

Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV)

Benefits of Victim Services
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Purpose of Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services

Law enforcement and policing professionals are often the first to respond to victims in the aftermath of a crime, allowing them to offer immediate services and support. This response can include addressing challenges and barriers that victims may experience, such as a lack of resources (food, housing, transportation) and distrust of or a lack of knowledge about the justice system. Victim services personnel can assist victims in navigating the justice system by advocating for their rights and connecting them to resources. Victims are more likely to engage with the criminal justice system when they feel supported and informed, contributing to community trust and overall public safety.¹

While many jurisdictions already have partnerships with community-based organizations providing victim services, there are benefits to victims, the agency, and the community to also establishing an in-house, law enforcement-based victim services unit.

Benefits to Victims



Early Engagement

Law enforcement-based victim services are uniquely positioned to offer immediate criminal justice support and information about victims' rights and resources available to victims. Support can occur during investigative events, such as interviews with investigators, and can include safety planning and referrals to community organizations.



Reduced Secondary Victimization

Victims who participate in the justice system are at risk for secondary victimization or further emotional harm. Victims who receive immediate victim services are more likely to report lower levels of distress following interactions with the justice system.²



Continuous Support

If a case reaches prosecution, law enforcement-based victim services personnel can support a seamless, warm hand-off to prosecution-based victim services, minimizing communication delays and feelings of instability.

1. For more information on victim needs, see [ELERV - Critical Needs of Victims](#).

2. Brian A. Reeves, [Police Response to Domestic Violence](#), 2006--2015, Research in Brief, NCJ 250180 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2017).

Benefits to Agency



Improved Case Engagement

Victims who have the assistance of victim services personnel are more likely to remain engaged in the criminal justice process.³



Dedicated Focus on Victims

Having dedicated victim services personnel allows sworn staff more time to focus on the many other aspects of policing in the aftermath of a crime report.



Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Law enforcement-based victim services give sworn agency personnel direct exposure to victim services professionals and can enhance the agency's understanding of victim needs.

Benefits to Community



Increase Community Trust

Law enforcement-based victim services personnel can provide seamless service delivery to crime victims, leading to broader community wide trust and confidence in law enforcement.⁴



Enhanced Public Safety

Agencies that incorporate law enforcement-based victim services are better equipped to support victims through their physical and emotional recovery while also working to prevent future victimizations.⁵



Opportunities for Community Partnerships

Partnerships between law enforcement-based victim services and community based organizations allow victims to access comprehensive services and information about the justice system.

3. Rebecca Campbell, "Rape Survivors' Experiences with the Legal and Medical Systems: Do Rape Victim Advocates Make a Difference?" *Violence Against Women* 12, no. 1 (January 2006): 1-16; Sharon M. Wasco, Rebecca Campbell, Holley Barnes, and Courtney E. Ahrens, "Rape Crisis Centers: Shaping Survivors' Experiences with Community Systems Following Sexual Assault" (paper presentation, Biennial Conference of the Society for Community Research and Action, New Haven, CT, 1999); Debra Patterson and Brenda Tringali, "Understanding How Advocates Can Affect Sexual Assault Victim Engagement in the Criminal Justice Process," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 30, no. 12 (2015): 1987-1997.

4. IACP, [Pathways Toward Collective Healing—Law Enforcement and the Communities They Serve: Collective Healing in the Wake of Harm](#) (Alexandria, VA: IACP, 2021).

5. Reeves, [Police Response to Domestic Violence](#), 2006-2015.

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