “fighting to live day to day.”

Many of the participants described experiences of re-victimization. For example, one participant suffered recurring nightmares about her childhood sexual abuse, which eventually drove her to seek out services. In fact, she noted that the abuse stays with you for a long time, and people do not understand that. Additionally, a homicide survivor noted that when the press reports on the anniversaries of the murder, she is re-traumatized. Further, another participant shared that when the cemetery incorrectly recorded her daughter’s name, the cemetery keeper told her it did not matter; she had to go to the funeral director to change the information. She noted, “It’s perpetual – it comes from every angle. That’s why people like us start drinking, put their heads in the sand – it’s unbearable. When you get up, someone else is taking a shot at you.”

One cognitively disabled participant was unaware that she was being victimized. She described instances where she was being taken advantage of sexually, for monetary benefit (food stamps, Social Security disability checks), and otherwise neglected and abused by others. However, it was apparent that she did not comprehend the fact that she was victimized when she called her abusers “friends” and “her boyfriend.”

2. Informal Crime Victim Resources

Few participants indicated that they utilized informal resources following their victimization. Although some individuals indicated that they did turn to family, friends, clergy, etc. for support, a majority of participants shared reasons why they did not use these resources. First, several participants explained that they did not even have family or friends to assist them. In fact, one participant stated that her abuser would not allow friends.

Next, many individuals discussed the lack of support from family and friends. For example, a participant stated that family and friends “felt she deserved what she got and brought it on herself.” Another participant described how her family and friends minimized the situation when she did try to seek help from them. Additionally, one participant shared that no one in her family believed her when she was raped as a child. Lack of informal support was also evident when one homicide survivor expressed that she does not talk to her family; “they don’t want to deal with it.” The participant noted that her family is still grieving and unable to support her needs.

Finally, several participants felt that it was unnecessary to reach out to family and friends. In fact, one participant said, “I put myself in this situation; I have to take care of it.” Another participant indicated she did not want to talk to anyone about her victimization, including informal or formal resources. She strongly stated that she “just wanted to forget about it.” Both of these participants were under thirty years of age.

3. Formal Crime Victim Resources

Almost all of the participants used formal resources following their crime experience.

Further, participants never paid for any of the services they received. See Appendix M for a list of organizations used by the participants.

Almost one-third (31.8%) of participants utilized shelters to escape a dangerous situation.

Some of the participants used a short-term (30 days or less) program, while others used a transitional housing program (up to 1 year). In fact, 42.8% of those who had used a shelter indicated that they had done so multiple times. Participants were also aware of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program offered in their area; many hoped to use this when their transitional housing expired.

Participants in every group reached out to a formal resource to speak about their crime experience. Many participants sought face-to-face group and individual counseling or online or telephone assistance (i.e. web chats, crisis hotlines) to cope with their victimization. They shared stories about how the counselors made a real difference for them. In fact, one participant said,

“If it wasn’t for [a particular staff member at a counseling center], I wouldn’t be here right now.” Further, several participants noted also receiving services for mental health issues such as: bipolar disorder, anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide.

Over one-quarter of participants (27.2%) applied for Victims Compensation Assistance; however, only 22.7% of those received assistance. Victims Compensation Assistance was used to pay hospital bills, funeral expenses, and counseling costs as a result of their crime experience. Of those who did not apply, 40.9% were aware of Victims Compensation Assistance, but either did not feel they needed it or did not apply. The remaining 31.8% were not aware of Victims Compensation Assistance.

Most participants (81.8%) interacted with law enforcement as a result of their crime experience. In fact, 75% reported their crime to the police. Several participants described developing a relationship with police officers and detectives. For example, homicide survivors noted that detectives had a real concern for them. In fact, one said that the detective worried about her family and told them “he would do his best – and he did.”

Participants received assistance with the legal system, including: court advocates, assistance with victim impact statements, filing for Protection from Abuse orders (PFA), legal representation, and assistance with small claims court. The overall sense from the participants was that the victim service providers helped them navigate a confusing legal system. For example, one participant noted, “they made a difference” and went on to say that there is a “sense that you’re ok when they are with you.”

Many participants received transportation services through victim service organizations following their victimization. All of these individuals used this service because they had to relocate after their crime experiences. In fact, all of the participants in the domestic violence group arrived for the discussion using a taxi voucher provided by the domestic violence shelter.

4. Help-Seeking Behavior

Personal safety was a key factor in seeking services following their crime experience.

Participants described the fear of another victimization, especially those who had experienced

stalking, domestic violence, and sexual assault. One participant noted that she felt “victimized and afraid and wanted to go somewhere safe.” Several participants shared that they relocated to other counties and/or obtained PFAs to escape their abusers. Participants in the domestic violence group also discussed safety concerns within the shelters themselves, which are supposed to be a safe haven for victims. In fact, participants shared which facilities are safer than others because they only allow the residents to enter (no visitors). Overall, safety was always a top priority.

Participants described reaching a breaking point where they felt they needed professional services. Two participants noted that nightmares were so overwhelming that they had to reach out for help. Further, several homicide survivors noted indescribable grief to the point where they were barely functioning. For example, one participant stated, “I can’t get it out of my brains – I can’t! I couldn’t do nothing besides holler and scream – she’s gone, but she didn’t deserve that.” Another described seeking out help when she said, “The only way I could make honor come to my daughter’s death was to pull all my fragmented pieces together.”

During the discussions, participants recognized that formal services offered specialized services to deal with their specific crime experiences. Participants were utilizing services that specifically matched the crime(s) they experienced. For example, homicide survivors noted the unique services for them offered by Anti-Violence Partnership, and many domestic violence victims were seeking services from domestic violence shelters.

Despite the fact that many participants were seeking formal services, a few were not emotionally or mentally ready to seek and accept help. In fact, one acknowledged that she knows her counselor will be there when she is ready to talk about her crime experience. Another participant stated that he was “pretty shook up and could not pursue [services] at the time.” Even though one participant experienced a sexual assault, she was adamant that she did not want any services. In fact, she felt like it is “not affecting her emotionally or otherwise” and she “doesn’t want to talk about it [with a professional].”

5. Contact with Victim Service Organizations

Many participants indicated that formal victim resources reached out to them following their crime experience. A number of participants noted that victim service organizations

provided information about their services via mail, follow-up phone calls, and through a representative at the morgue. Further, law enforcement officials also provided information to participants about services to help them after their experience. Also, several participants noted that hospitals reached out to victim service organizations on their behalf. For example, a nurse in the emergency room contacted the police and the county victim service organization on behalf of a participant following a violent assault. Two other participants were referred to services after suicidal thoughts.

Many participants initiated contact with formal resources following their victimization. Of those who reached out for help, most made a phone call to a victim service organization or crisis line. Participants either used the phone book, the Internet, or a smartphone to obtain a telephone number for formal help. In one instance, a participant noted that she personally knew a staff member at a victim service organization and reached out to her. Another participant was aware of the local victim service organization's services through its presence in her community as well as a Take Back the Night event at her college.

Although many participants contacted formal resources right away, others described waiting to seek help. Those that got help right away generally did so for safety reasons. For example, domestic violence, stalking, and physical assault victims sought assistance to remove themselves from abusers and dangerous situations. However, shock, shame, and embarrassment were all reasons participants shared for not seeking help right away. In fact, one participant noted that she waited 30 years before she contacted a victim service organization to deal with her childhood sexual abuse. Another participant shared that she decided to seek formal resources four years after her sexual assault after coming to the conclusion that informal resources were not enough.

6. Satisfaction with Victim Service Organizations

“I felt like I made the right phone call.” Many participants expressed satisfaction with the staff they encountered with formal resources. In fact, participants described making personal connections with staff members, feeling safe, and noting the willingness of the staff to help them

through their victimization. The comments below highlight the participants' satisfaction with their interaction with formal resource personnel.

- A DUI group participant shared that the local police department “took me in their hands – they were fabulous!”
- A homicide survivor described her contact with the victim service organization as “a lifesaver.”
- A senior group participant noted the strong relationship with the victim service organization that she contacted saying “they WERE the family” (her family turned against her).
- A homicide survivor described the helpfulness of her counselors when she said, “[Name] is the sweetest” and “I love them.”
- A senior participant noted a sense of comfort. When she described what she liked best about her experience with her victim service organization, she said that there is “Someone to listen to you. Someone is on your side. You are not alone, and they are willing to help you. It makes a difference.”

Participants also described the professional atmosphere at the victim service organizations. One participant noted the difficulty of getting over the shame and embarrassment of her situation when she called for assistance. They accepted her and said, “You need help, [this is] how can we help you, this is what we can do.” They surpassed her expectations. Another participant described her satisfaction with the confidentiality of services. In fact, she said, “[the confidentiality] makes you feel more comfortable with sharing with them.” Also, a participant shared that using services through the District Attorney’s Office opened the door to other victim resources.

“If you don’t have a positive experience, you are not going to keep trying [to get services].”

Despite positive comments, some participants felt disappointed with their victim service organization experience. Some participants struggled with the lack of services and support following their crime experience. One DUI group participant noted that she begged for counseling, and they told her they did not have time for her unless she was thinking of killing herself. Another participant shared her desperation to utilize a shelter saying that she was

“desperate, I had to beg them on the phone to get in [to the shelter].” She goes on to say “People really need services, and they turn us away.” Finally, a participant in the DUI group described the lack of support from staff at a victim service organization when she spoke at a victim impact panel. A DUI offender verbally attacked her when she referred to people like him (those who drink and drive) as “murderers.” She was disappointed that the victim witness representative did not stand up for her. The participant now refuses to take part in future panels.

A participant experiencing domestic violence described being overwhelmed by numerous entities, including: hospital staff, law enforcement, Children and Youth Services, and victim service representatives immediately following her crime experience. She stated “it was overwhelming – too many people at once. It was helpful, but a lot going on.”

Despite some participants praising the confidentiality of the victim services, others felt this was lacking for them. In particular, participants in the domestic violence group discussed their lack of faith in the system. For example, one of these participants said, “When you tell people, they take it away from you.”

7. Barriers to Receiving Services

Participants described a variety of reasons for not obtaining assistance following their victimization.

Some participants felt like their crime experience was not being taken seriously. For example, one participant shared the negative reaction she received when she tried to follow-up with law enforcement. He bluntly told her, “Miss, we got murderers and this and that, and we don’t have time for [property crime]. They have priorities on what they want to work on. This was a priority for me.”

Other participants were not aware of services and did not know how to find them. Several participants noted that no information was given to them regarding victim services. In fact, one participant said, “I shouldn’t have to search for it.” Further, one participant realized the services she was *not* offered as a result of the group discussion.

Several challenges with receiving services were described by participants. Domestic violence participants shared various examples of difficulties entering shelters. One strongly stated, “They don’t care if people are safe. They wouldn’t even allow people to come in and sleep on the floor just to be safe.” Further, they noted that families with older boys in particular encountered obstacles with accessing shelter services. Specifically, they described that there is an age limitation for boys (no boys 10+) at a shelter in their local community. Finally, another participant indicated that it was hard for her to access services during the day, when she had to work.

Several participants described confusion and bureaucracy when applying for Victim Compensation Assistance. For example, some participants noted questions about eligibility, especially in situations where other health or life insurance came into play. Further, several participants indicated the amount of paperwork involved, documentation needed, and length of time to receive benefits. This discouraged many from applying. One participant described owing money for all of the services received if you get an insurance settlement saying, “You get victimized all over again! You are always the victim – you are never done.”

The two cognitively disabled participants faced a unique set of barriers to receiving services. One participant felt that she did not have resources available to her because of her disability. She was repeatedly victimized yet never received services following any of her numerous crime experiences, despite the fact that she had contact with several formal resources (i.e. hospital, law enforcement, support coordinator). Further, one of the participants and her caretaker noted that the legal system can be extremely overwhelming and difficult to navigate especially for cognitively disabled individuals. The caretaker felt like cognitively disabled individuals need a court advocate. For example, she noted that the cognitively disabled participant had difficulties being questioned; it sounded like she was lying because she gets her timelines mixed up. The caretaker noted that a court advocate could ask questions so that things make sense and explain what the cognitively disabled person was speaking about during testimony or questioning. In fact, the research team found that it was essential that the caretaker participated in the group discussion for this reason.

Although concern for the offender, mistrust of the legal system, and sense of embarrassment were not mentioned by multiple participants, they were significant barriers to receiving services for some. One participant placed a greater concern for the offender than herself when she said, “The consequences for the offender would have been too great – too much punishment for things like that.” This participant went on to share a mistrust of the legal system as another reason for not reporting the crime or seeking services. Lastly, she felt a sense of embarrassment about her sexual assault. This played a part in declining to seek services.

8. Improvements to Formal Resources for Victims

Based on their experience with formal resources, participants described a number of recommendations to improve services for victims. Their suggestions fell under the following categories for improvement: organizational and service delivery improvement, outreach and education, and service offering.

Participants discussed a variety of needs, some of which were not necessarily related to their crime experience. For example, they described basic needs for themselves and their children such as clothing, food, medical and dental care, as well as, mental health needs, and assistance with their disabilities. This wide range of needs suggests collaboration with local community organizations and churches that provide free health clinics, soup kitchens, counseling services, food banks, and assistance with housing, employment, and disabilities.

Several participants noted that had it not been for the personal follow-up by victim service providers, they may not have sought any services. In fact, many participants described the shock or trauma following their victimization. One participant noted the importance of follow-up when she said, “Instead of just handing me the pamphlet – I may not even remember getting it especially with trauma.” These comments show that when victim service organizations extend a hand to victims, it can increase the chance that they will receive appropriate services to help them recover from their crime experience.

A few participants expressed that formal resources need additional training on dealing with crime victims. In fact, one participant filed a complaint against the police officer taking her report. He had declined to help her because the sexual assault happened in another jurisdiction. Because of this negative initial police experience, she did not report her crime in the correct jurisdiction stating that it was “too hard to go through it again.” As a result of her complaint, that police officer participated in a training course geared towards working with sexual assault victims. Another participant noted the importance of making sure that those who have the first contact with victims are knowledgeable about victims’ rights and services. Therefore, additional training for dealing with a variety of victim groups and crime experiences would be beneficial for all victim service providers.

A few participants noted that they were not educated about abuse, but they felt that providing education would improve services for future victims. For example, one specifically suggested providing an education program for children. In fact, she said, “If that would have been available at the elementary level, it might have given me the courage to speak up sooner [about my sexual abuse].” Another went on to say that knowing about abuse would make others not feel so alone. Therefore, reaching out to communities, especially children, could be beneficial for victims.

Victim service organizations could use technology to target younger victims. For example, a younger participant used her smartphone to access information about formal resources. However, she noted that victim service organizations could be more prominent in social media such as Facebook because this is where young people look for information. Further, several young people indicated they have used online chats in place of a telephone hotline to gain information about services or to speak about their experience.

Several participants expressed a desire for peer support programs to assist them following their victimization. For example, a DUI participant shared that she attended a peer support group. She described the benefit of this type of assistance when she said, “I knew I had a place that I could go and sit at a place with people who understood me.” Participants in the senior group also pointed out that peer support could be helpful. They described a system of victims

supporting victims where the person providing assistance had actually lived through a similar experience. One participant said, “Peer support is helpful . . . promote that – this would be big! We have to open up that door.”

Many participants recognized that victim service organizations are working with limited resources and funds. Therefore, participants suggested increasing funding, staffing, and other available resources to provide high quality services to victims. For example, participants from the senior group noted the need for a great deal of services following a victimization experience; however, one participant said “Funding prevents that.” Further, a participant from another group shared a specific experience where lack of resources affected her ability to receive services. Because the local victim service organization lost its counselor, she had to utilize a private counselor to deal with her victimization. Fortunately she had the means to pay for this (through insurance), but others may not be so fortunate. Additionally, a participant shared that funding cuts caused her domestic violence shelter to drop transportation services for clients. This was especially challenging because the domestic violence shelter is in a rural area without ample public transportation. Because additional funding is not always available, victim service organizations could consider sharing resources with other local providers to improve these gaps in service.

APPENDIX A – DATES AND LOCATIONS FOR QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

The Penn State research team traveled throughout Pennsylvania to complete the series of qualitative interviews. The dates and locations of each session are listed below.

1. Sexual Assault Victims

April 22, 2013

Penn State DuBois campus: DuBois, Pennsylvania

2. Victims with Disabilities

April 22, 2013

Arc of Indiana County: Indiana, Pennsylvania

3. Driving Under the Influence Victims

April 25, 2013

Dauphin County Courthouse: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

4. Domestic Violence Victims

April 26, 2013

Emergency Management Building: Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

5. Senior (55+ years) Victims

April 29, 2013

SeniorLaw Center: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

6. Homicide Survivors

April 29, 2013

Anti-Violence Partnership: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

7. Younger (18-24 years) Victims

May 22, 2013

Penn State Harrisburg campus: Middletown, Pennsylvania

APPENDIX B – MODERATOR’S GUIDE

Good Day/Evening! Thank you for attending our focus group session for (name of population). [Introduce researchers.] We are with Penn State Harrisburg’s Center for Survey Research. We are holding a series of these focus groups around the state for the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to understand the needs and gaps in service from people who have been victimized.

I realize that this is a sensitive topic. We want you to feel comfortable sharing your experiences – there are no right or wrong answers. Please be assured that anything you say here today will be kept confidential, and we will not use names or any other identifying information in any of our reports. Also, please remember that anything we discuss during this session should not leave this room.

Let’s begin by having each person introduce themselves. Please give us your first name only, and if you feel comfortable, briefly describe why you are seeking victim services (type of victimization).

Let’s begin by thinking about what helped you following your victimization.

1. What resources did you use to assist you with your victim experience?
 - a. Informal resources (these could be family, friends, pastor, etc.)
 - b. Formal resources (law enforcement, victim service organizations-VSOs, etc.); why did you decide to seek formal services? What helped you make the decision to seek services?
 - c. Did you apply for Victim’s Compensation Assistance? If yes, were there any unmet financial needs? Why didn’t you apply for compensation assistance?
2. Which specific victim service organizations (VSO) did you contact to assist you?
 - a. Did you contact the VSO right away? If not, why not?
 - b. How did you learn about the services offered at VSOs?
3. Describe your initial contact with the victim service organization?
 - a. Were they helpful?
 - b. Were they sensitive?
 - c. Did they fulfill your expectations when you contacted them?
4. What services did you receive from the VSO? (counseling, shelter, compensation, court advocacy, etc.)
 - a. Was there a financial cost for any of the services you received? If so, what were the service and the associated cost?

Next we would like to discuss your satisfaction with services, as well as any challenges you faced in obtaining these services.

5. What did you like best your experience with the victim service organization? What were you satisfied with?
6. What do you think would have made your experience easier?
 - a. What barriers, if any, did you face when seeking services (i.e. language, cultural, transportation, access to the building, location, hours, etc.)?
7. What do you wish had been there for you, but wasn’t?
8. Thinking about your entire experience with victim services, what specific changes should be made to help improve services for victims?

Before we conclude, is there anything else that we have not covered that you would like to discuss or share with us on this topic?

APPENDIX C – PROJECT INFORMATION ON CSR WEBSITE



As part of the 2012 Pennsylvania Crime Victims Needs Assessment, the Center for Survey Research is conducting seven focus groups around the Commonwealth. Below you will find information about the focus groups with crime victims and how to participate.

What is a focus group?

A focus group is a discussion with 6 to 10 people who have similar experiences. The discussion is led by an experienced moderator who will pose questions to the group. The focus group usually lasts 1 to 2 hours.

Why are you doing these focus groups?

The goals of the focus groups are to understand victim's needs and gaps in service from a crime victim's point of view. We will be conducting focus groups with the following populations: sexual assault victims, younger (18-24 years) crime victims, crime victims with disabilities, DUI victims, domestic violence victims, homicide survivors, and crime victims age 55 or older.

Who is doing the focus groups?

A research team from the Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg will be conducting the group. The groups are sponsored by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD).

Where are the focus groups being held?

They will be held across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Specific areas include: Clarion County, Indiana County, Harrisburg and surrounding areas, Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, Philadelphia, and the Delaware County area. The groups will be held in a safe location that is convenient and easily accessible. Specific location information will be given to registered participants only.

What kind of questions will be asked during the group?

We will ask questions about your experience as a crime victim, services you received as a result of being a victim, challenges or difficulties accessing services, and service you needed but were unable to receive. Participation in the focus group is voluntary, and you do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to or that make you feel uncomfortable.

During the group discussion, we will only use your first name. We will keep any information you share confidential and will not use your name or other identifying information in our reports. We will also ask other focus group participants not to share anything that was discussed during the group.

Will I receive anything for participating in a focus group?

Registered participants will receive \$20 cash as a token of our appreciation.

How do I register to participate?

Please contact the Center for Survey Research team using our toll free voicemail number 1-888-988-2572 or email us at focusgroups@psu.edu. You will be asked a few questions to confirm that you meet the eligibility requirements to participate in the focus group, your name, and a contact number or email where we can reach you when you register. Space is limited to 10 people in each focus group, so register now!

APPENDIX D – PRE-NOTIFICATION LETTER TO ORGANIZATIONS

[DATE]

[ADDRESS]

Dear [NAME]:

The Victims' Services Advisory Committee (VSAC), as part of our strategic plan, identified as a goal ensuring statewide access to core services for victims of criminal and juvenile offenders. An important step toward achievement of that goal is a statewide needs assessment, to determine the needs of victims and how to meet those needs.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) has contracted with the Center for Survey Research at Penn State - Harrisburg to conduct the Needs Assessment. They will gather detailed information about crime victims and victim services via community-wide surveys, focus groups, and targeted personal interviews with key victim service organization members and leaders.

The researchers have identified various victim services agencies, including yours, to assist with the Needs Assessment. Agencies were selected by the researchers to insure representation of the diversity of our field – by type of agency, type(s) of victims served, population density and geography.

Over the next several weeks, you will be contacted by the research team to request your participation in this project.

Their request of you may include:

1. In-depth interviews: this interview will identify current resources available to victims, populations served, underserved populations, issues your agency is facing that impact service delivery, successes in the organization, as well as unmet needs and service gaps.
2. Focus Groups: The research team will be conducting seven focus groups with crime victims throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The research team may contact you to request your assistance with identifying crime victims to participate in a focus group.

Attached is more detailed information regarding the Needs Assessment. I ask that you participate in this critically important work. For that, and for all you do for crime victims, I offer my sincere thanks.

Gratefully,

John Delaney
Chair
Victims' Services Advisory Committee

PCCD Victim Needs Assessment

The Victims' Services Advisory Committee (VSAC) is charged, by its enabling legislation, with, among other duties, advising the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) on the definition, development, and correlation of programs and projects and the establishment of priorities for direct victims' services and compensation. In October 2011, VSAC held a strategic planning session and identified new goals for the next three years. One of the goals identified as a priority is to ensure statewide access to core services for victims of criminal and juvenile offenders.

VSAC established the Access To Services (ATS) Subcommittee, charged to work on this goal. The ATS Subcommittee is made up of VSAC members and victim advocates from various agencies across the Commonwealth who provides direct services to victims. To support the goal of ensuring statewide access to core services, a statewide needs assessment is being conducted this year to determine how best to provide victims with access to core services, and more broadly, how best to meet their needs.

The primary goal of this one-year initiative is to develop a comprehensive understanding of unmet needs and service gaps through the perspectives of both service providers and victims. The study will provide a framework for use in future planning, enabling PCCD to respond appropriately to help strengthen victim services.

A research team at Penn State Harrisburg will be conducting the Needs Assessment and will be gathering detailed information about crime victims and victim services via community-wide surveys, focus groups, and targeted personal interviews with key victim service organization members and leaders.

The entity conducting the Needs Assessment is the Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg. They will be accomplishing the above through multiple means.

1. In-depth interviews will occur with 20 victim service programs to include—Sexual Assault and Rape Crisis only programs, Domestic Violence only programs, Dual Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis only programs, Comprehensive programs, and Procedural Services/System-based programs.
2. Web survey of victim service programs to identify existing services and programs, staffing and volunteer levels, number of victims served.
3. Focus Groups with victim populations of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Survivors of Homicide, Elderly (55+), LGBTQ, DUI, Persons with Disabilities.
4. Telephone survey in an effort to reach all victims, including those who may not have reported and/or sought assistance after being victimized. This will be done to ascertain their knowledge and utilization of victim services, barriers to services, service gaps and demographics.
5. Web survey of those who self-identify as victims to ascertain their knowledge and utilization of victim services, barriers to services, service gaps and demographics.
6. Literature review that will entail an in-depth search, review, and analysis on literature related to the unmet needs of crime victims, victim service provision, best practices, and underserved populations.

Over the next several months, your agency may be contacted by the Penn State researchers to assist and/or to actively participate in any of the above-listed activities. Please support this effort to strengthen victim services in PA.

APPENDIX E – CSR RECRUITING EMAIL TO ORGANIZATIONS

Dear [Name],

I am part of a research team at Penn State Harrisburg that is conducting a Needs Assessment on Pennsylvania's Victim Community. Sponsorship is provided by the Office of Victims' Services of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). You hopefully received a letter with information on the Needs Assessment last week from John Delaney, Chair of the Victims' Services Advisory Committee at PCCD.

The primary goal of this one-year initiative is to develop a comprehensive understanding of unmet needs and service gaps through the perspectives of both service providers and victims. The results of the project will increase the stature of victims' needs, help ensure statewide access to core services, and provide guidance on how funding can best be utilized to meet the needs of crime victims.

As part of the needs assessment, we are conducting focus groups with specific populations of crime victims across the Commonwealth. Our research team would like to hold a focus group in the **[county or area name]** with **[victim population]**. We would like your help publicizing the groups and sharing suggestions for a possible location to hold the group in your area.

If you are willing to help, we would ask you to (1) email our recruiting materials to [victim population] that have accessed services through your organization, and (2) circulate our recruiting flyer in your office or other locations where [victim population] will see it. We would also appreciate if you have any suggestions for a location to hold the focus group in your area that would be convenient and easily accessible. The focus group will be held in mid to late April. Interested focus group participants would contact us at Penn State for details – you would just notify [victim population] about the focus group and we'll take it from there. We will provide you with printed flyers and/or an electronic version to help you get the word out.

Who is eligible to participate in the focus group? [Victim population] who have accessed services through your organization. We are limited to 10 adult (18 years of age or older/55 years of age or older) participants in the focus group.

What are the benefits to the crime victims who participate in the focus group? This is an opportunity for their voices to be heard to increase the stature of victims' needs. In addition, registered focus group participants will receive \$20 cash as a token of our appreciation for participation.

I hope that you will be able to assist us in this important effort. I will follow up with you in the next few days via phone; however, if you have any questions or would like to discuss this in more detail, please feel free to contact me directly at [phone number] or [email address].

Thank you,
[CSR Staff Signature]

APPENDIX F – RECRUITING FLYER

**HELP US BETTER SERVE VICTIMS
OF CRIME AND EARN \$20**



Have you been the victim of [*insert target crime name here i.e. sexual assault, a DUI, etc.*]?

Are you 18 years of age or older [*for 55+ group change number to 55*]?

We would like to hear from you!

A team at Penn State Harrisburg is currently conducting a research study to better understand the needs of Pennsylvanians who have been victims of crime. We are looking for participants for a 2 hour focus group discussion. Participants will receive \$20 for their time.

[DATE]

[TIME]

[LOCATION]

If you would like more information on the research study, please visit our website at <http://csr.hbg.psu.edu>. You must register with Penn State in order to receive the \$20. Please respond quickly as space is limited to only 10 people per focus group.



To register, please contact:

Penn Sate focus group team toll free at 1-800-XXX-XXXX or via email at focusgroups@psu.edu.

APPENDIX G – SUMMARY OF CSR’S RECRUITING EFFORTS

The following individuals and organizations were contacted to assist with recruiting qualitative interview participants.

Sexual Assault Group:

1. Passages, Inc.
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Spoke with a program educator who indicated she and the counselors would contact potential participants directly
 - d. Sent recruiting flyer
 - e. Made follow-up phone calls to program educator and one of the counselors
2. Crossroads Project
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Sent recruiting flyer
 - c. Spoke with a project director who noted that she would circulate the flyer to all of her shelters and local offices to assist with recruiting
 - d. Spoke with a staff member at the Crossroads Dubois office; she and other staff members made phone calls to potential participants
3. HAVIN
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Left a voicemail message for the Executive Director to follow up on recruiting
4. Clearfield County Victim Services
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. The Director replied to the introductory email and noted that she would help to try to find participants
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Made follow-up phone call to the Director
5. Jefferson County Victim Services
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Spoke with the Director who noted that she would call a few potential participants
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Made follow-up phone call and spoke with office staff
6. Penn State DuBois Police Services
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Sent recruiting flyer so that it could be posted on campus
7. Penn State DuBois Health/Counseling Services
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Sent recruiting flyer
 - c. Spoke with a staff member who forwarded the flyer to her supervisor in Student Affairs so that he could circulate the flyer

Victims with Disabilities Group

1. Arc of Indiana County
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. The Executive Director forwarded the flyer to her network of contacts
 - e. The Executive Director indicated that there were concerns that clients would be re-victimized during discussions
 - f. Made several follow-up phone calls to the Executive Director
2. Alice Paul House
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer to Executive Director and one additional staff member
 - d. Spoke with the Executive Director who noted that she would speak with her staff regarding recruiting
 - e. The Executive Director sent an email just prior to the group declining participation
3. CARE Center of Indiana County
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Sent recruiting flyer
 - c. Left a phone message with a staff member
4. Indiana County Victim Services
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Sent recruiting flyer
 - c. Spoke with the Director who noted that she forwarded the flyer to other agencies that she works with that may have eligible victims

Driving Under the Influence Group

1. Dauphin County Crime Victim Assistance Program
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Spoke with staff who indicated they had recruited 10 participants for the group. Because they did not share contact information for participants, they made all reminder calls.
2. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) – Pennsylvania State Office
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email

Domestic Violence Group

1. Domestic Violence Service Center
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Made several follow-up phone calls to the Director
2. Women's Resource Center
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Made several follow-up phone calls to the Director

Senior (55+ years) Crime Victims Group

1. SeniorLaw Center
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Made several follow-up phone calls to the Director
2. CARIE
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Made follow-up phone call
3. NOVA
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Received email from staff member indicating they would circulate the flyer but were concerned their clients would not want to travel into Philadelphia for the group
4. Philadelphia City Victim Service Organization: Center City, East, North Central, Northeast Northwest, and South Divisions
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Sent recruiting flyer
 - c. Made follow-up phone calls to each organization

Homicide Survivors Group

1. Anti-violence Partnership
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Made several follow-up phone calls to the Director
2. Philadelphia City Victim Service Organization: Center City, East, North Central, Northeast Northwest, and South Divisions
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
 - d. Made follow-up phone call
 - e. Executive Director in the Northeast Division noted that they would post the flyer and mail it to 5 people they thought would be interested in participating.
 - f. The South Division offered to post flyers in the office.

Younger (18-24 years) Crime Victims Group

1. Dauphin County Victim Services
 - a. Sent PCCD pre-notification letter
 - b. Sent introductory email
 - c. Sent recruiting flyer
2. Lancaster County Victim Services
 - a. Left two voicemails regarding the project
3. Cumberland/Perry Domestic Violence Services
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Spoke with the Director who indicated that she may have one person who fits the criteria; would have that individual contact the project team if interested.
4. Catholic Charities (Lourdes House)
 - a. Left voicemail regarding the project
5. Dauphin County Probation Offices
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Spoke with staff who indicated they would circulate the recruiting flyer and follow-up directly with some of their clients who met the eligibility requirements
 - c. Made follow-up phone call
6. Common Roads LGBT Center (Harrisburg)
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Information was shared with several LGBT support groups for young people and posted on their Facebook page
7. YWCA
 - a. Left voicemails for various staff members regarding the project
8. Help Ministries
 - a. Left voicemail for Director regarding the project
9. Penn State Harrisburg Counseling Services
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Exchanged emails: staff member indicated that most students will soon be gone for the summer, but would refer anyone who came in for treatment to the project team.
10. Penn State Harrisburg Student/Housing Services
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Was re-directed to Counseling and/or Police Services
11. Penn State Harrisburg Police Services
 - a. Sent introductory email
 - b. Spoke with a police officer who indicated she would forward the information to members of the sexual assault task force
12. Penn State Research Team – Personal/Miscellaneous Connections
 - a. Posted flyer in apartments and businesses off-campus at Penn State Harrisburg
 - b. Sent recruiting flyer to other staff members in the building
 - c. Shared recruiting information on staff member's Facebook pages
 - d. Posted recruiting flyer on Facebook page for Community Psychology and Social Change Master's program

APPENDIX H – RECRUITING/SCREENING SCRIPT

This script was used to call back potential focus group participants that leave a message on the toll free number to indicate their interest in participating in one of the focus group sessions.

Hello my I speak with [Name]?

Hello, my name is [name] and I am calling from Penn State University to follow up on your interest to participate in a focus group session of crime victims in [Name of town] on [Date]. Is now a good time to speak?

If no:

I would be happy to call you back or I can give you my direct number and you can call me when it is a more convenient time to speak.

If yes:

Great! Before I can register you for the focus group session, I need to confirm a few pieces of information to make sure you are eligible to participate.

1. Are you 18 years of age or older? (for the focus group of crime victims age 55 or older, the question changed to are you 55 years of age or older).
2. Have you been the victim of a crime? (for the specific target groups we will insert the name of the crime – i.e. sexual assault, DUI, domestic violence, attempted homicide).

If the person does not meet the requirements:

I'm sorry but you do not meet the eligibility requirements to participate in our research study. Thank you for your time.

If the person does meet the requirements:

Great! Let's get you signed up for a session.

AD LIB:

- Gather contact information
- Provide information on date, time, location, directions, etc.

This focus group is being conducted for research purposes by Penn State. All of your information will be kept confidential and we will not use your name or any other identifying information in our reports. Your participation is voluntary. You can choose not to answer certain questions during the focus group. Furthermore, you may withdraw at any time without penalty. Registered participants who attend the focus group will receive \$20 as a token of appreciation for their time and effort. Do you have any other questions about the study or the focus group? You can also access more information on our website, csr.hbg.psu.edu.

Thank you for your time! Have a great day/evening. We will see you on [confirm date, time, location of focus group one more time]. Goodbye!

APPENDIX I – INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The Pennsylvania State University

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

Title of Project: PCCD Victim Needs Assessment

Principal Investigator: Dr. Chiara Sabina
Penn State Harrisburg
777 West Harrisburg Pike
Middletown, PA 17057
717-948-6066
Cus16@psu.edu

I. Purpose of this Research/Project

A research team at Penn State Harrisburg is conducting a Needs Assessment on Pennsylvania's Victim Community for the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). The purpose is to provide PCCD with a comprehensive understanding of victims' needs so that limited funds can be directed to the most significant and pressing statewide needs. The primary goal of this one-year initiative is to develop a comprehensive understanding of unmet needs and service gaps through the perspectives of both service providers and victims.

II. Procedures

You will be led by an experienced moderator in a guided discussion for about 1-2 hours. Penn State research team members will take notes during the discussion. Prior to the discussion, you will complete a demographic intake form. Notes will be used during analysis.

III. Benefits

Benefits of this study are to provide PCCD with information on unmet needs and service gaps from the perspective of people who have been the victim of a crime. PCCD can then have a better understanding of victims' needs so that limited funds can be directed to the most significant needs. Your participation will give you the opportunity to be part of this process and to have your voice heard.

IV. Extent of Confidentiality

All responses will be kept completely confidential. If you speak about the contents of the focus group outside the group, it is expected that you will not tell others what individual participants said. Although the moderator will interact with participants on a first-name basis, names will NOT be attached to comments. Non-personal data collected from these interviews will be maintained for 5 years. After 5 years, paper copies of the data will be shredded, electronic files will be removed from our server, and any data stored on CDs will be erased. The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections, the Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this research study. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

V. Freedom to Withdraw

Your participation is voluntary. You can choose not to answer certain questions. Furthermore, you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

VI. Right to Ask Questions

Please contact Dr. Chiara Sabina at 717-948-6066 with any questions, complaints, or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections (ORP) at 814-865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedure. All questions about research procedures can only be answered by the research team.

VII. Risk and Discomforts

Participants should be aware that the questions posed during the focus group discussion on victimization may cause discomfort or re-victimization when discussing the nature of the crime you experienced. Remember that your participation is voluntary and you can choose not to answer certain questions. A resource guide is available with the contact information of organizations (both national and local) that can provide counseling or other victim services. The research team can also put you in direct contact with your local victim service organization personnel.

VIII. Subject’s Responsibilities

A focus group is a group interview where we bring six to ten people together to talk about things that they have in common. You will comment on questions that are introduced by the group’s moderator. You must be 18 years of age or older.

IX. Payment for Participation

You will receive a \$20 cash incentive as a token of our appreciation for your time and effort.

Please initial one check box for the section below:

Publications/Presentations:

_____ I do give my permission for portions of this focus group to be directly quoted in publications/presentations. Your name will NOT be attached to your quotes.

_____ I do **NOT** give my permission for portions of this focus group to be directly quoted in publications/presentations.

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign your name and provide the date below. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

_____ Date: _____
Subject signature

Subject Name (Printed)

_____ Date: _____
Signature of person obtaining consent

Name of person obtaining consent (Printed)

Note: subjects were given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed informed consent form.

APPENDIX J– DEMOGRAPHIC INTAKE FORM

Please complete this brief focus group intake form. Responses are confidential and cannot be linked back to you because your personal information is NOT connected to the data. Completion of this Focus Group Intake Form implies your consent to use this demographic information during qualitative analysis. Thank you!

1. Are you...?

- Male
- Female

2. What is your age? _____ years

3. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino?

- Yes
- No

4. What is your race?

- White
- Black/African American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- American Indian/Native Alaskan
- Other, please specify _____

5. What category best describes your educational level?

- Less than high school
- High school diploma or GED
- Some college
- Two-year technical degree
- Four-year college graduate
- Graduate work

6. What is your marital status?

Single/never married

- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Married or living with a partner
- Other

7. Are you a veteran?

- Yes
- No

8. Do you think of yourself as:

- Straight or heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Something else
- Don't know

9. Do you have any children?

- Yes
- No

10. With respect to employment, are you:

- Currently working full-time
- Currently working part-time
- Currently not working, but looking for work
- Retired – Not working and not looking for work
- Disabled – Not working and not looking for work
- Not working and not looking for work

11. What is your total annual household income, before taxes?

- Under \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$19,999
- \$20,000 to \$39,999
- \$40,000 to \$59,999
- \$60,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$124,999
- \$125,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

12. A disability is a physical or mental condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Using this definition, do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes
- No

13. What is your zip code? _____

14. What type of crime did you experience?
(Select all that apply)

- Domestic/Dating violence
- Sexual assault
- Child abuse
- Driving under the influence (DUI), for example, an injury as a result of someone driving under the influence
- Assault
- Robbery
- Homicide
- Elder abuse
- Identity theft/fraud
- Stalking
- Other, please specify: _____

15. How long ago did this crime occur (if you have experienced multiple crimes, please respond for the most recent crime you experienced)?

- Currently occurring
- Less than 1 year ago
- 1-3 years ago
- 4-6 years ago
- 7-10 years ago
- 11-15 years ago
- More than 15 years ago
- Don't know
- Declined to answer

16. Did you report this crime to the police?

- Yes
- No

17. Were you born in the United States?

- Yes
- No

18. If no, where were you born? _____

APPENDIX K – RESOURCES FOR CRIME VICTIMS

Pennsylvania Crime Victims website: <http://www.pacrimevictims.org>

This website provides information about rights as a crime victim, notifications about offenders, available services, and victim service programs by county. An “escape” button is located on this website in the event that someone would need to exit the site quickly. It is located in the same spot on each page.

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV): 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV) is dedicated to ending domestic violence and helping battered women and their children re-establish physical, social, and economic dignity. This toll free number is a 24 hour national hotline.

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR): 1-888-772-7227

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) works to eliminate all forms of sexual violence. This toll-free number assists with information, referrals or local resources for victims of sexual violence.

Pennsylvania Victims Compensation Assistance Program: 1-800-233-2339

The Victims Compensation Assistance Program helps victims and their families by offering financial assistance. This number assists in filing a claim and has staff available to answer questions about compensation.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233), 1-800-787-3224 (TTY), or <http://www.thehotline.org>

Help is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The website provides information about abuse as well as resources available to victims. A “quick escape” button is located on this website in the event that someone would need to exit the site quickly. It is located in the same spot on each page.

Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men and Women: 1-888-7HELPLINE (743-5754) or <http://dahmw.org/>

The 24-hour hotline is operated by staff and trained volunteers to offer information and crisis intervention to victims of domestic violence. Domestic Abuse Helpline Services provides information on intimate partner violence, referrals to community resources, and a resource directory of “male victim friendly” resources.

[Location-specific Resources]

APPENDIX L – DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

	Mean	Range
Age (years)	44	21-65
	Number ⁴	Percent
Gender		
Male	1	4.5%
Female	20	90.9%
Transgender: Male to Female	1	4.5%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	1	5.0%
Non-Hispanic	19	95.0%
Race		
White alone	12	54.5%
Black - African American alone	8	36.4%
American Indian or Native Alaskan alone	1	4.5%
Some other race alone	1	4.5%
Education		
Less than high school	3	13.6%
High school diploma or GED	4	18.2%
Some college	7	31.8%
Two-year technical degree	2	9.1%
Four-year college graduate	3	13.6%
Graduate work	3	13.6%
Marital Status		
Single/never married	10	45.5%
Divorced	5	22.7%
Widowed	3	13.6%
Married or living with a partner	4	18.2%
Sexual Orientation		
Straight or heterosexual	19	95.0%
Lesbian, Bisexual, Something else, Don't know	1	5.0%
Respondent Has Children		
Children	16	72.7%
No children	6	27.3%

⁴ Questions on the intake were voluntary; therefore, the categories may not total to 22 (total number of participants).
Center for Survey Research
Penn State Harrisburg

	Number ⁵	Percent
Immigration Status		
Born in the United States	22	100.0%
Veteran Status		
Veteran	2	9.1%
Non-veteran	20	90.9%
Employment Status		
Currently working full-time	6	27.3%
Currently working part-time	4	18.2%
Currently working full-time and part-time	1	4.5%
Currently not working, but looking for work	4	18.2%
Retired – not working and not looking for work	1	4.5%
Disabled – not working and not looking for work	5	22.7%
Not working and not looking for work	1	4.5%
Disability Status		
Disabled	12	57.1%
Not disabled	9	42.9%
Household Income		
Under \$10,000	6	35.3%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	3	17.6%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	3	17.6%
\$40,000 to \$59,999	3	17.6%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	1	5.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1	5.9%

⁵ Questions on the intake were voluntary; therefore, the categories may not total to 22 (total number of participants).
Center for Survey Research
Penn State Harrisburg

APPENDIX M – LIST OF FORMAL RESOURCES USED BY PARTICIPANTS

- Anti-Violence Partnership
- Attorney General’s Office
- Belmont Behavioral Health
- Better Business Bureau
- CARIE
- Catherine McAuley House
- Catholic Social Services
- Children & Youth Services
- Commission on Economic Opportunities
- Community Counseling/Northeast Counseling
- Crossroads
- Crime Victims Center of Chester County
- Crisis Intervention – YWCA
- Dauphin County Victim Services
- District Attorney’s Office
- Domestic Violence Service Center
- Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program
- Lancaster Victims Witness Program
- Law Enforcement
- MADD
- Passages
- PA Department of Public Welfare (DPW)
- PA Office of Developmental Programs (ODP)
- Philadelphia Victim Service Organization
- RAINN
- Ruth’s Place
- St. Stephen’s Church
- Support Coordinator
- Victim’s Resource Center
- Women’s Coalition