

# Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV)

**Supervision**  
September 2024



## Management vs. Supervision

The terms management and supervision are often used interchangeably. However, recognizing the difference is key to understanding how to approach these two distinct but complementary roles. In general, management focuses on overall direction, goals, and tasks of a program, while supervision focuses on ensuring that personnel can achieve those goals and accomplish the tasks.

### Management

People **manage things** (strategic planning, policies and procedures, budgets).



High-level Decisions



Administrative Tasks



Agency Policy Implementation



Performance Appraisals

### Supervision

People **supervise people** (employee growth, training, overseeing day-to-day performance).



Proactive Engagement



Collaboration



Individual Professional Development



Programmatic Growth

## Common Supervisory Mistakes

### Don't



#### **Supervise passively**

Strategies such as “open door” policies can be an effective part of supervision, but they cannot replace regularly scheduled check-ins. Even the strongest and most experienced victim services personnel need regular supervision.



#### **Rely too heavily on peer learning**

Avoid turning existing victim services personnel with more experience into a de facto supervisor without the title or compensation to go with this added responsibility.



#### **Set unclear expectations**

Simply telling staff they are doing a great job without established standards to support it can leave staff feeling confused. This can also limit a supervisor's ability to address concerns that arise.

### Do



#### **Supervise proactively**

Having regular standing meetings with supervisees demonstrates value for the position and allows staff to raise issues before they require additional help. Meeting regularly also allows supervisors to better monitor and track an employee's successes, growth, and professional development needs.



#### **Ensure responsibilities are balanced**

Ensure all staff have the necessary resources, training, and support to perform their duties effectively. Peer learning can be a great tool for new victim services personnel when lines of supervision and onboarding responsibilities are clear and balanced between appropriate team members.



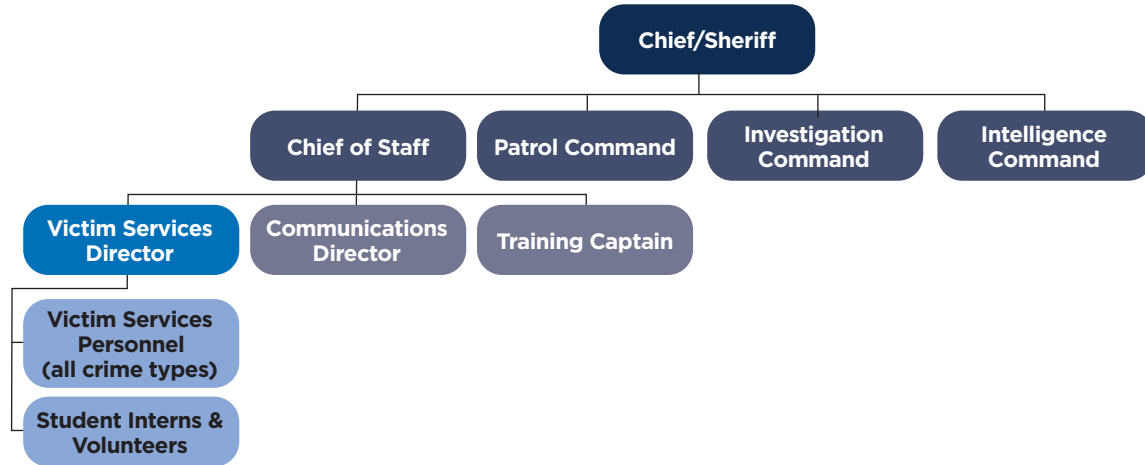
#### **Establish performance standards**

Having a set of established performance standards helps personnel have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Regular, standardized employee evaluations can help supervisors ensure staff are meeting expectations and providing the best possible services to victims.

# Options for Reporting Structure

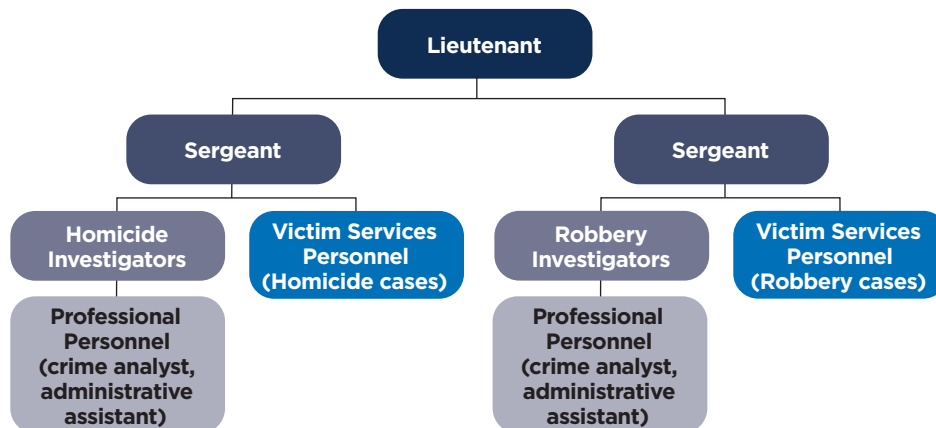
## Centralized or Decentralized Model?

### Centralized Victim Services



**Centralized model** – all victim services personnel report to the same dedicated unit supervisor

### Decentralized Victim Services



**Decentralized model** – victim services personnel report to different supervisors depending on crime type served or other assignment

The placement of the Victim Services Unit (VSU) on the organizational chart directly impacts supervision. Agencies should consider whether a centralized or decentralized model of victim services best fits the needs of the agency.<sup>1</sup> A centralized model allows for more streamlined decision-making and supervision, while agencies using a decentralized model may have multiple supervisors of victim services personnel spread across multiple units, impacting the standardization of services provided. Whether a centralized or decentralized model is used, ongoing communication and collaboration are required among victim services personnel and supervisors to ensure equitable service provision.

1. For more information on reporting structure and its impact on supervision, see [LEV - Advocacy Parameters](#).

## Sworn or Professional Staff Supervisor?

When identifying a supervisor for victim services staff members, agencies often have to determine if the immediate supervisor will be sworn or professional staff. At times, a sworn staff member is identified as the supervisor, but later, as the program grows, a professional staff member with a victim services background may be selected to lead the unit. When making this decision, agencies should consider the benefits and challenges. Each option has unique benefits and potential drawbacks, outlined below.<sup>2</sup>

	Sworn Staff Supervisor	Professional Staff Supervisor
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ More experienced in the criminal justice system</li><li>■ Knowledgeable in law enforcement agency culture</li><li>■ Established relationships with management</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Experienced in victim services provision and victim advocacy</li><li>■ Potentially less frequent turnover or assignment change</li><li>■ Primary focus on victim services oversight</li><li>■ Ability to assist with service provision, if needed</li></ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Potentially frequent turnover due to promotion and re-assignments</li><li>■ Potential split responsibilities (e.g., oversee victim services and homicide investigations)</li><li>■ May not possess first-hand experience of victim services delivery</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ May not have professional experience in a law enforcement agency or in the criminal justice system</li><li>■ Will likely need to build relationships with the chain of command and be provided additional agency education/training</li></ul>

Remember that organizational structure can and should evolve as the agency's needs and capacity change.

2. See [LEV - Agency Incorporation of Victim Services](#) for specific examples of how sworn and professional leadership can each offer different benefits to victim services units.

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