

INFORMATION GATHERING

INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The information gathering phase of this Needs Assessment was designed to collect rich, qualitative data for use in designing and implementing a comprehensive statewide assessment instrument and strategy. It began with a series of informant interviews with VSP leaders within each region. The objective of this interview activity was to talk with key informants throughout PA's victim service community in order to understand regional variations in victim needs, existing services, providers, and supporting organizations. These interviews helped to validate and challenge existing data; to provide input on the development of questions that would serve as the basis for a more in-depth discussion in a series of regional meetings with key stakeholders and victims of crime; and to identify potential representatives for these regional meetings.

A variety of organizations were invited to participate in these informant interviews based on their experience, mission, geographic location, and community & collaborative partnerships. In total, 22 organizations were asked to participate. Representatives from the following 14 organizations participated in these interviews representing 29 counties and all eight regions across the state.

- Your Safe Haven
- Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA)
- Victim Resource Center of Northeast PA
- Center County Women's Resource Center
- Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center (PIRC)
- SafeNet Erie
- The CARE Center, Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services (SPHS)
- Alice Paul House
- Valley Youth House
- Aware
- The Lincoln Center
- A Way Out
- Citizens Against Physical, Sexual, and Emotional Abuse, Inc. (CAPSEA)
- The Abuse Network

The interviews were coordinated in advance and were scheduled to take place during December 2016 and January 2017. Each informant interview was conducted via telephone call lasting approximately 20-25 minutes. Each recipient was provided a set of pre-scripted questions (See **Appendix II-1**) to help them prepare in advance of the call. Questions ranged from information about their organization, to indicating marginalized/underserved populations and their needs, to whom and how we should reach out within these communities in the survey phase. In addition, several open-ended questions provided opportunities for each informant to contribute additional information regarding needs and available resources within their service communities. Responses were captured in a matrix connecting responses with the respective representative and location. A summary of these responses is provided in **Appendix II-2**.

A summary of the predominant themes that resulted from these interviews is provided in Table II-1 below. Some of the observations were not prominent but were certainly notable for their visionary/innovative perspective. These included the need to be able to work across borders (state & county), the idea of building a centralized capacity for bringing services together to bridge gaps and provide one-stop service provision, and a suggestion to build prevention programs for the classroom to stop the cycle of victimization.

Table II-1: Predominant Themes from the Informant Interviews

PREDOMINANT THEMES FROM THE INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Topic	Predominant Themes
Top victim populations	Elderly, individuals with mental illness, victims with substance abuse, victims of domestic/intimate partner violence, sexual assault victims, victims of homicide, victims of human trafficking, immigrants, victims of child abuse and child sexual assault, homeless
Top underserved populations	Homeless/transient, people with disabilities, people with mental illness or substance abuse disorders, people with limited English proficiency, LGBTQ, incarcerated, immigrants/migrant workers, Muslim, Hispanic, incarcerated, rural communities
Top services needed	Shelter/family housing, civil legal services, financial assistance, legal immigration services, comprehensive services, transportation, childcare, advocacy, safety planning, counseling/mental health, medical
Collaboration partners	Law enforcement, district attorney, mental health agencies, drug and alcohol assistance organizations, children and youth, disability providers, human services, school districts, corrections/jail system, colleges and universities, sister agencies, communities of faith, Aging, business community
Agency needs	Strategic planning, training, education & awareness, fewer administrative requirements, stable funding.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

Upon completion of the informant interviews with key stakeholders and a review of the information that came from them, a series of regional meetings was coordinated and conducted to gather additional, in-depth qualitative data. Two meetings were scheduled in eight separate regions (Region 5 had two locations) throughout the state, one for stakeholders and one for victims of crime. Victims were represented in a group of their own so they were more comfortable sharing their experiences.

The regional meetings were designed to assess existing programs, distinguish system concerns from the assessment of victim services, explore unserved and underserved victim issues, and identify effective outreach methods within representative communities. The qualitative data gathered through these regional meetings provided a more detailed understanding of victims' needs and enabled the study team to conduct a preliminary assessment of existing services, service gaps, and barriers to access. In addition, the regional meeting results served as a guide in the development of the final survey instrument to determine the severity and extent of these issues. Representatives for the regional meetings were enlisted from VSPs, DAs, local agencies/organizations/individuals (community leaders, clergy, hospitals, etc.), victims, and others.

In preparation for the qualitative data collection, the study team identified eight (8) regions across the state as noted in the map in Figure II-1. These regions were established to allow for regional differences but were not intended to be all-inclusive at this point in the effort. To ensure that the meetings were manageable, attendance was limited to 8-12 participants in each region. Table II-2 shows a timeline and location for the conduct of these regional meetings.



Figure II-1: Regional Meeting Locations

Table II-2: Regional Meeting Timeline

Date	Region	Location
7/25/17	8	Human Services Center, Greensburg, PA
8/9/17	4	Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA
8/10/17	6	Department of Corrections, Mechanicsburg, PA
8/15/17	3	Wilkes University, Wilkes Barre, PA
9/6 - 7/17	2	911 Building, Smethport, PA
9/25/17	7	Bedford County Courthouse, Bedford, PA
9/28/17	5	Duane Morris Law Firm, Philadelphia, PA
9/29/17	5	NOVA Offices, Jamison, PA
11/17/17	1	International Institute of Erie, Erie, PA

Through a comprehensive statewide outreach effort that included the informant interviews, the study team identified a variety of organizations that serve victims of crime, organizations that serve populations vulnerable to crime, and actual victims of crime to assist with this Needs Assessment. These agencies and individuals were identified to provide a cross-representation of participants that effectively represented the diversity of the victim services field – by type of agency, type(s) of victims served, population density and geography. Participants were identified based on their involvement as a community leader in roles that may intersect with unserved or underserved victims of crime.

Once identified, each stakeholder was personally invited via letter from the Chairman of the Victims Services Advisory Committee. The letter explained the purpose of the needs assessment and prepared them for a more detailed letter they would be receiving regarding the regional meetings. Within two weeks, a follow-up letter was sent from the project’s Principal Investigator explaining the purpose and location of the meeting, encouraging their participation and RSVP, and informing them to about a separate meeting for victims of crime. It included a flier with details about this separate meeting and asked them to share this information with victims of crime whom they knew and encourage them to participate. Samples of these letters, along with the Victim flier, are provided in **Appendix II-3**.

Table II-3 shows the number of stakeholders who were invited to the regional meetings and those who participated by region. It also shows the number of victims who participated by region but does not include a number for “invited” since victims were recruited through fliers and word-of-mouth, not an actual invitation list. Figure II-2 shows a sampling of the agencies and services that were represented in the conduct of these meetings. A full listing of attendees by region is provided in **Appendix II-4**.

Table II-3: Invited Versus Attended

Region	Stakeholders		Victims
	Invited	Participated	Participated
1	30	14	4
2	30	8	4
3	15	2	6
4	24	7	1
5	70	11	0
6	19	3	0
7	31	5	0
8	31	6	1
TOTAL	244	56	16

Stackpole-Hall Foundation	NEPA Task Force Against Human Trafficking	County Human Services Departments	Berks County Mental Health/DD Program	Victim Service Center	Your Safe Haven
Office of Human Services	Helpline/211	Caring Communities	Berks Area Agency on Aging	Vita – Education	Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education
Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services, Inc.	Wilkes-Barre Crime Watch (WBCW) Coalition	Northeast PA (NEPA) Rainbow Alliance	SafeBerks	Crime Victim's Council	Retired County Commissioner
Juvenile Probation Department	Area Agencies on Aging	Magisterial District Court	Bucks County Mental Health/Developmental Programs	Philadelphia Corporation for Aging	Penn Foundation Community Mental Health
Domestic Violence Services	Anthracite Region Center for Independent Living (ARCIL)	Hazleton One Community Center/Hazleton Integration Project	Victim/Witness Services	Department of Behavioral Health & Intellectual Disabilities (DBHIDS)	Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh
YWCA	NAACP	Turning Point of Lehigh Valley	Family Services of Bucks County	Carlisle Cares	Ceasefire PA (statewide)
CASA	Volunteers of America	Children's Alliance Center	Montgomery Child Advocacy Project	Children & Youth Services Agencies	Charles Foundation
Children's Advocacy Centers	Northwest Area School District	Centro Hispano Daniel Torres, Inc.	NOVA	Adelphoi	Housing Authorities

Figure II-2: Sample of Agencies and Services Represented at the Regional Meetings

Each meeting followed a 2-hour facilitated and structured process designed to gather input on developing and distributing a comprehensive needs assessment survey instrument. Input from these meetings was essential in guiding the development of our comprehensive survey instrument which was to be distributed to a much larger statewide audience. Scripts and a short PowerPoint presentation were developed and utilized for each meeting, stakeholders and victims, to ensure consistency in the questions asked from one region to the next. These scripts followed a topic map in Figure II-3, which was developed to guide the conduct of these meetings and ensure that all topics were sufficiently addressed to meet the team’s objectives. Copies of these Regional Meeting materials are included in **Appendix II-5**. In addition, responses and feedback were captured on-screen during the discussion to serve as a visual aid and allow participants to review and correct what was being captured. This feedback was later captured in a matrix to assist in the analysis and use in building the survey instrument.

Upon conclusion of the regional meetings, the study team began a process of evaluating and organizing the qualitative data gathered through these meetings. The team’s efforts focused on coding and analyzing this data to identify themes, sift through the primary issues, clarify research methods and strategies, and refine the list of resource needs. The results of this step provided the framework for the survey development and implementation steps in Part III.

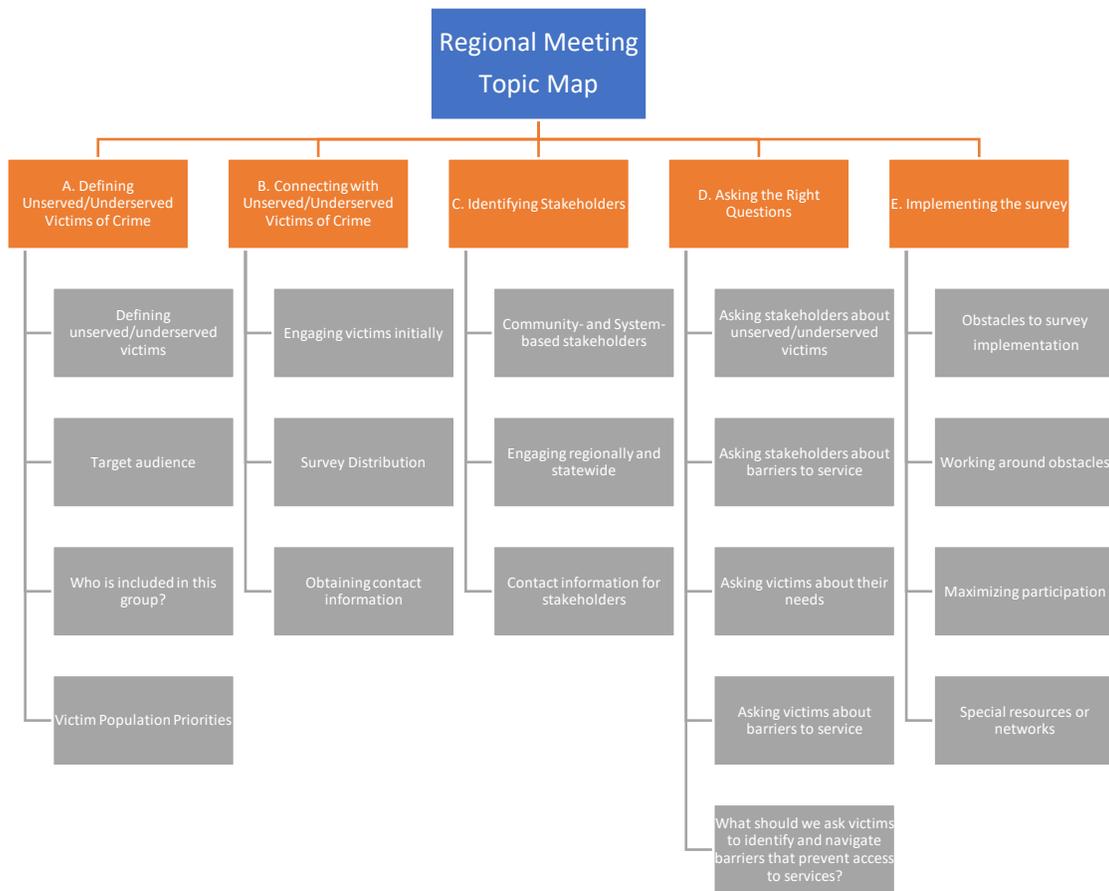


Figure II-3: Regional Meeting Topic Map

The regional meetings, in large part, validated much of what we heard in the informant interviews. Through the discussion process within the small groups, however, participants built on each other’s ideas. This brought out additional information relative to underserved populations and needs. For example, victims whose cases are withdrawn or “pled-down” may not receive the full spectrum of services; elderly are afraid of reporting victimization for fear of losing independence; marginalized populations such as children, elderly, and physically/intellectually are often excluded because of their caretakers who restrict information. In addition to questions about unserved/underserved populations and needs, participants were asked for input on how to get word out about the needs assessment and how to best distribute the survey. The feedback was very helpful in shedding light on the most effective ways to reach victims of crime. Participants emphasized the need for trust, suggesting community and social gathering areas such as laundromats, barbers, and taverns over government organizations. They also emphasized the need for anonymity and keeping the survey simple to increase the rate of response. Smartphone and digital formatting were the overwhelming formats for distribution, however alternative language options, in paper or digital format, was emphasized as critical for including many victim populations. Another popular theme was to avoid survey terminology, which would likely turn away potential respondents. These predominant themes identified in this process are summarized in Table II-4 below.

Table II-4: Predominant Themes from the Regional Meetings

PREDOMINANT THEMES FROM THE REGIONAL MEETINGS

Topic	Predominant Themes
Unserved/underserved populations	Mental health issues, choose not to report/accept that they are a victim, don't see themselves as a victim, unaware of services, geographically challenged, intellectually challenged, isolated due to culture, fear retaliation, in the criminal justice system as offenders, substance abuse/addiction, college/university populations, foreign born/culturally challenged, unreported crimes, religious sectors (Amish/Mennonite), elderly and very young, fear consequences of reporting, dependent on a caregiver, poor/low income, etc.
Greatest need	Shelter/housing, counseling, medical services, early intervention, transportation, access to services in rural areas (no cell phone service), multi-lingual counselors & staff, job training, funeral services, awareness/understanding of services available
Community organizations to help get word out	Faith community newsletters, food pantries, public libraries, Career Links, laundromats, barbershops, literacy organizations, cultural community centers, bars/taverns, beer/liquor stores, vape stores, hospitals & doctors' offices, county government, community fairs, service agencies (Salvation Army, Red Cross), police, homeless shelters, coroner & funeral homes, daycare centers, school guidance counselors,
Other Ways to get the word out	Social media, TV/public service announcements, radio stations, umbrella agencies/associations, legislative offices, college Title IX Coordinators
Ways to distribute survey	Electronic format, survey link through trusted network, smartphone, email, fliers with QR code, word of mouth, snowball sampling, paper surveys at service organizations & kiosks, social media, avoid survey terminology