LAW ENFORCEMENT & VICTIM SERVICE PROVIDER COLLABORATION TOOLKIT

Indiana Coalition to
End Sexual Assault
Engage. Educate. Empower.

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Indiana Coalition to End Sexual Assault

In consultation with
Dottie Davis and Darlene Bradley

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PREFACE

The goal of this Law Enforcement and Victim Service Provider Collaboration Toolkit is to help create a cooperative environment where law enforcement and victim service providers work hand-in-hand to ensure the holistic well-being of victims and survivors while also supporting the goals of the criminal legal process.

This toolkit has the following objectives:

1. **Enhancing Victim Support:** Ensure that victims of crime receive comprehensive services, including emotional, legal, medical, and financial support, by bridging the gap between law enforcement and victim service agencies.
2. **Education:** Increase law enforcement and VSP knowledge about each other to help dispel myths and misunderstandings.
3. **Improving Communication:** Facilitate better communication and coordination between law enforcement officers and VSPs to ensure that both groups are aware of the victim's needs and rights throughout the criminal legal process.
4. **Building Trust:** Strengthen trust between law enforcement and victims by showing that law enforcement cares about the victim's well-being, and by reducing victims' fear or reluctance to engage with police due to trauma or mistrust.
5. **Increasing Accountability:** Ensure that both law enforcement and VSPs are held accountable for providing the highest level of care and services to victims in a timely and respectful manner.
6. **Supporting Trauma-Informed Responses:** Understand trauma and vicarious trauma in order to promote the use of trauma-informed approaches in all interactions.
7. **Enhancing Case Outcomes:** Improve the quality of investigations and prosecutions by providing victims with the support they need to fully participate in the justice process, which can lead to more successful case resolutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to express our deepest gratitude for the invaluable assistance and support all victim service providers, law enforcement, and other agencies provided in the development of the Law Enforcement and Victim Service Provider Collaboration Toolkit. This project is incredibly important for improving the care and services offered to victims of crime, and your contributions were essential in ensuring that it will be as effective and impactful as possible.

From the outset, we knew that creating a toolkit that bridges the gap between law enforcement and victim services would require the insights and expertise of many individuals with diverse backgrounds and experience. Your involvement was instrumental in helping us identify and address the critical needs of both law enforcement officers and the victims they serve. By drawing from your knowledge, experience, and commitment to improving outcomes for victims, you have made a significant difference in the quality and practicality of the final product.

Thank you to our sponsors:

INDIANA CRIMINAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE

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LETTER FROM PRESIDENT & CEO

Dear Readers,

It is with great pride that The Indiana Coalition to End Sexual Assault (ICESA) presents our Law Enforcement and Victim Service Provider Collaboration Toolkit. This resource is designed to support and strengthen the vital partnership between law enforcement agencies and victim service providers, ensuring that the needs of crime victims are met with compassion, efficiency, and professionalism.

The collaboration between law enforcement and victim services is crucial in providing holistic care for victims. Each partner brings unique skills and expertise, and when these resources are combined, the result is a more effective response that prioritizes both justice and healing. This toolkit offers practical strategies, tools, and insights to enhance communication, improve coordination, and foster trust between agencies, ultimately leading to better outcomes for victims.

We hope this toolkit empowers your organization to build stronger partnerships and improve services for victims of crime. Together, we can create a safer, more supportive environment for those who need it most.

Thank you for your dedication to this important work.

Elizabeth L. White

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Dottie Davis

Dottie Davis is a nationally recognized speaker who previously served 32 years with the Fort Wayne Police Department where she attained the rank of Deputy Chief and was last assigned as the Director of Training at their police academy. She implemented and wrote policy for the agency for the Crisis Intervention Team and for the Lethality Assessment Program and served as a hostage negotiator for 7 years. During her career, she received two Meritorious Service Citations, named law enforcement officer of the year by the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and a Lifetime Achievement Award recipient from the Rocky Mountain Women in Law Enforcement. She is a contracted trainer for the International Association of Chiefs of Police, CIT International, Fair and Impartial Policing, the Law Enforcement Training and Technical Assistance Consortium, and the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Davis is a graduate of the National FBI Academy, Gavin de Becker & Associates Advanced Threat Assessment Academy, and Purdue University, and is the owner of Davis Corporate Training, Inc., a private consulting firm focusing on violence prevention, and provides expert witness testimony in both civil and criminal cases.

Darlene Bradley

Darlene Bradley is a former Special Agent that was assigned to the Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations, Indianapolis, IN office. While employed for the government, she conducted criminal and administrative investigations involving both Customs and Immigration violations. The investigations range from protection of the nation's commerce, smuggling, money laundering, export enforcement, international terrorism to immigration issues.

Bradley was also one of the implementation members of IPATH of (Indiana Protection Against Trafficked and Abused Humans); which is the combination of federal, state, local law enforcement and service providers to assist with all aspects of human trafficking. While employed with DHS/HSI, Ms. Bradley successfully investigated and assisted with several federal and state prosecutions of known high-profile sex traffickers within the state of Indiana. Also, as part of Ms. Bradley's duties and responsibilities, she assisted with the victim's services of domestic and foreign national individuals.

INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement and victim service providers (VSPs) are critical in ensuring justice and support for individuals who have experienced victimization, especially in sensitive cases such as sexual assault, human trafficking, domestic violence, and child abuse. However, the relationship between law enforcement agencies (LEAs) and VSPs is often complicated by varying goals, responsibilities, and methods of operation. A coordinated, collaborative approach is essential to address the needs of victims while ensuring the integrity of the investigative process. This toolkit is designed to foster such collaboration, equipping law enforcement and VSPs with strategies, resources, and best practices to enhance their response to victims of crime. While it includes information about sexual assault service providers and their service partners, much of the toolkit applies to any VSP working regularly with law enforcement.

This toolkit is not comprehensive, and we invite readers to let us know what they like, what we got wrong, and what we should include in the next revision by emailing **info@endsexualassault.org**.

Victim or Survivor?

We use the terms victim and survivor interchangeably in this toolkit. The term "victim" is often used in the criminal legal system to describe someone who has been a victim of a crime, and it's also used by law enforcement. However, the term "survivor" is also appropriate and can be empowering for some people. Best practice includes asking the individual how they prefer to be referred to.

Here are some reasons why the term "survivor" may be preferred over "victim":

- **Empowerment.** The term "survivor" can help people feel strong and capable of overcoming what happened to them.
- **Avoids stigma.** The term "victim" can be stigmatizing and reinforces feelings like shame or guilt.
- **Avoids negative societal discourses.** The term "victim" is associated with negative societal discourses, such as portraying victims as passive, weak, or traumatized.

Some people may identify as only a victim or only a survivor. Many identify as both a victim and a survivor to describe their healing journey and others don't identify as either because the experience was not traumatic for them. All of these identities are valid, since we all deal with traumatic experiences differently.

Law Enforcement Engagement is an Adult Victim's Choice.

Victim/Law enforcement interactions are outside of the scope of this toolkit. However, in the spirit of increased collaboration between officers and victim advocates, we feel it is important to remind all involved that it is always the sexual assault survivor's choice to engage with law enforcement. No adult survivor is required to engage at all, unless there are mitigating circumstances (e.g., endangered adult, potentially other crimes committed by the victim before or during the assault). Also, sexual violence victims and survivors under the age of 18 may be required to cooperate with law enforcement as well as other government agencies, due to mandated reporting laws. However, there is a difference between working with an adult victim/witness and working with a suspect. Law enforcement has discretion when working with sexual assault victims. Also, law enforcement should be mindful that a survivor can be coerced to commit crimes especially when the victim is dependent on the perpetrator in some way. Trying to survive doesn't make a person's victimization any less valid or true.

Adult survivors are not required to engage with law enforcement to:

- Receive a forensic examination (rape kit) or directly associated medical treatment.

Review all Rights of Sexual Assault Victims via the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute.

- Get services from a Rape Crisis Center, sexual assault service provider, or human trafficking service provider
- File a protective order
- File civil lawsuits
- Be believed

There are many legitimate reasons why a survivor may not engage with law enforcement or the criminal legal system, many of which stem from fear, trauma, and concerns about how they will be treated throughout the criminal legal process. These reasons vary depending on the individual's personal experience, cultural background, and societal factors, but some common concerns include:

1. **Fear of Not Being Believed**
   Many sexual assault victims fear they will not be believed by law enforcement or that their claims will be dismissed as false or exaggerated. This concern is compounded by societal myths and misconceptions about sexual assault, such as the belief that false reports are common. Research indicates that false reporting is rare, but the perception of disbelief can discourage victims from seeking help.
2. **Fear of Retaliation**
   Victims often fear retaliation from the perpetrator, especially if the perpetrator is someone they know or someone in a position of authority. This fear can be heightened if the victim feels that law enforcement will not adequately protect them. Retaliation could involve physical harm, threats to their reputation, or intimidation of family members.
3. **Fear of Being Judged or Blamed**
   Victims may fear that law enforcement or others will judge or blame them for the assault. This can be particularly concerning if the victim was drinking, using drugs, or in a situation that society may label as "risky" (e.g., meeting the perpetrator at a party or engaging in consensual sexual activity before the assault). Victims may internalize these judgments and hesitate to report the crime for fear of being blamed for their own victimization.
4. **Concerns About Privacy and Public Exposure**
   Talking to law enforcement means disclosing highly personal and traumatic details of the assault, which can feel invasive. Victims may worry about their privacy, fearing that their identity could become public or that sensitive information will be shared with others, including family members, friends, or the media. The prospect of reliving the trauma through interviews, court appearances, and public scrutiny is a major deterrent.

5. Distrust of the Criminal Legal System

Many victims, particularly those from marginalized communities (e.g., communities of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, undocumented immigrants), may have a deep-seated distrust of law enforcement based on past experiences or systemic bias. They may fear discrimination or mistreatment or feel that the criminal legal system does not serve or protect people like them. For instance, research has shown that women of color are often less likely to report sexual assault due to fears of being dismissed or not taken seriously.

6. Fear of Re-traumatization

The process of reporting a sexual assault can be emotionally and psychologically taxing. Victims may need to recount their experience multiple times, which can trigger feelings of shame, anxiety, and helplessness. Law enforcement practices that are not trauma-informed can exacerbate these feelings, leading to secondary victimization, where victims feel they are being harmed again by the very system meant to help them.

7. Lack of Understanding of the Legal Process

Many victims are unfamiliar with the criminal legal system and may not fully understand what to expect after reporting a sexual assault. The fear of the unknown, combined with concerns about how long the process will take and whether the perpetrator will be held accountable, can deter victims from coming forward.

8. Desire to Move On

Some victims may choose not to report because they want to avoid reliving the trauma of the assault and focus on healing and recovery. Engaging with law enforcement can feel like a prolonged and painful process that may delay their ability to move forward. For some, the emotional toll of seeking justice outweighs the perceived benefits.

9. Pressure from Others

Victims may feel pressured by family members, friends, or community members not to report the assault. This can happen in cases where the perpetrator holds a respected position or is part of the same family or social circle, making the victim fear social ostracization or conflict. In some cases, cultural or religious beliefs may discourage victims from going to law enforcement, instead favoring private resolutions.

10. Immigration Status or Legal Concerns

For undocumented immigrants or individuals with precarious legal statuses, fear of deportation or legal consequences may prevent them from reporting the crime. Even if local law enforcement has policies that protect victims regardless of their immigration status, victims may not be aware of these protections or may fear that encountering authorities could result in their deportation.

For more resources about helping undocumented victims visit this U.S. Homeland Security site. https://www.uscis.gov/tools/information-for-certifying-officials-law-enforcement-judges-and-other-agencies

11. Perception that Reporting Will Not Lead to Justice

Many victims feel that even if they do report the assault, it will not result in a conviction or meaningful consequences for the perpetrator. Given the low rates of prosecution and conviction in sexual assault cases, victims may believe that the effort and emotional toll of reporting will be in vain, reinforcing feelings of powerlessness.

Victims of crime often face psychological, emotional, and financial distress, which can be further exacerbated by interactions with the criminal legal system. Law enforcement officers are often the first point of contact for victims, and how these officers interact with victims can have long-term effects on their willingness to engage with the system. Studies have shown that victims who feel respected, believed, and supported by law enforcement are more likely to engage in investigations and pursue legal remedies. Conversely, victims who experience secondary victimization—such as being blamed or dismissed—may disengage from the process entirely.

This toolkit emphasizes a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach in both law enforcement practices and service provision. A victim-centered approach prioritizes the rights and needs of the victim, ensuring that their voice is heard and respected throughout the criminal legal process. Meanwhile, a trauma-informed approach recognizes the impact of trauma on victims and adjusts procedures to avoid re-traumatization. These practices are widely recognized as essential in improving outcomes for both victims and criminal legal proceedings.

The toolkit also addresses the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration. While law enforcement is tasked with investigating crimes and apprehending offenders, VSPs provide critical services such as counseling, legal advocacy, shelter, and medical care to help victims recover and navigate the aftermath of crime. With this in mind, unless there's a crime being committed or a safety concern, law enforcement and VSPs are on equal footing when engaging with one another. No one actor is more important when it comes to ensuring victims receive services and justice. These coordinated efforts between law enforcement and VSPs ensure that victims are not only safe but also supported holistically. Research has shown that when LEAs work closely with victim advocates, the outcomes for both victims and investigations improve, with increased reporting rates, better victim cooperation, and higher conviction rates.

Furthermore, this toolkit outlines specific practices and procedures that can enhance the coordination between law enforcement and VSPs. Effective collaboration reduces duplication of services and ensures that victims do not have to repeatedly recount their traumatic experiences to different entities, which can re-trigger trauma.

By providing law enforcement and VSPs with a shared framework, this toolkit aims to improve outcomes for crime victims while promoting a more effective, empathetic, and coordinated response to crime. It underscores the importance of mutual respect, ongoing communication, and a deep understanding of trauma's impact on victims. In doing so, this toolkit contributes to building trust between victims and the criminal legal system, ultimately leading to better justice outcomes and victim recovery.

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SECTION 1

GENERAL EDUCATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

These objectives aim to educate and dispel myths and misunderstandings about law enforcement agencies (LEAs), victim service providers (VSPs), and the other systems they interact with.

By the end of this section, readers will be able to:

1. Understand the organizational structures of Indiana's LEAs and their respective roles in responding to sexual violence.
2. Identify the key responsibilities and functions of VSPs, including rape crisis centers and human trafficking support organizations.
3. Navigate confidentiality laws and privilege protections that affect collaboration and information sharing between agencies.
4. Discuss shared struggles and barriers to service between law enforcement and service providers and how they impact their work
5. Recognize the key mutual benefits to partnership and collaboration.

Indiana Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs)

Indiana's 600+ LEAs are organized at the state, county, and municipal levels. Here's a summary of the key types of agencies:

1. State Police and State Agencies and Structure

Indiana State Police (ISP)

The primary statewide LEA which includes activities such as (and in no particular order):

- Enforces traffic laws on highways.
- Conduct criminal investigations.
- Manages special units like SWAT, cybercrime, and narcotics task forces.
- Investigate vehicle crashes.
- Make death notifications.
- Direct and control traffic at disaster scenes, crash sites and special events.
- Render first-aid to people until advanced Emergency Medical Services arrive.
- Aids local law enforcement in law enforcement and investigations.

State Police Rank Structure

1. Superintendent (appointed by the Governor)
2. Colonel
3. Lieutenant Colonel
4. Major
5. Captain
6. Lieutenant
7. First Sergeant
8. Sergeant
9. Corporal
10. Senior Trooper
11. Master Trooper
12. Trooper

2. County Sheriff Departments

Each of Indiana's 92 counties has an elected sheriff who is the chief law enforcement officer of the county. Sheriffs' departments are responsible for enforcing laws in unincorporated areas (county areas), operating county jails, serving legal processes, and providing court security.

Simplified Sheriff Department Rank Structure

1. Sheriff (Elected)
2. Chief Deputy
3. Captain
4. Lieutenant
5. Sergeant
6. Corporal
7. Deputy

3. Municipal Police Departments

Indiana's cities and towns have their own police departments responsible for enforcing local ordinances, patrolling, and investigating crimes. Larger cities, such as Indianapolis (Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department, IMPD) and Fort Wayne, have larger departments with specialized units.

Marion County and the City of Indianapolis are slightly different because they have consolidated government services. The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) is the primary LEA that enforces the day-to-day laws. The Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) manages the county jail facilities, provides security to courts and City/County buildings, serves warrants, and more.

Simplified Police Department Rank Structure

1. Chief (appointed by the Mayor or Town Council)
2. Assistant Chief
3. Deputy Chief/s
4. Captain
5. Lieutenant
6. Sergeant
7. Officer

4. University Police Departments

20+ colleges and universities in Indiana, such as Indiana University and Purdue University, maintain their own accredited police departments. These agencies have commissioned law enforcement, as well as civilian security personnel that provide security and enforce laws/rules on and near campuses.

Detectives

Indiana LEAs may have detectives or detective units. The rank of detective is equivalent to an officer, deputy, or trooper, unless they can also be promoted within the detective tract. A detective is normally a lateral move within agencies in Indiana and not necessarily a promotion.

City vs. County Law Enforcement

The municipal police generally wear uniforms that are blue and the county wears brown uniforms. Both are commissioned law enforcement officers and have arrest powers in the State of Indiana. The city officers patrol the streets within their city limits while the deputies from the sheriff's office patrol the county roadways and are responsible for the operation of the jail, and those incarcerated within. Indiana law also puts the onus on the sheriff's department to serve all civil orders of the court and provide security at the courthouse. However, any law enforcement officer in the State of Indiana may serve and enforce a civil order of protection.

Other Types of Law Enforcement

In addition to state, county, city, and town marshals, at the time of publishing, there are 39 school LEAs (not universities), 4 airport, 4 railroad, and 12 hospitals with their own police departments.

Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) Operations

Training

The Indiana Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Plainfield may train any person hired by a LEA statewide, while the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD), Fort Wayne Police Training Center (FWPD), Northwest Indiana Law Enforcement Academy, Southwest Indiana Law Enforcement Academy, Indiana University Police Academy, and the Indiana State Police (ISP) Academy may only train officers from their locale or agency. These academies range in duration from 15-24 weeks of training.

Indiana has a 3-tier system of training for officers in the state. Tier I officers must attend either ILEA or 1 of the certified law enforcement academies in their region. Tier 1 officers receive a minimum of 600 hours of training. Recruits attending the academies for IMPD, FWPD, or ISP receive over 900 hours of education due to more specific training to their cities or duties.

Officers attending the Tier II program (which is only offered at ILEA) are those working as Town Marshals, gaming agents, Department of Corrections officers, and hospital police. These officers have arrest powers only within the town or facility in which they police.

Individuals receiving Tier III training offered only at ILEA are specifically geared toward agencies that are oriented toward investigative duties. These agencies include the Medicaid Fraud Division, fire marshal, inspector general investigator, and investigators for the prosecuting attorney's office.

Annually, officers must receive 24 hours of continuing education; 4 hours must be in defensive tactics, 2 hours in emergency vehicle operation, and 2 hours in firearms. The remaining 16 hours may be in any other topic provided by a certified ILEA instructor or an expert in their field.

Sexual Violence Training

On average new recruits receive 3.5 hours of instruction on responding to sexual assault and rape investigations. In addition, ILEA offers a 3-day course required by law for all sexual assault investigators within LEAs titled Trauma-Based Sexual Assault Interviewing. There is no required annual training on this topic for Indiana law enforcement officers.

Human Trafficking Training

Law enforcement in Indiana is mandated to receive training around human trafficking pursuant to IC 5-2-1-9. While there are specific requirements for what should be included in the training, each department receives training on the topic in varying degrees of length and comprehensive coverage of foundational information, depending on who is facilitating it. Some may receive a two-hour training from the Indiana Trafficking Victims Assistance Program (ITVAP) which partners with the Indiana State Police. Additionally, there are no organizations in Indiana currently providing training on how to investigate cases.

See the Indiana State Police's Human Trafficking Law Enforcement Reference Guide for more information **https://www.in.gov/isp/human-trafficking-law-enforcement-guide/**

Officer's Roles

The patrol officer or deputy at a crime scene is initially in control of the investigation. In many Indiana agencies, that officer or deputy wears the hat of the responding officer and lead investigator for the crime because that agency does not have an Investigative Division, due to the size of the department. In larger cities and counties, an agency may have a Detective Bureau/Unit that will respond to felony crimes once the responding officer has made that determination. At that point, the detective oversees the investigation. When a person of rank (corporal or sergeant) arrives at the crime/investigation scene, they may assume command of the incident, direct the next steps, or provide support for the other officers or detectives.

The role of law enforcement is to provide emergency assistance, ensure public safety, and conduct criminal investigations. Law enforcement also plays a critical role and has a tremendous impact on a victim's recovery and long-term well-being. This hinges on their response to an investigation of a sexual assault. Officers and investigators who use trauma-informed practices during interactions with victims will validate and assist in their recovery. In addition, The International Association of Chiefs of Police Sexual Assault Incident Report notes that treatment the victim receives by law enforcement may affect their decision to continue with a case.

The investigative response to sexual violence often varies by jurisdiction. With over 600 LEAs in Indiana, variation is inevitable.

In response to sexual assault, law enforcement is responsible for the following:

- Providing for the immediate medical, emotional, and physical safety needs of the victim
- Providing a trauma-informed response, including a trauma-informed interview process
- Ensuring victims are treated with dignity and respect
- Providing appropriate referrals for victims

- Processing the crime scene for physical evidence, which may include gathering personal property of the victim and the alleged suspect
- Collecting evidence
- Taking a report of the sexual assault or starting an investigation, depending on the wishes of the victim
- Identifying suspects, as appropriate
- Arresting suspects, as appropriate
- Referring charges on the suspect, as appropriate
- Arranging for forensic examination of the suspect when necessary
- Ensuring the victim's right to speak with a victim advocate or VSP during the investigation
- Documenting the case in a written report
- Participating in court proceedings
- Completing all other duties normally associated with investigative and law enforcement functions

As soon as the officer realizes there has been unwanted sexual contact, they should contact a Medical Forensic Examination Provider also knows as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), if the victim wishes to have an exam completed. The examination can take up to 4 hours or more depending on severity, complicated medical circumstances, travel time, and examiner availability. Access to the exam may be limited—especially in rural areas. Survivors should be given the option to travel to a regional hospital with SANE coverage. A VSP can assist the officer and survivor to locate the nearest SANE.

Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security Investigations conducts criminal investigations into related offenses that traffickers commit. These crimes include fraud, drug trafficking immigration, human smuggling, money laundering, visa fraud, child sexual abuse materials, interstate sex trafficking/prostitution, sexual exploitation of children and obstruction.

Large vs. Small LEAs

Small and large LEAs differ in several key areas, including structure, resources, community engagement, specialization, and operational scope. These differences can affect how each type of agency performs its duties and responds to crime in its jurisdiction.

Below are some of the major differences between small and large LEAs:

1. Size of Personnel

- ***Small Agencies:*** More than half of the 600 LEAs in Indiana have fewer than 12 officers and operate with limited administrative or specialized staff. Officers in small agencies often take on multiple roles. In rural areas, the office can be only a sheriff, deputy, and a staff member. Several Indiana towns are policed by one full-time officer and one part-time officer. Coverage may not be 24 hours a day. These officers are required to conduct all investigations, often with little advanced or specialized training. They may rely upon mutual aid from the Sheriff's Department or nearby municipality.
- ***Large Agencies:*** Larger agencies, such as those in major metropolitan areas, often employ hundreds or even thousands of officers. These agencies can have distinct divisions and specialized personnel, allowing for more focused roles (e.g., homicide, narcotics, cybercrime units). Law enforcement personnel are often assigned to a district or area to patrol on a regular basis therefore becoming more familiar with the specific area. Only IMPD and ISP employ more than 1,000 officers. Including those 2 agencies, there are only 22 agencies with 100 or more full-time officers.

2. Specialization and Training

- ***Small Agencies:*** Officers in small agencies tend to be generalists due to the size of the workforce. They are often expected to handle a wide range of cases, from traffic enforcement to violent crimes. Specialized training may be

less frequent or limited, and there may not be enough personnel to form dedicated units for specific crimes like cybercrime or domestic violence.

- ***Large Agencies:*** Some large LEAs have specialized units dedicated to specific types of crimes, such as homicide, organized crime, terrorism, gang-related violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Although even large LEAs may not have special officers assigned to sexual assault and similar special victims.

3. Community Relationships and Policing Style

- ***Small Agencies:*** Small agencies tend to have closer, more personalized relationships with the communities they serve. Officers in small towns or rural areas may know residents on a first-name basis, which can foster trust and cooperation, but can also create challenges relating to conflicts of interest (relatives are victims/perpetrators, relationships with more parties involved). Community policing is often more straightforward due to the smaller population and the consistent presence of familiar officers.
- ***Large Agencies:*** In large urban agencies, maintaining close, personal relationships with individual community members can be more challenging due to the size and diversity of the population. However, large agencies often invest in community outreach programs, though these may be more formal and structured than the informal relationships seen in smaller departments. Large agencies may face challenges related to public perception and trust due to issues like police militarization or high-profile cases of misconduct.

4. Operational Scope and Crime Complexity

- ***Small Agencies:*** Small LEAs generally deal with lower levels of violent crime and more minor offenses, such as traffic violations, property crimes, or local disputes. Complex cases such as organized crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism may require them to seek assistance from state or federal LEAs.
- ***Large Agencies:*** Large agencies are often tasked with addressing more complex and serious crimes, including high levels of violent crime, drug trafficking, and threats of terrorism. They are more likely to encounter organized crime, gang activity, and large-scale investigations that require coordination across multiple agencies or jurisdictions.

5. Bureaucracy and Decision-Making

- ***Small Agencies:*** In small agencies, decision-making is often more centralized and streamlined due to the smaller number of staff and layers of bureaucracy. Officers can usually communicate directly with leadership, and decisions are made more quickly and informally.
- ***Large Agencies:*** Larger LEAs typically have a more bureaucratic structure with multiple layers of command. This can slow down decision-making, as orders and information need to pass through several levels of authority. However, the larger structure also provides clear protocols and accountability measures that can improve the agency's operational efficiency in dealing with complex issues.

Victim Service Providers (VSPs)

A Victim Service Provider (VSP) in Indiana is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) public organization, or unit of a public organization, that primarily offers support and assistance to victims of crime (IC 35-37-6-5). These services may include crisis intervention, counseling, legal assistance, and advocacy to help victims navigate the aftermath of a crime.

Rape Crisis Centers (RCCs) and Sexual Assault Service Providers (SASPs)

There are many organizations that provide sexual assault (abbreviated as SA) prevention and response services throughout Indiana. Many organizations are also dual domestic violence and SA service providers. Some also are part of medical or mental health care organizations. Not all provide the same types of services, and only those that adhere to the ICESA service standards can be designated RCCs. Those service standards were created following Indiana state law and national guidelines.

Indiana code (§5-2-6-23) defines a Rape Crisis Center as an "Organization that provides a full continuum of services, including hotlines, victim advocacy, and support services from the onset of the need for services through the completion of healing, to victims of sexual assault". They may be located within domestic violence (DV) shelters or other social service agencies and may provide more services than the core.

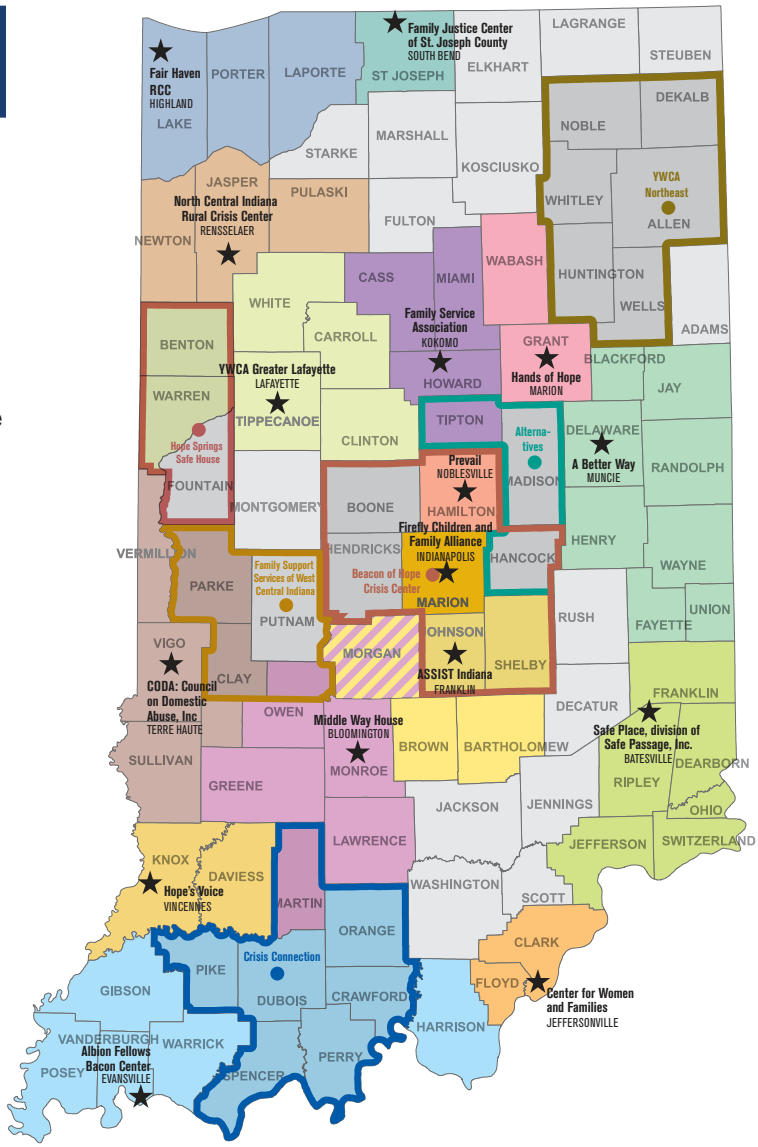
Services and agency structure vary, but at each RCC core services include:

- 24-Hour Helpline/Crisis Hotline
- Hospital/Medical Advocacy (On-Site Response)
- Advocacy
- Criminal Justice/Legal Advocacy
- Community Awareness/Outreach
- Information & Referral
- System Coordination, Collaboration, and Case Management
- Support Groups

The following are available at some, but not all centers:

- Professional Therapy/Counseling
- Primary Prevention Programs

Sexual assault service providers (SASPs) offer many, but not all, core services. **Not all sexual assault service providers are available for assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**



[ICESA Service Provider Directory]

Services at an RCC or SASP are available to those who self-identify as victim/survivor of sexual violence and their non-offending, significant others regardless of the type of sexual violence experienced, whether the survivor reported to law enforcement, and how much time has passed since the assault or abuse.

Victims are informed of the specific services available and given choices about which services they receive. The RCC respects that the victim's choices may be affected by their cultural and religious background experiences and individual circumstances and works with the victim to

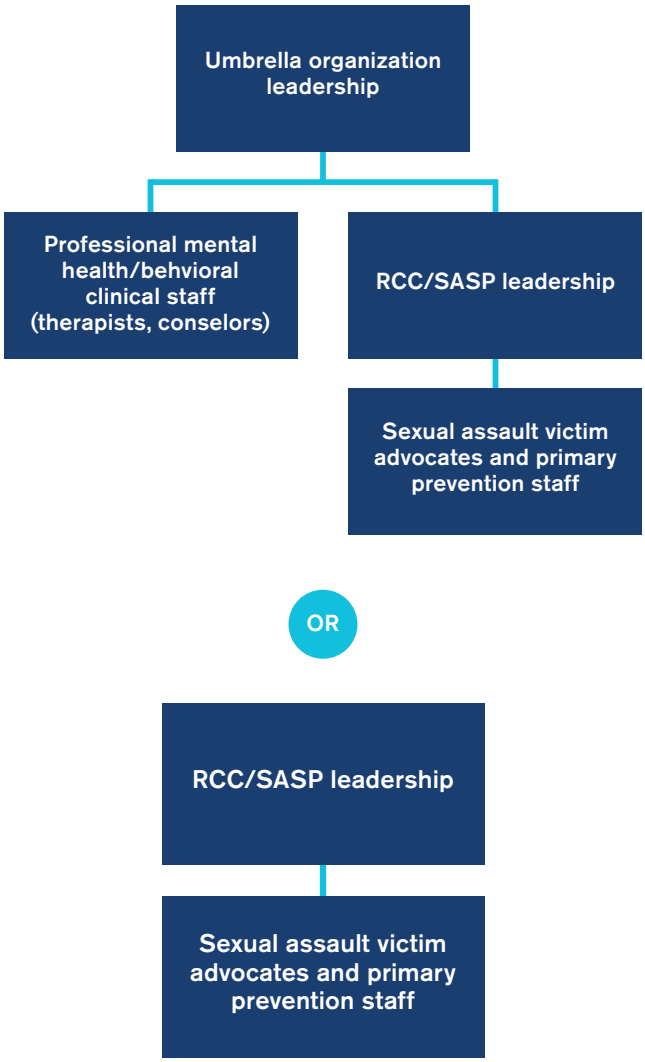
address identified service goals. In relationship with every victim, the SA advocate shall foster maximum self-determination on the part of the victim, including choices regarding whether to participate in a forensic exam for evidence collection, file a police report, or engage with the criminal legal system.

As mentioned above, some RCCs in Indiana exist under broader umbrella organizations that provide other services, such as domestic violence services and shelters. To understand the services available, contact the agency directly.

Despite the considerable need for sexual assault response services, availability remains a concern. Indiana has many counties without a dedicated community-based sexual assault VSP. Many of the existing agencies are working to cover large service areas. Most partnered organizations have few dedicated sexual assault response staff. To learn more about service availability in your local community, consult the staff at your local ICESA partnered organization.

SA Service Provider Structure

Each RCC/SASP has an organizational structure that works for them. Some umbrella organizations have mental/behavioral health professionals that provide services not included in no-cost sexual assault services. Other independent providers may only have two or three professionals on staff who do everything. Here is a simplified structure:



Many SASPs don't have full-time or dedicated SA advocates. Also, some service providers cover large regional areas. Read more about barriers to service in that section.

Training

In addition to on-the-job training provided by their employer, RCC and SASP staff should complete the CORE 40 Sexual Assault Victim Advocacy training offered by ICESA. CORE 40 training is designed primarily for sexual assault advocates who are staff or volunteers working with victims of sexual violence within community-based RCCs/SASPs. Although the emphasis of CORE 40 is focused on building the fundamental skills for advocates working in the field of sexual assault, the training allows for flexibility to incorporate additional topics when deemed relevant. Content is presented by subject matter experts and topics often include:

- The Role of Victim Advocate
- Neurobiology of Trauma and Vicarious Trauma
- Indiana Sex Crime Statutes
- Strangulation
- Human Trafficking
- Immediate and Long-Term Impacts of Sexual Violence
- Protective Orders
- Sexual Assault Response Teams
- Confidentiality
- Crime Victim Compensation
- SANE Medical Care and Services
- Primary Prevention
- Best Practices for Working with Law Enforcement

All sexual assault advocates working within RCCs in Indiana are to complete a total of sixteen (16) hours of continuing education each year. Two (2) hours of training in each of the following areas:

- Crisis intervention
- Judicial advocacy
- Medical advocacy
- Continuing supportive advocacy

SA Advocate Role

Sexual assault advocates, also called **community-based advocates**, play a crucial role in supporting victims through various stages of recovery and justice. Here are some key examples of how they work with victims:

1. Emotional Support
   - *Crisis Intervention:* Advocates provide immediate emotional support when a victim first reaches out, whether it's through a hotline, in person, or online. They help calm the victim, listen to their story, and validate their emotions.
   - *Ongoing Emotional Support:* Many advocates offer ongoing emotional support through regular check-ins or referrals to professional counseling services, helping victims navigate feelings of fear, guilt, anger, and trauma.
2. Information and Education
   - *Explaining Rights and Options:* Advocates educate victims about their rights, legal options, and available resources. They help victims understand the process of reporting sexual assault, including what happens in medical exams, police reports, and court proceedings.
   - *Safety Planning:* Advocates often work with victims to create safety plans tailored to their individual circumstances, especially in cases where the assailant is known to the victim.
3. Medical Accompaniment
   - *Hospital Support:* When victims undergo forensic exams (often called rape kits), advocates often accompany them to the hospital to provide emotional support, ensure their rights are respected, and explain the medical procedures.
   - *Health Referrals:* Advocates can connect victims with healthcare providers for follow-up care, including physical health, sexual health, and mental health services.
4. Legal Advocacy
   - *Court Accompaniment:* Advocates may attend court hearings with the victim, offering

emotional support and helping them navigate the legal process. They can explain legal jargon and help victims understand what to expect at each stage of the proceedings.

- *Assisting with Protective Orders:* If the victim needs a restraining or protective order, advocates help them fill out the necessary paperwork and accompany them to court if needed.

5. Advocacy in the Criminal Justice System
   - *Working with Law Enforcement:* Advocates often act as intermediaries between victims and law enforcement, ensuring that police take reports seriously, treat victims with respect, and follow proper protocols.
   - *Helping Navigate Prosecution:* If the case goes to trial, advocates work with victims and prosecutors, explaining the legal process and supporting victims through testimonies, cross-examinations, and other court procedures.
6. Resource Connection
   - *Housing Assistance:* Advocates help victims find emergency housing or shelters if they are unsafe in their current living situation due to the assault.
   - *Financial Support:* Some advocates help victims apply for compensation through victim assistance programs, which can cover medical bills, counseling, lost wages, and other expenses related to the assault.
7. Empowerment and Advocacy for Long-Term Recovery
   - *Survivor Support Groups:* Advocates may facilitate or connect victims with survivor support groups, which offer a space for sharing experiences, healing, and mutual support.
   - *Helping with Employment or Education Issues:* Advocates assist victims with employment or education concerns that arise because of the assault, such as needing time off or academic accommodations.

Following an assault, the victim advocate response at the hospital is a critical component of the medical response, offering crisis intervention, support, and advocacy before, during and after the exam. In communities with an RCC, SA advocates are available to respond to the hospital 24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year.

It is both best practice and a right of the victim to have the advocate present and in the examination room during the medical forensic exam. While at the hospital, the SA advocate supports the victim during the examination process, helps the victim understand the options available to them, and helps to provide and explain follow-up resources.

Victim advocates should not participate in any evidence collection procedures, interfere with any medical treatment, or comment on the SANEs/healthcare providers work/treatment decisions while the victim is present. Contact the ICESA partnered program nearest to you to learn more about advocate availability.

By providing these services, SA advocates aim to empower victims, promote healing, and help them regain control of their lives after the trauma of sexual violence.

Community-Based vs. System-Based Advocates

Under Indiana law (IC 35-37-6-3.5), only those non-profit organizations, recognized as such by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the Indiana Department of Revenue, whose primary purpose as VSP can carry the title victim advocate. The terms "victim advocate" and "victim assistant" may frequently be used interchangeably in law enforcement, prosecutor, or other government or health care entities that frequently work with victims. These agencies' victim assistance employees are referred to as **system-based advocates**.

Many law enforcement offices and prosecutor's offices across the state employ victim assistance staff who can support survivors, if that survivor chooses to navigate the criminal legal system. These advocates are not necessarily licensed mental health professionals or trained specifically to work with trauma victims. Also, these services are typically only available while a crime is being investigated or prosecuted. "Their roles and responsibilities will vary based on their governing agency, as will the term they use to describe themselves. Because of their status as government employees, system-based advocates often have better access to information regarding the criminal legal processing of the victim's case."

Not all law enforcement or prosecutor offices have victim assistance staff. This is especially true for smaller communities.

A community-based advocate provides a greater breadth of assistance to survivors than systems-based advocates. They "can assist victims even if a crime has not been reported; can assist before, during and after a criminal case; can provide holistic services aimed at victims' broad needs; and, depending on the jurisdiction's laws and funding source, can maintain privileged communications with victims"[2]

Communities using **both** community-based advocates and systems-based advocates provide the most comprehensive assistance to victims.

"Police Officers are asked to do many jobs in their daily duties. They are routinely asked to "fix" people who suffer from mental health issues and/or substance use disorder. While we can train officers to help in these types of situations, having a properly trained licensed social worker is extremely helpful. A social worker embedded in a police department gives officers options that are powerful and sometimes life changing. When officers know they have better options, they will use those social workers to solve those difficult situations. Having social workers embedded in a police department gives your community the peace of mind that the people with mental health issues and substance use disorder are getting the services and connections to treatment that they need."

– Captain Kevin Hunter
Fort Wayne Police Department

[1] https://evawintl.org/wp-content/uploads/Advocacy-in-Criminal-Justice-System.pdf
[2] https://ncvli.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Indiana-Privacy-Privilege-and-Confidentiality-last-updated-2021.pdf

Other Victim Services

LEOs or advocates may encounter other types of victim services in Indiana. They include Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs), Human Trafficking Service Providers, and Colleges and Universities.

SARTs

A Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) is a multidisciplinary team made up of the county prosecutor, VSP, sexual assault nurse examiner, and law enforcement. This team provides interagency, coordinated responses to prioritize victim needs, hold offenders accountable, and promote public safety. Indiana Code 16-21-8-1.5 requires that if a SART has not been established in a county, the prosecuting attorney shall appoint one in that county, or the county shall join with one or more other counties to create a regional SART, to comply with duties assigned to these important response services.

Community-based SA advocates, law enforcement, along with prosecutors and sexual assault nurse examiners, are included as core members of a SART. One of the most important aspects of the collaboration that arise from SARTs is the trust that each team member gains in the methods and goals of all participants in the coordinated response and the knowledge that each participant is acting in support of a victim-centered approach. The duties of a SART are outlined in IC 16-21-8-2.

SART members typically meet on a regular schedule to review recent sexual assault cases and seek to:

- Improve victims' access to services by addressing barriers
- Improve how systems' personnel treat survivors
- Ensure comprehensive service delivery
- Increase offender accountability by increasing reporting and conviction rates

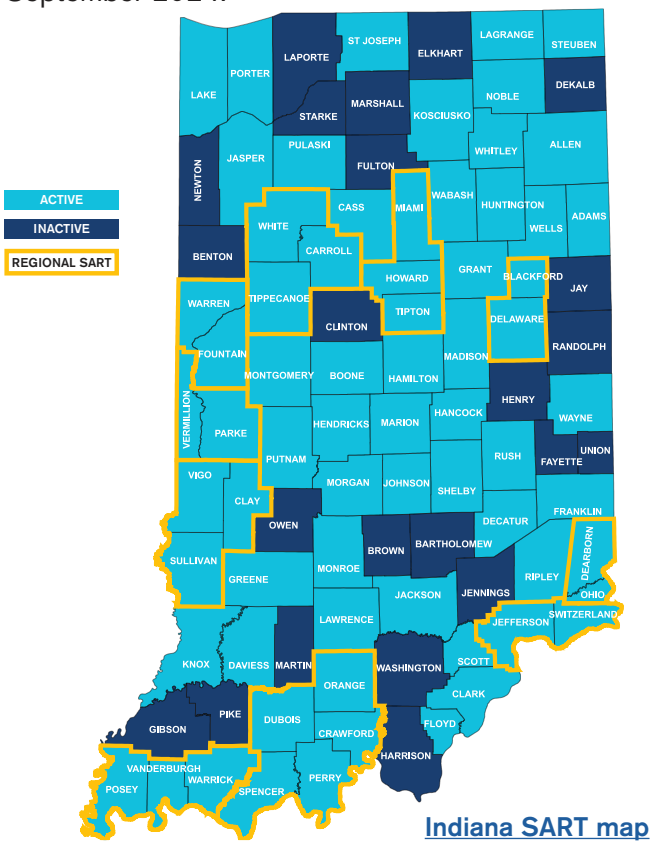
Indiana law requires that SARTs create a protocol that establishes the collection, preservation, secured storage, and destruction of sexual assault forensic medical exam samples (commonly called rape kits).

[SART toolkit]

Not all counties have a SART. There are many reasons why, which include:

- **Limited staff capacity**. Rural service providers and government offices sometimes only have 2-3 people on staff, and this means that there's limited capacity to create or regularly convene a SART.
- **High rates of turnover.** Service providers and other SART members have high rates of turnover for many reasons. Prosecutors are elected and serve four-year terms. They can be re-elected without limits, but for some counties, there could be a new prosecutor as early as every four years, making continuity an issue.
- **Strained relationships.** In some counties and regions, working relationships between core members of the SART result in no activity by the group.
- **A need for training.** Some Indiana counties don't know that it's a state requirement to convene a SART, or if they know that, they're not sure what to do next. ICESA helps provide technical assistance to these counties to help them convene a SART.

These are the active SARTs in Indiana as of September 2024.



[Indiana SART map]

Human Trafficking Service Providers

In addition to sexual assault response programs, there are service providers that separately provide counseling, job skills, case management, assistance finding long-term housing, legal services, peer support, and mentorship specifically for human trafficking survivors. Homeless shelters and DV shelters can also help bridge the gap in housing resources which are often lacking, especially for adult survivors.

The benefits of law enforcement engaging with a victim at the beginning of the investigation include:

- Timely assistance in meeting the victim's needs
- The provider has knowledge of service resources law enforcement may not
- An advocate can provide reassuring support to a victim who may be fearful and / or mistrustful of law enforcement

It is important for law enforcement to connect with providers at the earliest opportunity before conducting operations to ensure appropriate resources are available for victims. This pre-emptive step not only connects victims with timely assistance, but can help reduce last-minute issues, thereby alleviating stress for both law enforcement and service providers.

Victims of human trafficking often don't self-identify as victims, and it is not uncommon for them to mistrust and / or be fearful of law enforcement for a variety of reasons. Even when recovered from a trafficking situation by law enforcement, they may not want to engage beyond that.

Foreign nationals / undocumented individuals are often victims who are dealing with the lack of immigration status which is a factor that should be considered.

The issue of safe housing for human trafficking victims will be their focus and not the criminal legal proceedings.

Just like with service providers who serve sexual assault survivors, human trafficking providers are prohibited by law and grant funding regulations from releasing information about their clients to anyone without a release of information. This can be challenging and frustrating to law enforcement when they want additional information to further an investigation. However, if a victim is connected early with community services to get their needs met and ongoing support, there is ultimately a greater likelihood they may connect / engage with law enforcement in the long run.

HT Training

There are no state mandates or content regulations for law enforcement or VSPs to receive training on human trafficking. ICESA has worked to provide trauma-informed, survivor-centered foundational training, as well as advanced training on how to engage with survivors, to all RCCs in the state. However, there are providers in the state where it is unknown what training, if any, they have received or if they are doing work that follows best practices.

Indiana Colleges and Universities

Any school receiving federal funding must also comply with sexual assault prevention, response, and reporting requirements as provided by federal regulations such as Title IX, the Clery Act, and the SAVE Act. Schools may also provide separate victim advocate services through a Student Affairs or similar administrative office. These programs are not required by federal regulations, though.

Two key points are:

1. Colleges and Universities are not required to provide sexual assault victims with community-based advocate resources. Current laws allow schools to handle all sexual assault claims internally, this includes initial reports, investigations, and discipline. Victims must seek out community-based advocates and report to law enforcement on their own.

2. Indiana law provides privileged communication between victims and some university staff and students. Per Indiana law, this privilege is extended only if they are part of a named advocacy program, campus counseling services, or in some cases clergy. No other faculty, staff, or students enjoy(s) that communication privilege and legal protection. See the next section for more about confidentiality and legal privilege.

Confidentiality and Privilege

Confidentiality means protecting information to ensure only those authorized have access to it. In most cases, a victim's information can only be shared with the victim's written consent.

Confidentiality is a foundational tenet of a trauma-informed, victim-centered response to sexual violence. Confidentiality is a principle codified in both federal and state law, is a provision under several federal grants, and is also an ethical obligation under professional licensure and certification requirements for some disciplines. Confidentiality may appear as an obstacle to effective collaboration, but with a proper framework in place, advocates and law enforcement will:

- Be prepared to explain their limits to confidentiality to victims,
- Know the laws, rules, and regulations governing the way case information is shared,
- Have a plan for handling situations in which case information may be discussed, and
- Pause to ensure that confidentiality and victim privacy are not violated when discussing case information.

Those committed to building a trauma-informed, victim-centered response must understand both the policy considerations behind confidentiality and the ways in which confidentiality benefits the partnership between advocates and law enforcement and the empowerment of victims.

Confidentiality supports a victim-centered response by:

- Increasing victim autonomy (allowing the victim to choose when, how, and with whom information is shared).
- Increasing the victim's psychological and physical safety as disclosure and reporting may result in threats of harm by the perpetrator or community at large.
- Decreasing potential person and societal consequences (i.e. discrimination at work or in housing, alienation from family or community, and negative impacts to a victim's educational career).

Confidentiality benefits collaboration between LEOs and Advocates by:

- Protecting communications between a victim and privileged professionals from scrutiny by the perpetrator, the court, the defense, and the public.
- Building trust between the victim, service providers, and systems may increase a victim's willingness to participate in the criminal legal process.
- Building legal and ethical checks and balances to ensure the protection of a victim's right to control how and when their information is shared and discussed.

Confidentiality is a concern for advocates and LEOs when case information is discussed. Case information is any information that is considered private or confidential under federal law, state law, certain funding sources, and/or professional licensure and certification requirements.

Along with state legal protections, certain federal grants like those funded through the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 include strict confidentiality requirements. These grant programs include the Victim of Crimes Act Grant (VOCA), Sexual Assault Services Formula Grant Program (SASP), and the STOP (Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Grant. Along with internal record keeping requirements, associated federal regulations prohibit sharing any information without a release of information (ROI) from the victim.

Confidentiality in rural areas can be difficult. Not only are services scarce, but victims' identity and circumstance are more easily knowable. For example, survivors may be seen entering or leaving a service provider, which potentially impacts confidentiality. Maybe the survivor's child is on the basketball team at school, and the local prosecutor

is the coach. Or maybe the defense attorney has a sibling who lives next door to the victim. Blurred lines and difficult boundaries can happen anywhere, but they are particularly an issue in small communities without intentionally trying to do so. Tackling this issue is outside of the scope of this toolkit, but we recommend reviewing the following resources:

- Victim Rights Law Center — Tips: Protecting Survivor Privacy in Rural Areas: **https://victimrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Tips-Survivor-Privacy-in-Rural-Areas.pdf**
- Challenges and Benefits of Ethical Small-Community Practice. Schank, J., Helbok, C., Haldeman, D., Gallardo, M. — **https://gsep.pepperdine.edu/aliento/content/schank-gallardo-focus-on-ethics-2010.pdf**

While confidentiality laws protect victim's information within the confines of their experience, there are additional legal protections provided by the law that are important to explore.

Privilege

One of the largest differences between community-based and systems-based advocates is the extension of legal privilege, and the "Victim Advocate" title does not automatically grant legal protection. In other words, any information a survivor provides to a system-based advocate, while remaining confidential, is not privileged and may be used against them.

> Legal privilege in the United States refers to certain protections that prevent specific communications or information from being disclosed in legal proceedings. These privileges are designed to encourage openness and confidentiality between parties, such as attorneys and clients, without the fear of forced disclosure.

"System-based advocates typically do not qualify for counseling privilege, so their private communications with victims – and the written records documenting their services – typically cannot be guaranteed to remain confidential. In other words, if a system-based advocate is asked for information by a police officer or prosecutor, it will typically need to be shared, even if it was learned during a private conversation with the victim. This information will then potentially be shared with the defense. The same is true for anything the system-based advocate observes or learns about the victim or case, not just what takes place in their private communications. This is because system-based advocates are employees of the government."[1]

It is important that these differences in service scope do not create an adversarial relationship between community-based and system-based advocates. BOTH services are needed to protect victims, and both services result in better survivor outcomes, but it's important for all involved to know and understand their primary roles. Because even well-intentioned professionals can end up doing something that challenges the victim's legal safety.

[1] https://evawintl.org/wp-content/uploads/Advocacy-in-Criminal-Justice-System.pdf

Implications of Confidentiality

As noted above, victims engaged with RCC services are granted confidentiality and privilege by Indiana law, and through federal grants that they may be receiving. This means that VSPs are prohibited from sharing information about anyone receiving services, regardless of who is asking. In larger organizations, this restriction even extends to other types of employees within that agency.

VSPs understand that time is of the essence in a criminal investigation; however, they are not able to provide information about the victim to the LEO. This can cause LEOs to become frustrated and some might view the VSP as being uncooperative. Even if the piece of information seems innocuous, the legal protections are in place to keep the victim safe—not because the VSP wants to be difficult. In the same way a lawyer cannot and would not give an officer any information about their client, victim advocates enjoy the same confidentiality and privilege protections.

Everyone involved should understand that there are real implications to a service provider for unlawfully giving out victim information. The service provider could face legal penalties brought by the state or they could lose their funding, and the individual who disclosed could face civil legal penalties and loss of licensure, if applicable.

Shared Struggles

Law enforcement agencies and VSPs share the same struggles in attempting to keep the public safe. When it can seem that there are only differences between groups, it's important to be mindful that we all have forces out of our control which dictate our situations. The following is not an exhaustive list of mutual barriers.

Cultural Differences

Law enforcement officers and VSPs in the United States have different work cultures and priorities when working with victims of crime. These differences can sometimes create challenges in how they collaborate. Here are the key cultural differences between the two:

1. Focus of Their Roles:
   - Law Enforcement: Their main goal is to investigate crimes and enforce laws. They are focused on gathering evidence, catching offenders, and ensuring public safety. This often means they are focused on facts, and their interactions with victims are usually aimed at getting information for the case.

     Retired Chief of Police from Chattanooga, TN, Fred Fletcher specializes in helping agencies implement victim-focused and trauma-informed policing practices. He states, "We are not going to prevent every crime, we CAN care about every victim."

   - VSPs: Their primary focus is to provide support and assistance to victims. They aim to help victims emotionally and practically, offering services like counseling, legal aid, and shelter. Their approach is more compassionate and empathetic, focusing on the victim's well-being rather than the facts of the case.

2. Communication Styles:
   - Law Enforcement: Officers tend to use direct and formal communication. Their questioning can sometimes feel blunt because they are trying to develop the probable cause to arrest someone. They need clear, factual answers to build a case, which are difficult for survivors to give following trauma.
   - VSPs: They tend to use empathetic and patient communication. They are trained to listen carefully, show understanding, and create a safe space for the victim to share their experience without pressure.

3. Time Sensitivity:
   - Law Enforcement: Time is often crucial in investigating cases, so they may be focused on moving quickly. This urgency might sometimes conflict with a victim's need for time to process their trauma.
   - VSPs: They generally prioritize the victim's pace and emotional readiness. Their goal is to support the victim through their recovery, which can take time.

4. Perspective on Justice:
   - Law Enforcement: Justice, for them, means apprehending and arresting the offender, and writing detailed and accurate reports, so that the prosecutor's office will get a conviction.
   - VSPs: They view justice in a broader sense, focusing not only on prosecution but also on healing and recovery for the victim. They may emphasize services like therapy and support groups over strictly legal outcomes.

5. Approach to Victim Needs:
   - Law Enforcement: While officers do care about victims, their primary goal is to solve the case. A victim's needs may be considered secondary to the investigation because providing safety planning and addressing the needs of the victim is not an officer's area of expertise. They must rely on community partners to assist the survivor.
   - VSPs: Their entire role is about meeting the needs of the victim—whether that's providing safety, emotional support, or helping them navigate the justice system.

References

- National Institute of Justice. (2011). *Bridging the Gap: Research in Victim Services and Law Enforcement Collaboration.*
- Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). (2013). *Strengthening Law Enforcement–Victim Services Partnerships to Enhance Victim Assistance.*

Trauma and Vicarious Trauma

Trauma happens when someone experiences a deeply distressing or shocking event, like violence, a serious accident, or abuse. It can leave them feeling overwhelmed, unsafe, or in emotional pain. Trauma affects the mind and body, leading to problems like anxiety, depression, or PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

Vicarious trauma, on the other hand, is what happens when someone is indirectly affected by hearing about or helping others through their trauma. It's common among people like counselors, social workers, law enforcement, or healthcare workers who deal with trauma victims regularly. Over time, hearing about others' suffering can start to take a toll on these professionals, leading to emotional exhaustion or even symptoms similar to PTSD.

Key Differences

1. Direct vs. Indirect Exposure:
   - Trauma: The person experiences the traumatic event themselves.
   - Vicarious Trauma: The person is impacted by someone else's trauma, usually through repeatedly hearing about or helping with traumatic stories.

2. Who is Affected:
   - Trauma: Anyone can experience trauma if they go through a highly stressful or harmful event.
   - Vicarious Trauma: Usually affects people in helping professions, like therapists, doctors, or social workers.

3. Impact:
   - Trauma: Can cause intense fear, helplessness, and emotional suffering, often leading to mental health issues like PTSD, depression, or anxiety.
   - Vicarious Trauma: Causes professionals to feel emotionally drained, disconnected, or anxious due to repeated exposure to others' trauma. It can affect their work and personal life.

4. Prevention:
   - Trauma: There's no way to fully prevent traumatic events, but people can seek support after experiencing trauma to help with recovery.
   - Vicarious Trauma: Professionals can take steps to prevent vicarious trauma by setting healthy boundaries, seeking peer support, and practicing self-care.

Law enforcement officers experience an average of 3.5 traumatic events every six months, or over 200 traumatic events throughout their career. This is significantly higher than the average person, who experiences two to three traumatic events in their lifetime. Here are some common types of traumas they face:

1. Direct Exposure to Violence:
   - Officers are frequently exposed to violent situations, such as shootings, assaults, or domestic violence. Witnessing or being involved in violent confrontations can leave officers with lasting emotional scars, anxiety, or PTSD.
2. Fatal Incidents:
   - Responding to deadly accidents, suicides, or murders can be extremely traumatic. Officers who arrive at the scene of a fatal incident or have to notify families of a death may struggle with grief and shock.
3. Threats to Personal Safety:
   - Law enforcement officers regularly face danger in their line of work. The fear or experience of being injured, attacked, or even killed during duty can cause long-term psychological stress.
4. Handling Child Abuse Cases:
   - Investigating cases of child abuse, neglect, or sexual exploitation can be deeply upsetting. Officers are often left feeling emotionally distressed after dealing with vulnerable children and the horrific acts committed against them.

The daily exposure of listening to survivors recount their victimizations, looking at crime scenes, and video or photographic evidence of sexual assaults, writing detailed reports about the crimes, and preparing to testify to the facts are all hazards for officers in work-related trauma. According to a 2021 Survey conducted by the Fraternal Order of Police, among active officers, over half (53.6%) reported experiencing high levels of burnout; 44% of active and almost 31% of former officers reported some level of psychological distress. Police officers responding to this survey reported higher rates of PTSD, depression, and anxiety compared to the general population. In this group of police, 6.2% of officers (both active and former) had suicidal ideation during the previous 12 months and 18.5% had suicidal ideation at some point in their police career.

Linking police trauma to victim trauma can help us all understand the similarities, how trauma responses are real, and how humans respond to trauma differently.

For crisis assistance nationally, seek support through one of these 24/7/365 crisis lines:

Call or text 988 (Sucide and Crisis Hotline)

Cop2Cop: 866-COP-2COP (1-866-267-2267)

CopLine Crisis Line: 800-COPLINE (1-800-267-5463)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255

Safe Call Now: 206-459-3020

COPLINE: 833-361-3053

Law Enforcement Officers in Crisis can text BLUE to 741741

Fraternal Order of Police: Officer Wellness

Hope for Heroes: www.hopeforheroes.com

Please note: ICESA does not endorse or maintain any of these resources and their availability may change.

Types of Vicarious Trauma Experienced by Law Enforcement

While officers may not experience certain traumatic events directly, they often absorb the trauma of others. Here are examples of vicarious trauma:

1. Repeated Exposure to Victims' Trauma:
   - Constantly hearing about and helping victims of crimes like sexual assault, domestic violence, or

child abuse can leave officers feeling emotionally drained. Over time, this indirect exposure to suffering can cause symptoms of PTSD.

2. Supporting Families of Victims:
   - Officers often interact with families who are grieving or in shock after a traumatic event, such as a homicide or fatal accident. Helping these families through their pain can lead to emotional exhaustion and a sense of helplessness.
3. Investigating Violent Crimes:
   - Law enforcement professionals who investigate gruesome crimes or review graphic crime scene evidence can experience vicarious trauma, even though they weren't physically present when the crime occurred.
4. Compassion Fatigue:
   - Constantly working with people in distress can cause officers to feel emotionally numb or detached, a condition known as compassion fatigue. This can lead to burnout and make it harder for officers to continue providing effective help.

VSPs work closely with people who have gone through traumatic experiences. While they aren't usually the direct victims, they can still experience trauma in several ways:

1. Direct Threats of Violence:
   - Some VSPs work in environments where they may face threats from abusers or perpetrators, especially in domestic violence shelters or during court hearings. This can lead to feelings of fear or anxiety about their own safety.
2. Burnout from Overwork:
   - Many VSPs face high caseloads, long hours, and emotional exhaustion. Constantly dealing with others' trauma, especially without adequate self-care and organizational care, can lead to burnout, which is a form of emotional and physical collapse.
3. Witnessing a Client's Struggles:
   - Providers who work with victims of severe trauma, such as sexual assault or human trafficking, often witness their clients' ongoing pain and hardship. Seeing someone struggle with their trauma, even after offering support, can leave providers feeling frustrated, helpless, or distressed.

Types of Vicarious Trauma Experienced by VSPs

VSPs are especially vulnerable to vicarious trauma because they regularly hear about and work through traumatic experiences with their clients. Here are some common types:

1. Listening to Graphic Accounts of Trauma:
   - VSPs often hear detailed and painful stories of abuse, violence, or trauma from their clients. Repeatedly hearing these stories can lead to vicarious trauma, where the provider begins to experience emotional distress, anxiety, or even symptoms of PTSD.
2. Empathizing Deeply with Clients:
   - Providers often form close, empathetic relationships with their clients. While this helps build trust, it also means they may feel the emotional weight of their clients' suffering. This can lead to emotional exhaustion and a sense of hopelessness, especially when progress is slow.
3. Feeling Responsible for Clients' Outcomes:
   - Providers might feel personally responsible for the recovery or well-being of their clients. If a client continues to struggle or experiences more trauma, the provider may feel guilt or self-doubt, which contributes to vicarious trauma.
4. Cumulative Stress from Multiple Cases:
   - Working with multiple clients who have each gone through trauma can add up over time. This cumulative stress can wear down providers emotionally and mentally, making it harder to separate their personal lives from their work.
5. Secondary Trauma from Graphic Evidence:
   - In some cases, VSPs may be exposed to crime scene photos, medical reports, or legal documents that detail the traumatic experiences of their clients. This repeated exposure to disturbing materials can cause secondary trauma.

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Staffing Challenges

Both law enforcement and VSPs face significant staffing challenges that impact their ability to serve the public and victims of crime effectively.

Law Enforcement Staffing Challenges

1. Recruitment Difficulties:
   - Police departments across the U.S. are struggling to recruit new officers. A combination of negative public perception, concerns over job safety, and long hours has led to fewer people wanting to join the force. This has left many departments understaffed.
2. Retention Issues:
   - Many officers are leaving the profession early, either due to burnout, high stress, or early retirement. Law enforcement is a demanding job, and the mental and emotional toll can make it difficult to retain staff long-term.
3. Budget Constraints:
   - Police departments are often limited by tight budgets, which affects their ability to hire enough officers. This creates more pressure on existing staff, leading to fewer opportunities for training, overwork, and increased burnout.
4. Increased Workload:
   - Due to the staffing shortage, officers are required to take on more duties, such as responding to more incidents with little to no time in between to mentally reset or take care of basic needs, like eating, drinking, or using the restroom. This not only stretches departments thin but also affects officer morale and performance.
5. Training Needs:
   - As the role of law enforcement expands, there is a growing need for specialized training (e.g., de-escalation, mental health response), but the lack of staff makes it difficult to provide proper training without impacting daily operations.

VSPs Staffing Challenges

1. High Caseloads:
   - VSPs, such as social workers, counselors, and advocates, often face overwhelming caseloads. With limited staff and a growing number of clients, providers struggle to give each victim the attention and care they need.
2. Low Pay and Funding:
   - Many victim service organizations rely on government grants or donations, which limits how much they can pay their staff. Low wages make it difficult to attract and retain qualified professionals, especially when the emotional demands of the job are high.
3. Burnout and Vicarious Trauma:
   - Working with trauma survivors every day can lead to vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue among VSPs. The emotional toll, combined with low pay and high caseloads, results in frequent burnout and high turnover.
4. Lack of Qualified Professionals:
   - There is a shortage of qualified mental health professionals and social workers, especially in rural or underserved areas. This shortage leaves existing staff overburdened and victims with fewer resources for support.
5. Inadequate Resources for Training:
   - Like law enforcement, VSPs need ongoing training to handle complex issues such as human trafficking, domestic violence, or mental health crises. However, limited staffing and funding make it hard to provide the necessary training without disrupting services.

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Barriers to Service and Service Gaps

Law enforcement agencies in the United States face several barriers that can hinder their effectiveness in serving communities. Here are some of the key challenges:

1. Public Trust and Perception:
   - Many communities have a lack of trust in law enforcement due to past incidents of police violence, discrimination, or misconduct. This can make individuals less willing to engage with police, report crimes, or seek help from officers.
2. Diverse Community Needs:
   - Communities are increasingly diverse, and law enforcement may struggle to meet the unique needs of different cultural, racial, and socioeconomic groups. Officers might not have the skills or training to effectively communicate and interact with all community members.
3. Geographic Challenges:
   - In rural areas, LEAs may face geographic barriers that make it difficult to respond quickly to incidents. Limited personnel and vast distances can delay response times, impacting the safety of community members.

VSPs in Indiana face several challenges that can limit their ability to effectively support individuals who have experienced crime. Here are some key barriers:

1. Lack of Awareness:
   - Many victims may not be aware of the available services or may not know how to access them. This lack of awareness can result from insufficient outreach or communication efforts by VSPs.
2. Geographic challenges:
   - Not all areas of Indiana are served by a sexual assault service provider. This lack of coverage is especially true in rural areas. Likewise, areas may have a sexual assault service provider, but other therapeutic services are not available.
3. Cultural and Linguistic Barriers:
   - Indiana is home to diverse communities, and some victims may face cultural or language barriers that make it hard to seek help. Providers may not always have the resources to address these needs effectively.
4. Stigma Surrounding Victimization:
   - Some victims may feel ashamed or embarrassed about their experiences, which can prevent them from seeking assistance. Stigma surrounding certain crimes, such as sexual assault or domestic violence, can create additional barriers to service.
5. Complex Legal and Procedural Systems:
   - Navigating the legal system can be overwhelming for victims. Many providers may struggle to offer adequate legal assistance or support in understanding rights and options, leaving victims feeling confused and unsupported.

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Benefits of Partnership

Collaboration between law enforcement and VSPs can significantly enhance the support available to victims of crime. Law enforcement cannot bear the sole responsibility of solving crimes and societal issues. Conversely, law enforcement must recognize the importance of working with outside agencies to build public trust and legitimacy. A shared vision and common goals should be established and mutual respect for each other's expertise and experience is a must.

Image source: Rinehart, T.A., A.T. Laszlo, and G.O. Briscoe. 2001. *Collaboration Toolkit: How to Build, Fix, and Sustain Productive Partnerships.* Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Here are some key benefits of law enforcement and VSP partnership:

1. Comprehensive Support for Victims:
   - When law enforcement and VSPs collaborate, victims receive a more holistic approach to support. This includes emotional support, legal guidance, and safety planning, all tailored to the victim's needs.
   - Advocates can help LEO build trust with the victim which can help in the investigation.
   - Also, survivors who feel supported by the process stay engaged and have better outcomes. As a result of working collaboratively with LE and VSPs they:
     – File more police reports (59% vs. 41%) and those reports are less likely to be no actioned (29% vs. 57%)
     – Receive fewer victim blaming questions from LE around dress (41% vs. 46%) and sexual history (12% vs. 46%)
     – Are less likely to be asked by LE to take a lie detector test (6% vs. 18%)
     – Have a decrease in secondary victimization emotions in the aftermath of the assault including less guilt (59% vs. 86%), less depression (53% vs. 88%), and less reluctance to seek further help (61% vs. 89%).
2. Improved Communication:
   - Working together fosters better communication between agencies. This helps ensure that information is shared efficiently, allowing for quicker responses and more effective case management.
3. Increased Awareness of Resources:
   - Law enforcement officers who are aware of available victim services can direct victims to the appropriate resources. This can help victims access necessary support quickly, reducing their feelings of isolation and confusion.

4. Enhanced Trust and Community Relations:
   - When law enforcement actively collaborates with VSPs, it can improve community perceptions of the police. Victims are more likely to trust law enforcement when they see a commitment to supporting victims' needs.
5. Trauma-Informed Approaches:
   - Both law enforcement and VSPs can benefit from shared training on trauma-informed practices. This ensures that all interactions with victims are sensitive to their experiences, helping to reduce re-traumatization.
6. Streamlined Legal Processes:
   - By working together, law enforcement and victim services can create more efficient legal processes for victims. For example, victim advocates can accompany victims to court, providing emotional support and helping them understand the legal system.
7. Shared Data and Resources:
   - Collaboration allows for the sharing of data on crime trends and victim needs. This can help both law enforcement and VSPs tailor their programs and responses to better serve the community.

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SECTION 2

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SERVICE PROVIDER ENGAGEMENT

In this section, we'll explore ways law enforcement officers and VSPs can better work together during day-to-day activities.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Review tactical engagement best practices to help law enforcement and service providers work better together.
2. Demonstrate what works and what doesn't when engaging with each other.

It is important to have good working relationships so that the survivor is protected, and any investigations yield as much information to help the victim as possible.

Collaboration

Collaboration between law enforcement and VSPs can lead to better outcomes for victims of crime. Here are some effective techniques and examples of how these groups can work together more effectively:

1. Regular Meetings and Coordination:

- Holding regular meetings to discuss ongoing cases, share insights, and evaluate service delivery can strengthen the partnership between law enforcement and victim services.
- SART meetings are an important function in which teams build relationships, develop protocol to define the roles and the responsibilities of each agency as it responds to the needs of victims, cross train to understand cross-agency roles, discuss emerging issues, monitor progress, revisit mission and goals, assess changes in the larger community, ensure sufficient resources, and prepare strategy for addressing any remaining challenges.

EXAMPLE

Actively participate in your county's SART (see Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) section earlier in this toolkit). If there isn't a SART in your county, work with the prosecutor to form one. ICESA offers a SART Toolkit to help counties organize a SART. If you already attend your county's SART meetings and they aren't frequent enough, offer to host more frequent meetings. Front line advocates need to build relationships with front line officers.

To improve SART attendance and engagement in meetings, it is encouraged that coordinators provide a clear agenda to guide productive and meaningful meetings.

Some examples of agenda items that SARTs often discuss are:

- SART Protocol Development
- Agencies' roles with regards to responding to sexual assault
- Roles of service providers regarding responding to sexual assault
- Best Practices & Critical Issues
- Community Education and Outreach
- Legislation
- Case Review
- Necessary Trainings
- Confidentiality

SARTs function best when there is predictability regarding frequency, and consistency with dates, times, and locations of meetings. SART meetings should be hosted at a location and at a time accessible to the team members.

2. Joint Training Sessions:

- Providing training for both law enforcement and victim service staff on topics such as trauma-informed care, cultural competency, and crisis intervention can enhance understanding and cooperation.

EXAMPLE

A training workshop on trauma-informed approaches might be jointly organized by a police department and a local victim assistance program, enabling both groups to learn from each other's perspectives.

3. Victim Advocacy Programs:

- Implementing victim advocacy programs where advocates work closely with law enforcement can provide victims with essential support during the legal process.

EXAMPLE

In many jurisdictions, victim advocates are available to accompany victims to police interviews, court appearances, or other legal proceedings, offering emotional support and information.

4. Community Awareness Campaigns:

- Jointly launching campaigns to educate the community about available resources and services can improve access for victims.

EXAMPLE

A combined effort to create brochures and social media posts informing the public about victim services and how law enforcement can help could enhance awareness and trust.

5. Co-located Services:

- Setting up shared office spaces where law enforcement and victim services are located together can facilitate collaboration and communication.

EXAMPLE

In some jurisdictions, police departments have established “one-stop shops” where victims can report crimes and immediately access victim services without having to travel to another location.

6. Develop Referral Systems:

- Create clear referral protocols so that law enforcement officers know how to connect victims with appropriate services quickly.

EXAMPLE

A referral guide that outlines available victim services, including contact information and the types of assistance provided.

7. Establishing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs):

- Creating formal agreements between LEAs and VSPs can outline the roles and responsibilities of each party. This ensures clear communication and a coordinated response to victim needs.
- LEA don’t need the prosecutor’s office to make an arrest, even if the prosecutor doesn’t think there’s a case.

EXAMPLE

A police department and a local domestic violence shelter might sign an MOU that specifies how they will share information and resources, such as when officers can connect victims directly to shelter services.

8. Data Sharing:

- Establishing protocols for sharing data about crime trends, victim needs, and service usage can help both agencies tailor their approaches and improve service delivery.
- Domestic violence and SA correlation disconnect. Nearly half of women in abusive relationships will also be raped or sexually assaulted by their abusive partner and often multiple times over the course of the relationship. Training law enforcement to ask about sexual assault and rape as a form of battery during their domestic violence investigations will likely increase reporting of

these felony crimes. Officers will more likely understand that their case does not shift from a domestic violence investigation to a sexual assault or rape case, but that sexual assault was used as another form of power and control in the abusive relationship.

- The number of victimizations reported to advocates does not match the number reported to law enforcement. One reason why may be that law enforcement is not asking about this form of battery.
- Examples of how it's helpful to share data
  - Trend data can help focus services and identify emerging problems or needs.
  - Although we understand the confidentiality requirements must first be considered, when law enforcement officers and advocates are able to share data and trends they are observing, it helps each agency identify and understand emerging needs, problems, and trends inside their community. This communication also improves trust, accountability, and transparency between the agencies.
  - Sharing data or crime trends and patterns can be beneficial to solving crimes within a community. Officers can inform advocates that they are investigating several reports of sexual assault in an area with the descriptive information that they have been provided. It is likely that an advocate has additional information that could be shared with a release of information from the survivor which may lead to the identification of the suspect.

EXAMPLE

Law enforcement might share crime statistics with VSPs, helping them understand which areas need more outreach or resources.

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When law enforcement and VSPs work together, following certain guidelines can enhance their collaboration and ensure better support for victims. Here are some key DOs and DON'Ts, along with examples:

DOs

1. Do Communicate Openly:

- Maintain clear and consistent communication to keep everyone informed about ongoing cases and available resources.

EXAMPLE

Regular check-in meetings to discuss cases, share updates, and coordinate responses.

2. Do Provide Joint Training:

- Offer training sessions that include both law enforcement and VSPs to foster understanding and improve collaboration.

EXAMPLE

A workshop on trauma-informed care where both parties learn how to better support victims together.

3. Do Respect Victim Privacy:

- Always prioritize the confidentiality of victims' information and ensure that sensitive data is handled appropriately.

EXAMPLE

When discussing a case, avoid sharing identifiable details without consent from the victim.

4. Do Collaborate on Resources:

- Share information about available resources, services, and support options for victims.

EXAMPLE

Create a resource guide that outlines services from both law enforcement and victim service organizations, making it accessible to victims.

5. Do Foster Trust:

- Build trust with the community by demonstrating a unified front in support of victims and their rights.

EXAMPLE

Jointly participating in community events to raise awareness about available services and the importance of reporting crime.

DON'Ts

1. Don't Blame Each Other:

- Avoid finger-pointing or assigning blame when challenges arise. Focus on solutions instead.

EXAMPLE

Instead of blaming law enforcement for low victim reporting rates, work together to identify barriers and improve outreach..

2. Don't Ignore Culture:

- Be mindful of the diverse backgrounds of victims and ensure that services are culturally competent and accessible.

EXAMPLE

Provide interpretive services for non-English speaking victims and be aware of cultural practices that may affect interactions.

3. Don't Overlook Victim Needs:

- Always prioritize the needs and preferences of victims when making decisions about their cases.

EXAMPLE

Before proceeding with an investigation, consult the victim about their comfort level and desired outcomes.

4. Don't Rush to Judgment:

- Avoid making assumptions about victims or their situations. Listen actively and approach each case with an open mind.

EXAMPLE

Instead of assuming a victim's story is inconsistent, take the time to understand their perspective and circumstances.

5. Don't Work Alone:

- Resist the temptation to operate independently. Collaboration is essential for providing effective support.

EXAMPLE

Instead of having separate outreach programs, develop joint initiatives to educate the community about available services.

References

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SECTION 3

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND VSPS

In this section, we'll focus on how law enforcement officers and VSPs can work to build long-term partnerships.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. **Build Strong Partnerships** – Foster trust, respect, and effective communication between law enforcement and VSPs.
2. **Enhance Collaboration** – Use regular meetings, joint training, and constructive feedback to strengthen teamwork and problem-solving.
3. **Engage the Community** – Work together on outreach initiatives to support victims and build public trust.

Building Partnerships

In general, partnership building takes commitment, communication, compromise, and time. Here are some other relationship building basics:

- **Adjusted expectations.** We must meet people where they are, both literally and figuratively. If you know working relationships have been very strained in the past, start with simple plans, and don't expect any one side to go from zero to sixty overnight.
- **Communication.** Effective communication is a fundamental part of any relationship. It involves listening as much as talking and considering the other person's point of view.
- **Active listening.** Communicating is important, but so is active listening. It is a key part of building closer connections and establishing interpersonal relationships. It's also a key part of problem solving, conflict resolution, and constructive criticism.
- **Boundaries.** Boundaries are important for creating safety and predictability in a relationship. They mark the emotional and physical lines that govern the relationship. Likewise, stating those boundaries and expressing when a boundary has been crossed is important to learning about each other.
- **Empathy.** Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings and emotions of others. At work, empathy can show your dedication to maintaining relationships.
- **Respect.** Respect is essential for building healthy relationships. When people treat each other with respect, they can have a much deeper understanding of the other person's needs and how to work together effectively.
- **Trust.** Trust is a foundational building block of relationships. It allows people to be open and vulnerable without fear of needing to protect themselves.
- **Time.** Building relationships, partnerships, and good collaboration takes time and patience.

Building strong partnerships between law enforcement and VSPs is essential for effectively supporting victims of crime. All these techniques apply to both sides of the partnership; however, due to large service territories, advocates might have to travel to law enforcement partners in their districts.

"We live in a very rural area, with a very tiny hospital. I received a call from the hospital asking for assistance in a sexual assault. We unfortunately do not have a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner available at our hospital and have to drive about 45 minutes to an hour to get to a hospital with one. A lot of times the local law enforcement will help us with transport, especially if it speeds up the system. For one survivor, the hospital called to let us know that LE could not transport. The law enforcement officer who responded to the call pulled the nurse and I both aside and let us know that he would not be able to transport the survivor due to her having an active warrant. He stated he did not want to interfere with the exam, so he was going to leave her with us. The officer and I worked together to make sure the survivor got to where she needed to go, and the officer never tried to interfere with the survivor getting support. We have worked very hard to get our officers to trust us, and he knew that we all had the same goal, which was to get the survivor help."

–Lead Advocate, Indiana Victim Service Provider

The previous section offered specific, day-to-day ways both groups can engage with each other during regular work activities. This section focuses more broadly on the relationships between the agencies, building trust, and getting to know one another, so that when the work gets stressful, frustrating, or confusing, everyone involved has a more stable foundation and will be able to address situations in a calm, consistent manner. Here are some strategies to build relationships:

1. Establish Regular Meetings:

- Schedule consistent meetings between law enforcement and VSPs to discuss cases, share updates, and strategize on improving services for victims.
- These meetings should be separate from Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) meetings, where the focus is on collaboration between law enforcement and the service provider.
- The goal at the beginning is to find neutral common ground, learn about each other, and then build from there.
  a) Top-Down approach: Leadership on both sides meeting to define goals
  b) Bottom-Up approach: An advocate and a law enforcement officer who already have a good working relationship could start to meet regularly and understand the landscape.
- If finding time to meet is difficult, consider meeting virtually or finding a neutral, public meeting space that is near the halfway point between agencies.
- Once a relationship has been established, you can work together to implement some or all the best practices on this list.
- Some questions to ask each other during the partnership building process:
  a) What perceptions do we, advocates and law enforcement have of each other?
  b) Do we have facts to support these beliefs?
  c) What stories have led to any divide between us?
  d) Are we currently waiting for a critical incident that requires us to work together? Or are we willing to be proactive and form a collaborative group that regularly meets to forge relationships and solvability factors for reported crimes?
  e) What common goal can law enforcement and advocates agree upon to best serve victims of crime?

"The relationship between prosecutor and victim advocate is critical. It's absolutely necessary for the two most important things to happen…protecting the victim and holding the offender accountable. We approach from different perspectives but work towards these goals with a unified front. These relationships allow for the collaboration of our different disciplines even if we disagree on the approach at times. The formation of these relationships took time and did not happen overnight. Respect and trust is earned spending time together in the trenches. That time together forges a bond that gets stronger over time."

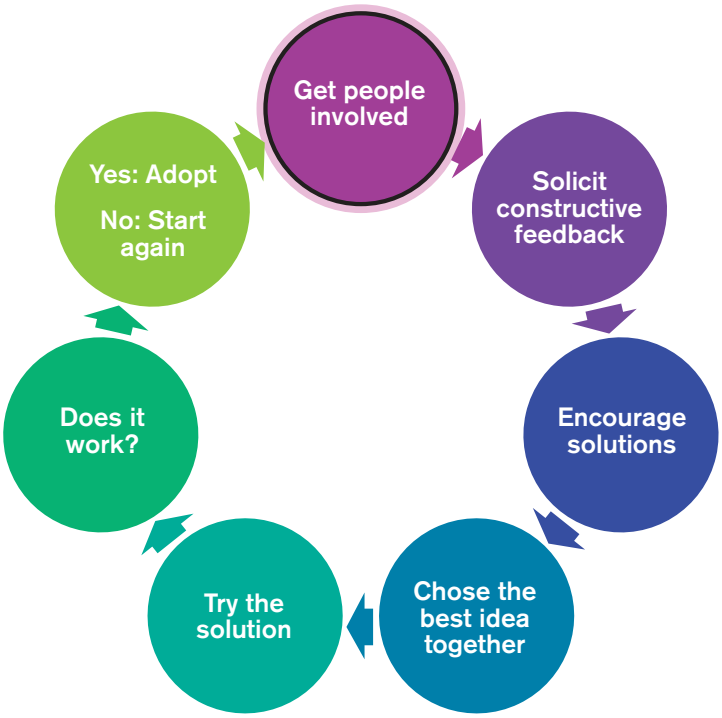
–Ric Hertel
Prosecuting Attorney, Ripley County

2. Recognize and Celebrate Successes:

- Acknowledge and celebrate the successes of collaborative efforts, whether it's a successful outreach program or positive feedback from survivors.
  a) Start small: If something good or helpful happened, say it the next time you see that person.
  b) Find more tangible ways to recognize each other: buy someone coffee, send a thank you note, send a kudos email to a supervisor.
- Slowly work up to something bigger like hosting an annual recognition event to honor law enforcement officers and VSPs for their teamwork and dedication to victims.

3. Encourage Feedback and Improvement:

- Regularly solicit feedback from both law enforcement officers and VSPs on what's working well and what could be improved in their collaboration.
- Follow the continuous improvement model:



- Constructive feedback is a way to help someone improve their performance or behavior by providing clear, specific, and balanced insights. It can help people identify areas for improvement, develop their skills, and grow positively. Here are some characteristics of constructive feedback:
  a) Focuses on solutions: Constructive feedback focuses on solutions and encouragement, rather than just pointing out shortcomings.
  b) Provides actionable insights: Constructive feedback provides insights that people can act on.
  c) Builds people up: Constructive feedback is a tool to build people up, not break them down.
  d) Shows concern: Constructive feedback shows concern and gives the receiver the opportunity to share what's going on.
  e) Avoids character judgment: Constructive feedback avoids judging someone's character.
- Feedback can be scary because usually people have a whole lot more to say about what isn't working well than what does work well. That's okay. If everyone sets expectations knowing the feedback might be negative, then it can help. Feeback is at least participation.

> **"Over the past several years, my team and I have learned something about clarity and the importance of hard conversations that has changed everything from the way we talk to each other to the way we negotiate with external partners. It's simple but transformative: Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind."**
>
> –Brené Brown

- Over time as you build a culture of healthy feedback and continuous improvement, this process will become easier, and everyone involved will feel invested in the partnership's success.

4. Create Joint Training Sessions:

- Develop and participate in training activities together that focus on topics like trauma-informed care, legal rights of victims, and effective communication strategies.

EXAMPLE

A joint training session on handling sexual assault cases, emphasizing the roles of both law enforcement and victim advocates.

"Joint training for law enforcement, at all ranks, and VSPs, across all capacities, provides not only the latest best-practice education but also fosters a mutual understanding of each other's roles in supporting victims. This collaborative learning environment enhances empathy for not only victims but each other's roles, streamlines processes, and strengthens partnerships that ultimately benefit the communities we serve."

–Candra Ramsey
Program Director, A Better Way

"There are so many benefits to law enforcement and VSPs training together. When they train together there is a chance to have open discussions from each other's points of view. As they are being trained together, the material is the same for both, allowing them to better understand each other's roles, expectations and risks. This also helps them to connect as a team working together towards the same goal, instead of individual entities. Collaboration is imperative for us to provide the best interventions for victims and thus, training together helps to form and provide that collaboration."

–Shana Evans, BSN, RN, SANE-A, SANE
Program Coordinator – Center of Hope

5. Consider Collaborative Initiatives:

- Focus on events or activities that involve both law enforcement and victim services working together to address specific community needs or issues.

EXAMPLE

Find public events where officers and service providers can set up an informational table.

6. Foster Community Engagement:

- Collaborate on community events and initiatives that raise awareness about victim rights and available services, helping to build trust and transparency.

EXAMPLE

Organizing a community forum where residents can ask questions and learn about how law enforcement and victim services can support them.

References

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- Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). (2013). *A Guide for Law Enforcement and VSPs: Improving Services for Victims of Crime*. Retrieved from https://ovc.ojp.gov
- U.S. Department of Justice. (2020). *Building Trust Between Law Enforcement and Communities: A Guide for Law Enforcement and VSPs.* Retrieved from https://justice.gov

CONCLUSION

"It's always something, to know you've done the most you could. But don't leave off hoping, or it's of no use doing anything. Hope, hope to the last,"

– Charles Dickens

We hope that by writing this toolkit, law enforcement and advocates will hope for a stronger community partnership that will ultimately provide comfort to victims and allow the criminal legal system to hold offenders accountable.

To all in law enforcement and victim services: your dedication and collaboration embody the spirit of resilience, compassion, and hope that our communities need. Every day, you step forward to support victims and to bring justice, making a profound difference in countless lives. Together, you are more than just protectors—you are beacons of trust, guiding people through some of their darkest moments.

As you work together, remember that every small act of empathy, every patient conversation, and every piece of support you offer helps rebuild hope. Trauma can be isolating, but through your combined efforts, you are breaking that isolation, helping victims find their voice and heal. Your commitment to trauma-informed practices, collaborative crisis response, and holistic support isn't just procedural—it's transformative. It shows survivors that they are seen, heard, and valued.

Keep pushing forward, even when the journey feels challenging. Your collaboration stands as a testament to what's possible when we lead with compassion. In the strength of your partnership lies the foundation for safer communities and brighter futures. Thank you for all that you do—together, you inspire hope and change, one life at a time.

Collaboration between law enforcement and VSPs is essential to creating a responsive, compassionate, and effective system for supporting victims and seeking justice. This toolkit is designed to serve as a resource, guiding agencies and professionals through best practices, innovative strategies, and trauma-informed approaches that place victims at the center of our efforts. By working together, law enforcement and service providers can streamline support, minimize re-traumatization, and increase both accountability and trust within communities.

Through integrated responses, shared resources, and continuous communication, we can improve outcomes for victims and foster a system where safety and healing are priorities. Implementing these strategies requires commitment, adaptability, and empathy, but the rewards are significant: empowered victims, strengthened community relationships, and more comprehensive support networks.

As you use this toolkit, remember that your work has the power to transform lives. Your collaborative efforts show victims that they are not alone, inspiring hope and resilience in their recovery journey. Together, we can ensure that all victims receive the justice, respect, and support they deserve, paving the way for safer, more compassionate communities. Thank you for your dedication to this mission.

References

SA LAWS

IC 16-21-8 Emergency Services to Sex Crime Victims

IC 16-21-8-1.5 Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs)

IC 35-37-6 Victim Advocacy

IC 35-42-4 Sex Crimes, Rape, and Consent

IC 5-2-6.1 Compensation for Victims of Violent Crimes

ABOUT ICESA

ICESA helps the helpers.

Pronounced “EYE-kess-uh”

As the only U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention designated sexual assault coalition for the state of Indiana, ICESA is unlike any other organization. As a coalition, we specialize in:

- Building partnerships
- Coordinating prevention and response services
- Fostering collaboration among sexual violence service providers, survivors and their families, healthcare professionals, and other allies throughout Indiana.
- Advocating for survivors in policy spaces

ICESA’s comprehensive Victim Services Capacity Building Program aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of Indiana’s sexual assault service providers by facilitating inter-agency coordination, resource development, and knowledge sharing across the state. We pay special attention to service improvement and education for those providers who serve marginalized communities, victims of inequity and racial injustice, and underserved communities. ICESA’s Victim Services Capacity Building Program focuses on:

- Statewide Sexual Assault Response Coordination
  - Rape Crisis Center (RCC) Development and Sexual Assault Service Provider Support
  - Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Coordination
  - Economic Justice Fund (EJF) Administration.
- Sexual Assault Prevention and Intervention Programs
  - Indiana State Campus Consortium (ISCC)
  - Primary Prevention Program
  - Bystander Intervention Program
- Professional Training: We provide education and professional training for VSPs, government agencies, healthcare workers, and associated organizations (our service constituents) with a focus on service standards and best practices to ensure all victims and survivors receive high-quality, person-centered support in their communities. Our primary training programs are:
  - CORE 40: Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Basic Training
  - Coffee with the Coalition
  - Special Topical Training
  - Statewide Conferences
- Outreach Activities:
  - Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAM)
  - General Awareness Tabling
- Advocates for Systems Change

ICESA

Indiana Coalition to
End Sexual Assault
Engage. Educate. Empower.

endsexualassault.org