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# **VICTIM SERVICES AGENCY: FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

**New York City  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
A.	Background .....	2
B.	Open Questions for the Victim Services Movement .....	3
C.	Open Questions for VSA .....	4
II.	BOUNDARIES .....	7
A.	Introduction .....	7
B.	Background .....	7
1.	Type of Services .....	7
2.	Types of Victims .....	8
3.	Preventing Victimization .....	9
4.	Geographical Boundaries .....	9
5.	Activity Boundaries .....	10
6.	Travelers Services .....	10
C.	The Current Environment .....	10
D.	The Future .....	11
E.	Conclusions and Questions .....	12
III.	COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES .....	13
A.	Minimum Standards .....	13
B.	Courts .....	14
C.	Community Programs .....	14
D.	Special Victims .....	15
E.	Special Services .....	15

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (con't)

F.	Future Directions .....	16
1.	Courts .....	16
2.	Community Services .....	17
3.	Special Victims .....	19
G.	Conclusions and Questions .....	19
IV.	THE ROLE OF RESEARCH .....	20
A.	What Types of Research Would Be Most Appropriate? .....	21
1.	Basic Research On Victims' Needs .....	21
2.	Research On Systems That Affect Victims .....	22
3.	Model Program Evaluation .....	22
4.	Operational Analysis .....	23
B.	Conclusions and Questions .....	24
V.	PUBLIC POLICY .....	25
A.	History and Background .....	25
B.	Future Directions .....	27
C.	Conclusions and Questions .....	27
VI.	TRAINING AND PUBLIC EDUCATION .....	28
A.	Introduction .....	28
B.	Background .....	28
C.	The Current Environment .....	29

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (con't)

1.	Training of Mental Health Providers .....	29
2.	Training Criminal Justice and Social Services Personnel On Domestic Violence .....	30
D.	Conclusions and Questions .....	31
VII.	PERSONNEL .....	32
A.	Who Is The Work Force? .....	32
B.	Possible Solutions .....	33
1.	Flex Time On A Systematic and Widespread Basis .....	33
2.	Enhanced Training .....	33
3.	Educational Benefits .....	34
4.	Attracting Staff From Clients .....	34
5.	More Autonomy, More Restraints .....	34
6.	Relying More on Volunteers and Part-Time Staff .....	35
VIII.	CURRENT AND FUTURE FUNDING .....	37
A.	Government Contract .....	37
1.	City Funding .....	37
2.	State Funding .....	38
3.	Federal Funding .....	40
B.	Non-Government Sources .....	40
1.	Private Funding .....	40
2.	Other Income .....	42
3.	Interest and Dividend Income .....	43

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (con't)

<b>C.</b>	<b>Possibilities for Future Funding .....</b>	<b>43</b>
1.	Exploring New Fundraising Fundraising Strategies .....	43
2.	Developing a Reimbursement System With The Crime Victims Board .....	44
3.	Encouraging Legislative Solutions .....	44

### IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	Boundaries .....	45
2.	Comprehensive Services .....	45
3.	Research .....	46
4.	Public Policy .....	46 -
5.	Training .....	46
6.	Public Education .....	46
7.	Personnel .....	46
8.	Funding .....	47

APPENDIX A: Summary of the Environment in which VSA Activities Operate

APPENDIX B: List of Project Sites

## I. INTRODUCTION

When the Victim Services Agency (VSA) was launched in 1978, its goals were to reduce the cost, inconvenience and trauma associated with being the victim of a crime. It grew out of a federally funded demonstration program housed in Brooklyn Criminal Court and staffed by 40 employees and five volunteers. Today both the mission and scope of the Agency have changed. As a result of a 1982 merger with the Travelers Aid Services, the Agency with its new name the Metropolitan Assistance Corporation (MAC) now assists family and friends of victims, travelers in distress, homeless, runaways and immigrants as well as crime victims and their family and friends in more than 40 programs from 67 different sites. Last year VSA's 400 full-time and 85 part-time employees assisted by 146 volunteers helped more than 120,000 people. VSA's work is supported by the city, state, and federal governments as well as by foundations, corporations and individuals.

In creating the organization, Mayor Koch said, "I believe that each individual victim deserves to have a vehicle through which he or she can express his or her needs..... Where important services are not provided, the Agency itself will develop programs to meet the need."

Over the past ten years, VSA has acted in terms of this mandate. For example, as New Yorkers have become more aware of domestic violence, crimes against the elderly, and incest, VSA has created new programs to assist the victims of these crimes. The result has been an Agency valued for its responsiveness to complex and changing needs.

But during this time VSA has not been accustomed to shaping its own long-range agenda. While young organizations often have a limited capacity for self-direction, VSA has now acquired the level of knowledge and expertise to both carry out and benefit from concerted planning. Thus, as VSA enters its second decade, the Agency is embarking on a planning process that will allow it to set goals for its second ten years. This paper, which was developed with contributions from staff and Board members, is a first step in that process. Our plan is that it will stimulate additional discussions with the staff and Board as well as with clients, other service providers, and policy makers so that a responsive, feasible, and far-reaching plan emerges to guide us during the next decade.

**A. Background:** VSA has its roots in the movement to expand services for crime victims, which grew steadily around the nation and particularly in New

York City during the 1970s. A brief summary of these developments may help to set VSA's past work and future plans in context.

In the early 1970s criminal justice officials had come to recognize that most victims and witnesses were dissatisfied with the court system. Public confidence in law enforcement was so low that nearly two-thirds of all crimes were unreported.

Numerous victims and witnesses were refusing to cooperate with the prosecution, and numerous cases were dismissed because victims and potential witnesses perceived sentences as too lenient and were deterred from taking part in court proceedings out of fear, lack of confidence, or because the cost or inconvenience was too high.

In 1974 the U.S. Department of Justice launched a series of demonstration projects designed to foster the willingness of victims and witnesses to take part in court proceedings. One of the first was VSA's precursor, the Victim/Witness Assistance Project created by the Vera Institute of Justice in 1975. The goals of the project were to reduce the number of unnecessary appearances in court for victims, witnesses, and police officers; to provide the prosecution with information about whether witnesses would be appearing in court; and to offer victims and witnesses support services such as transportation and child care that would eliminate obstacles to court appearance.

A second major factor in the growth of the victim movement during the 1970s was the development of the women's movement. As the role of women in society was re-examined, it was recognized that crimes against women, specifically rape and domestic violence, were far more common than had been previously believed.

Encouraged by consciousness-raising groups and the feminist movement, victims began to break the silence and shame surrounding rape and battering. Many came to recognize that they were not responsible for the crimes committed against them and concluded that bringing them into the open was therapeutic. Rape crisis centers, hotlines, and battered women's shelters were established by volunteers, often survivors, to provide emotional support and safety to victims. More broadly, in its effort to empower women, the feminist movement heightened public sensitivity to the psychological effect of not only rape and battering but of all crimes, through emphasizing how these crimes created feelings of powerlessness, isolation and guilt.

Because the interests of criminal justice officials and feminists were initially different from one another, each group developed a distinct approach to helping victims. Programs established within prosecutors' offices or police departments have focused on the court-related needs of victims as witnesses, such as transportation and notification of court appearances. Programs that grew out of the women's movement have usually been community-based, often staffed by volunteers, and serving rape and domestic violence victims. Because these staff felt that their clients were treated insensitively by police, prosecutors and judges many of the rape and domestic violence programs initially had an adversarial relationship to the criminal justice system. A number of programs have overcome these antagonisms and today work cooperatively with the criminal justice system.

Today, U.S. communities are home to over 6000 victim assistance programs. In addition to free-standing, not-for-profit agencies such as VSA, victim assistance programs are housed in prosecutors' offices, police and probation departments, social service and mental health agencies, neighborhood associations, women's organizations, and the offices of religious groups.

In the last decade however, both in New York City and nationally, victim services have grown more rapidly than victims' rights because efforts to address victims rights have been met with some resistance. Victims are just beginning to forge an active role in the American criminal justice system, which has traditionally limited victim involvement to initiating the case, and in rare cases, testifying at the trial. This is so even though research conducted jointly by the Vera Institute of Justice and VSA documented the interest of victims in having greater participation in the system. VSA and other victim programs have established procedures that seek to introduce the victims' voice into case processing. And in some states victims have been granted rights but there have not been accompanied by a mechanism for redress if they are denied. Over the next decade, it is, therefore, likely that the victim's services movement will be grappling with a number of issues associated with integrating the crime victim into the criminal justice process.

**B. Open Questions for the Victim Services Movement:** As the victim services movement enters the 1990s, it confronts a number of serious questions. Some reflect the tensions associated with the earliest years of the movement; others have arisen as the structure of services has become more complex. Since many, if



not all, of these questions have a bearing on VSA's future, this section offers a brief overview of them.

- What is the proper balance the movement should try to strike between efforts to increase services and to develop and strengthen rights? Would a stronger role in the criminal justice system empower victims sufficiently to lessen the need for counseling? For example, many practitioners in the movement believe that if a battered woman is taken as seriously as a robbery victim by the court and feels supported by the criminal justice system, her capacity to extricate herself from an abusive relationship will be much greater than if she feels ignored by the courts.
- Should the emphasis of the movement be on helping victims through the criminal justice process, thereby directing services to arrest cases? Or should activity be focused in neighborhoods with an effort to reach out to victims in cases where arrests have not been made and where victims have not even reported the crime to the police?
- Should the movement seek to recruit and train workers specializing in the needs of victims? Or would it be more efficient to train members of other helping professions such as police officers or social workers to provide these services.
- If victim assistance providers become closely integrated into criminal justice, legal and educational systems, will they lose their power to advocate for individual clients? For victims as a group?
- What are the boundaries of services that the movement should provide? Are victims who commit crime such as battered women who strike back, appropriate clients? Should it extend services to victims of other catastrophes?

C. **Open Questions for VSA:** Besides the broad questions facing the victims' services movement, the ten-year plan must address a number of issues that relate more specifically to New York City and VSA's own record in the field. They are:

- ***Boundaries of Services:*** As a pioneer in identifying needs of crime victims and then designing and setting up programs to meet them, VSA has grown in many directions. The merger with Travelers Aid in 1982 further expanded the roles the Agency has assumed and has created some confusion internally as well as with the public. One response to VSA's size, complexity and diversity would be to create new and independent, not-for-profit corporations or have selected projects adopted by other agencies so that administrative and fiscal burdens on VSA would be reduced. A less radical approach would be to restructure the corporation and create subsidiary corporations with distinct names, autonomy, and well-articulated missions.

- **Comprehensive Delivery of Services:** In New York City, VSA's 11 community offices serve 21 of the 75 police precincts. In addition, there is a sprinkling of neighborhood based victim assistance programs sponsored by community organizations which serve additional police precincts. VSA services that focus on particular groups of victims are even more scattered: For example, the Agency's Program for Families of Homicide Victims conducts outreach and court advocacy only in Brooklyn.

To insure the rational delivery of services to crime victims and survivors, VSA needs to consider: 1) whether certain services such as crisis intervention, information and referral should be available to every crime victim, and if so, what those services should be; 2) whether more intensive services such as practical assistance, counseling, support groups, and court advocacy should be available to victims of certain heinous crimes such as survivors of homicide, rape, and aggravated assault, and 3) whether VSA should continue to act as a primary provider of victim services in New York City.

- **Research:** VSA probably has a greater research capacity than any other service agency in the victim field. However, while the Agency has conducted selected studies to understand the impact of crime on victims and victims' role in the criminal justice system, it has not systematically collected data on all of its projects. Similarly, only some potentially replicable pilot projects have been designed with an evaluation component capable of documenting success or failure. In light of these factors, it would be useful to consider: 1) Should more energy be concentrated on routine data collection or on demonstration projects? 2) Should pilot programs be launched if VSA lacks the funds to assess them? 3) How can the Agency disseminate results so that other agencies benefit from its experience?
- **Public Policy:** VSA's efforts at influencing public policy have been sporadic. Activities have included proposing legislation and reviewing administrative regulations, working for passage of some bills, and on occasion, supporting federal initiatives. As the largest provider of services to victims the Agency may have a responsibility to develop a stronger capacity to speak for victims in the development of regulations and laws to protect them. It is also necessary to consider whether an Agency funded by public sources is constrained in its advocacy efforts.
- **Training and Public Education:** One important approach to improving the treatment of victims and expanding the delivery of services is through training professionals to identify and assist crime victims to educate the public about how to protect itself against and cope with crime. VSA has conducted trainings for police officers, judges, assistant district attorneys, teachers, physicians and nurses with the goal of sensitizing them to victims' needs and informing them of victim services. These and other similar training and public education activities have the potential to reach

and affect large numbers of people with a relatively modest use of resources. At the same time, compared to direct services, the impact of these activities may be short-lived and diluted. Given these considerations, VSA should determine the degree of emphasis it wishes to place on each of these approaches.

- ***Administrative Issues:*** Once VSA has determined its future goals, the Agency should determine the funding and staffing requirements necessary to meet them and begin to map out strategies for filling those requirements.

The following sections of the paper examine each of these issues in more detail.

## II. BOUNDARIES

**A. Introduction:** When Mayor Koch announced the founding of VSA he described the Agency's goals: "to increase services to victims of crime and improve the effectiveness of case processing in the criminal justice system" While this mandate has informed much of VSA's development, we have not restricted our activities to these two goals. The most radical departure resulted from the merger with the Travelers Aid Society in 1982, not anticipated in VSA's original blueprint. As a result we operate travelers and immigrant services, a runaway hotline and the Streetwork Project an outreach project for homeless youth. We have also undertaken other activities such as pregnancy prevention, a welfare hotel and family counseling to prevent child abuse, endeavors somewhat afiel from the original plans for the Agency.

Since serving victims was uncharted territory when VSA began, we faced many choices. Decisions on new initiatives have been primarily guided by identifying unmet needs of crime victims and the availability of funding. For example, early on, counselors reported that victims often needed emergency shelter. In response, we raised private funds and obtained changes in government regulations that allow us to give "dignity money" or food to victims. As the number of homeless and hungry people mounted during the mid-1980's federal funds were designated to meet crisis needs and we successfully argued that battered women should qualify so that we now have some institutionalized sources for emergency food, shelter, transportation, and cash.

Because we have adopted an entrepreneurial approach to developing services our growth has not always been orderly. In looking to the future, our approach needs to be modified because: 1) by trying to pursue many opportunities at once may cause an Agency to sacrifice the quality of its services; 2) other organizations now exist which can take advantage of the opportunities and develop the services as well as or better than VSA; 3) VSA is considered by other victim programs as a threat because of its size and perceived power; 4) many crime victim needs are yet unmet.

**B. Background:** Examining how some of our services evolved and where gaps persist, should help us develop a strategy for growth.

**1. Types of services:** When VSA started, we envisioned services limited to crisis intervention, court assistance, and help with practical problems such as food, transportation, and document replacement. We assumed

services to elderly crime victims: A senior citizens program with staff trained to deal with crime victims? A victims program with staff trained to deal with senior citizens? Or specialized programs designed particularly for elderly crime victims?

Another group of victims we have not reached because of our or their lack of interest or our failure of imagination about how to reach them are victims of white collar crime, Federal crimes, and arson as well as victims who are merchants.

Most recently, we have confronted the thorny issue of whether we should help crime victims who become offenders. What is our responsibility toward battered women who fight back and maim or kill the man who has abused them?

**3. Preventing victimization:** In the founding paper, we talked about programs designed to reduce criminal victimization through community efforts to make neighborhoods more physically secure (through safe corridors or improved lighting). We did not envision social efforts at reducing crime such as teaching crime prevention or counseling batterers. However, we have observed that after several years of working with victims to help them cope with the aftermath of crime, staff want to become involved in prevention. The prevention activities we are engaged in include the Domestic Violence Prevention Project, Project SMART (the school mediation project), group counseling for batterers and incest offenders and community education on crime, with particular focus on rape and sexual assault.

While crime prevention may be too slippery a concept to use as a boundary, it has the appeal of allowing us to attack the root of the problem rather than limiting activities to after the fact. Prevention activities may be important to reduce burn-out and keep staff stimulated and hopeful.

**4. Geographical boundaries:** We have been comfortable within New York City as the usual parameter of our activities. On occasion, we have ventured out. For example, we are engaged in a national training on domestic violence for police chiefs. We are exploring the possibility of setting up a Travelers Aid program in Newark. When we have been approached about setting up services outside of New York City, such as mediation services in Westchester, we have demurred.

**5. Activity boundaries:** VSA has not restricted its activities to direct services, but has been involved in research, legislation, advocacy, coordination, and training. Indeed, originally, we envisioned that these types of activities would absorb more energy than direct services but we found that:

- The clients demand for direct services was more obvious and compelling than outside agencies request for coordinating activities such as police, development or evaluation;
- There was less political resistance to providing services than to assuming an advocacy or coordinating role;
- Funding was more readily available for services. Some of the other sections of this paper deal with whether we should intensify these non-direct service activities.

**6. Travelers services:** The merger with Travelers Aid extended our boundaries considerably: homeless and immigrants became appropriate clients. However, the merger is confusing to the public: they may legitimately question why VSA operates a runaway hotline or immigration services? Some of these issues can be cleared up through better public information about the two divisions and more careful distinctions between whether VSA or Travelers Aid is the sponsor of an activity. Clarifying the boundaries of both VSA and TAS might help the public understand and identify the two divisions of MAC.

**C. The Current Environment:** Some VSA staff members feel that there has been too much emphasis on growth. Among complaints that have been voiced are:

- The Agency's administrative resources have been stretched so they no longer meet the needs of programs, managers, and line staff;
- MAC has become an impersonal Agency because of its size. Employees sometimes have little sense of relationship with each other, even when they do similar work.
- Agency employees have too little input in expansion decisions;
- The flow of information from headquarters to field offices is too scarce and slow.

Whether or not these complaints are well-founded, the fact remains that many staff resent the Agency's rapid growth. There is widespread longing for a slowing of the Agency growth and a clarification of its mission, structure, and boundaries.

**D. The Future:** Among the issues we need to consider as we think forward are: 1) Should we shrink, maintain or expand boundaries? What criteria should we use? 2) If we continue to grow with or without new boundaries, how do we structure the growth so that staff and the public perceive it as a strength rather than as a flaw?

It may be that one way to respond to these concerns is through structural changes. The problems may not be that the Agency's growth has been too rapid and diverse, but that its structure is unwieldy and ill-defined. One response would be more distinct divisions, each with identified purposes and boundaries and each division with its autonomous or semi-autonomous administrative resources (such as fiscal staff, computer systems and space).

Implicit in this view is the notion that MAC would have few pre-defined boundaries. Instead, each of MAC's operating division (e.g., VSA, TAS, and possibly others) would have clearly defined missions.

Among the advantages of decentralized structure would be:

- Staff would have more input into decisions affecting their division;
- Assuming each division adequately defined its boundaries, confusion about boundaries and "mission" would be diminished;
- Each division could grow at its own rate rather than at a rate imposed upon it;
- Since each division would have its own identity, outside agencies would find MAC less confusing;
- Trainers, fiscal officers, planners, systems personnel and other support staff assigned to (and possibly hired by) a particular division would be more knowledgeable about and responsive to the needs of the division and its individual programs;
- MAC could continue to grow.

On the other hand, a more decentralized Agency structure would pose numerous problems and challenges:

- The decentralization of administrative resources would cost money (economies of scale would be lost);
- Arguably, a higher caliber of managers would have to be recruited (this too would cost money);
- Quality control would be come more difficult. Inevitably, disparities between the quality of services rendered by different divisions would develop;
- Competition between divisions (for free space, funding, and administrative resources) could become fierce;
- Staff morale could suffer in divisions that are poorly managed or slow to grow. Staff may feel bereft if not part of the MAC mothership.

**E. Conclusions and Questions:** Our development as a stable, comprehensive, and diversely supported Agency allows us more berth in managing how we grow during our second decade. In a preliminary discussion on growth, the Board has recommended keeping the MAC structure, but creating firmer boundaries for the individual divisions. Are we prepared to strengthen the operational divisions with their own fiscal, administrative, and personnel resources? Should we start with one division? What divisions can we imagine: Crime Victims; Homeless, Travelers and Immigrants; Mediation; and Offender Treatment Programs? Are there other possibilities?



### III. COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

VSA's evolution reflects our roots in the courts, the research we've conducted, an entrepreneurial approach which takes advantage of available sources of funding and what staff and clients inform us are victims' needs. Because services were developed more in response to these factors than in response to a systematic survey of needs, the delivery of services to crime victims in New York City is not distributed evenly or in highly rational fashion. Knowing that it would be difficult to garner sufficient resources to fill all the service gaps, one way of ordering the continued growth of victim assistance programs in the city would be to establish a level of minimum services that would be available to all citizens of the City. In thinking about the future of victim services in New York City as well as the future of VSA, we should in conjunction with city agencies and victim advocates, establish standards, figure out how New York City might meet these standards, and determine what role VSA should play.

**A. Minimum Standards:** The concept of a minimum standard is based on the notion that all crime victims have the rights to certain services. In New York State, the closest effort to enumerate these services is found in the 1984 Fair Treatment Standards for Crime Victims Act, which broadly lays out a set of rights and services which victims are entitled to in the criminal justice system. Many states have a similar standards but their shortcomings are, that they don't elaborate on what services should be available (only that the police should refer victims to services); don't establish sanctions that be imposed on the police, prosecutors or judges if the standards are not met; and generally only apply to victims of crimes that have resulted in an arrest. There has been no effort to systematically define entitlements for victims in cases without arrest. In a 1982 VSA research study, "Victims and Helpers: Reactions to Crime," VSA made an effort to find out from victims what they need. We learned that 75% of victims (burglary, assault, and robbery) suffer psychologically, feeling angry, shameful, guilty, and helpless. Many experience fear of another victimization. Practical problems include financial stress; inconvenience in replacing or repairing property; the need for lock repairs, borrowing money, someone to stay with them and transportation. This study guided the development of VSA's services and our efforts to combine practical help with supportive services.

VSA has developed three sets of services: court based which are the best developed and most consistent, community based which serve 11 communities

and extend to victims in cases which there has been no arrest, and special services which are the most intensive (involving long-term counseling, shelter, advocacy, and practical assistance) but least widespread.

**B. Courts:** Combined with District Attorneys offices an array of services are offered in the City's ten family and criminal courts\* :

- Reception centers where victims and witnesses can wait before testifying in a safe and dignified environment;
- Crisis intervention counseling and advocacy with court officials;
- Notification of upcoming court dates; procedures for excusing or putting victims and witnesses on call;
- Transportation to shelters, courts and hospitals;
- Assistance in recovering stolen property and in replacing lost documents and property;
- Information about entitlements including crime victim compensation, restitution, and Orders of Protection; and
- Information about additional services to address the aftermath of victimization (such as shelter, food, and counseling).

In some courts, we provide day care, court accompaniment and intensive advocacy for families of homicide victims and battered women. While we notify victims of court dates, we have not successfully developed a system to advise them and get their input on every court decisions such as bail setting, pleas and sentencing.

**C. Community Programs:** VSA has 11 community offices serving 21 of the 75 police precincts. These offices vary in the services they offer from crisis intervention and practical help to a continuum of services for battered women, such as, emergency and transitional shelter, day care, lock replacement, and counseling for them and their children. To reach the victims who report crimes and the sixty percent who do not, community offices are exploring different outreach strategies. Community education and crime prevention are two areas the community offices have been involved with but for which formulas have not been developed.

\* Except in Manhattan Criminal Court where VSA activities are limited to administering restitution, VSA is the primary provider of victim services.

**D. Special Victims:** As VSA developed programs for crime victims, certain groups emerged as needing specially tailored services. Surviving family members of murder victims is the most compelling example. While these families share with other victims the need for court advocacy and assistance in arranging compensation, they also require, long term services best provided by specialized staff exclusively committed to serving them and by peer support from other survivors. Other groups of crime victims in need of special services include:

- Domestic violence victims who need temporary and permanent shelter, counseling for themselves and their children, court advocacy, and employment. Their need for services may extend from the time they are first abused, until they flee their home and subsequently establish an independent life away from the batterer.
- Sexual assault victims who may require counseling court advocacy for themselves and their families (short- and long-term), and peer support groups. Most recently, we recognize that these victims also require counseling about AIDS;
- Incest survivors and their family members who require court advocacy, family counseling, offender counseling as well as long term therapy;
- Elder abuse victims, who often feel particular shame, need extra encouragement to seek help, court accompaniment, assistance with completing social security and other forms, as well as support from peers;
- Crime victims with disabilities who have added difficulty in negotiating complex criminal justice and social service systems;
- Children who as victims or witnesses to adult family violence may learn to deal with anger violently; and
- Immigrant crime victims who often distrust the police because of their experience in their country of origin and for whom language, documentation requirements and a foreign criminal justice system creates barriers to obtaining help.

**E. Special Services:** In the beginning, VSA had planned to limit its services to practical assistance, crisis intervention, advocacy and crime prevention. As the earlier sections of this chapter indicate, many of these services have been developed and expanded upon. However, some current areas of activity, particularly housing, legal services and drug abuse counseling, represent a departure. The major impetus in these examples has been clients requesting the service, counselors bemoaning the lack of services, and other affiliated

deal with many and perhaps competing agencies serving crime victims. And, indeed, competition from other agencies to deliver court services has been limited.

The competition that VSA has encountered in the courts, in fact, has come from the District Attorneys, who in many parts of the country, provide victim services. There are, however, disadvantages to DA's providing these services. They tend to view victims as witnesses rather than as injured parties; are not closely linked with community resources which help meet victims non-court needs; and are not able legally to protect the confidentiality of clients' records and, in fact, may be obligated to provide them to the defense. In addition, victim advocates inside a prosecutor's office must bow to the demands of the bureaucracy which may compete with victims' own needs. Furthermore, services for victims in a prosecutor's office would be susceptible to cuts if funding for other "essential" prosecutorial functions became strained.

2. **Community services:** VSA's role in providing community services is neither as defined nor as extensive as in the courts. In addition, because a network of community based agencies exist VSA may encounter resentment if it establishes services in neighborhoods when local agencies have the potential or know how to serve crime victims. Besides resistance from the community, there may be other advantages to VSA taking a back seat in the creation of a network of neighborhood based offices because community based agencies already exist and because they may offer:

- Sensitivity to community problems and people;
- Convenience for victims;
- Better use of community resources particularly volunteers involved in community block and tenant organizations;
- Cost effectiveness; and
- The opportunity to build a network of victim serving agencies which could add momentum, strength and innovation to the victim's movement.

VSA might also benefit by encouraging other agencies to add neighborhood victim components.\* Our free-standing neighborhood offices, are isolated, and more expensive to run than had we chosen to provide these services centrally. Furthermore by supporting the development of victim components at the community level we could create allies and reverse the threatening image that we have among some providers because we have garnered what is perceived as a disproportionately large piece of the funding pie. This strategy might also result in a speedier spread of services than if VSA by itself were to try to fill all geographical service gaps. In addition, it would free up VSA resources for other initiatives.

The disadvantage this strategy poses is that it may create confusion for the public, city agencies, and particularly the NYPD, about which agency is providing services for victims. In addition, increasing the number of service providers could create an unhealthy competition among neighborhood groups for funding, press coverage and clients.

If VSA were to decide not to develop new community offices but to advocate successfully for funding for victim programs in every community, it might be appropriate for VSA to help community organizations by:

- Developing protocols for outreach, counseling victims, and/or advocating on their behalf with social service and criminal justice systems;
- Training the community providers on using the protocols;
- Providing technical assistance and case consultation;
- Developing protocols with criminal justice, social service, health and educational providers on responding to crime victims;
- Convening a coalition of community groups; and

\* VSA's most focused effort to get neighborhood groups to provide victim services came in 1984, when it conducted a pilot project with the Citizens Committee of New York City and four community based organizations. The project built on VSA research suggesting that a majority of crime victims turn to neighbors, relatives and friends for emotional support. VSA and the Citizens Committee identified community groups which recruited volunteers to provide victims psychological first aid and referral to services. The project worked well and not far beyond the funding period only in two communities; suggesting it was not a fool-proof method for delivering neighborhood based services.

- Acting as a conduit for funding.

Assuming these roles without engendering resentment would be a delicate undertaking because they imply that VSA has been anointed an expert. An alternative strategy might be for the community programs to place a coordinator in each precinct who would provide victims with psychological first aid and practical assistance and then screen and refer victims to a VSA multi-service center which would provide more intense psychological services for special victims (such as victims of child sexual assault or elder abuse). Still another strategy would be to outstation VSA staff to community programs.

**3. Special Victims:** VSA services for special groups of victims such as elder abuse victims and families of homicide victims have usually started as demonstration projects. While some of the programs have been institutionalized, it has usually been on a smaller scale than the original funding. The result is unevenness in services for these particularly traumatized victims.

The development of services for special victims should be guided by the frequency of incidents and their geographical distribution. At minimum, there should be services available in each borough. Ideally they would be centralized in multi-service centers providing long term help for any victim and well as for those who require long term counseling.

**G. Conclusions and Questions:** Despite the financial pressures that the City and State are facing, there are possibilities for adding services and for redistributing some of the resources already dedicated to crime victims.

- What risks would VSA assume if it were to press for a more systematic approach to the allocation of victim services resources?
- What is the chance of success in influencing decision or arriving at consensus about minimum standards?
- Should an advisory commission of directors from voluntary agencies and city agencies be formed to help guide the development of victim services?

#### IV. THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

VSA inherited a strong research department from the Vera Institute. During its first years, along with Vera, VSA conducted studies on the role of the victim in the court process, the restitution process, the frequency and nature of intimidation, and informal support provided to victims by friends and family.

But in the mid 1980s a combination of factors made research a less prominent part of VSA's program. These included the phasing down of federal funding for research, the reluctance of the city and state to support research, and the growing demand -- and hence greater availability of funds -- for direct services. As a result, the research department, which comprised 10 staff members in 1979, had only two in 1984.

Still, throughout the 1980s the department did complete a number of important projects. These included an assessment of the effectiveness of teaching victims to reduce their vulnerability to crime, studies on the psychological and material effects of crime on victims, an evaluation of victim impact statements, and two studies on victim and witness intimidation.

Today, the tide appears to once again be turning towards more support for research on victims' issues. The Justice Department has renewed its interest in this work and it is likely that as more federal and state funds are dedicated to services for victims, the demand for assessing the effectiveness of these services will grow. In combination with these factors, other observations about the current state of the field suggest that this is an opportune time for organizations to expand their research on victims' issues. To start, victim services are now well enough established so that negative findings pose little risk to society's basic commitment to these activities. Also, the range and type of services are increasing rapidly. This suggests the need for evaluation of services to guide VSA and other agencies in decisions about which programs should be invested in and which should be phased out. Similarly, research could inform decisions about training and legislation, as well as help secure and maintain funding.

Thus, there are good reasons for research to expand rapidly over the next decade. Similarly, there are good reasons to look to VSA to take on a position of leadership in this new surge of activity. Of chief importance is the Agency's record of conducting studies on victim-related issues. A number of other organizational strengths also indicate that VSA is well positioned to take on a leadership role.

- The Agency is well known and respected. It has an established place in the criminal justice system and enjoys city, state, and national recognition. This visibility enables VSA to influence policy through the dissemination of its research results. For example, VSA's research on intimidation has been cited by legislators in many states who have successfully sought more stringent penalties for defendants who intimidate victims.
- VSA works with a large number of clients and is involved with them at many stages of the social service and court process. Combined with the cultural diversity of New York City, the number and variety of clients served by VSA creates excellent conditions for a research laboratory. A VSA study conducted in New York generates large numbers of subjects more rapidly than would be the case in smaller jurisdictions.
- The scope of VSA's work is unusually broad. In contrast to the range of services in most victim assistance programs, VSA's projects are not limited to direct services and often encompass more than one site and type of victim.
- VSA has access to basic data. Many VSA programs use computerized systems of tracking case records, enabling the Agency to answer questions - on the nature of program activities and on such client characteristics as income and gender.

**A. What Types of Research Would Be Most Appropriate?** If VSA is to expand its research role, it could continue to pursue diverse types of research or it could decide to concentrate more heavily on one or two of four specific areas. The options are:

**1. Basic Research on Victims' Needs:** In a 1981 study for the National Institute of Justice, VSA examined the informal sources from which victims sought assistance. The study found that while few victims turn to the social services system for help, virtually all receive support from family, friends, and neighbors.

The past five years have been a time of considerable growth in the number of studies that, like the 1981 study, seek to learn more about the needs of victims. Still, there are topics about which relatively little is known. VSA is now conducting a study for the National Institute of Mental Health to examine how family and friends help -- and hinder -- the recovery of rape victims. There are a number of other unanswered questions that interest VSA staff. For example, does the court process speed up or retard the healing process for victims? It is often said that the criminal justice



system inflicts a "second wound" on victims. But it is also argued that court actions like punishment of the offender or restitution for the victim promote recovery. As yet, however, there is no systematic evidence about whether on balance court processes significantly help or hinder victims' readjustment.

Other questions of interest to VSA are whether some people in a given community are more likely than others to suffer repeat victimization, and if so, why? VSA studies have revealed that some individuals have lengthy histories of victimizations while their neighbors have little or no such experience. But there is no evidence on whether these are more than random patterns and, if so, why.

One advantage to conducting basic research is the opportunity to promote the development of important knowledge in the field. It also may allow VSA to attract co-investigators from universities to jointly undertake some studies. The drawbacks include the typically long time from conception to results and the concomitant high costs.

**2. Research on systems that affect victims:** VSA's earliest research study was an examination of the role that victims play in criminal prosecution. It was found that many victims failed to cooperate with prosecutors primarily because of dissatisfaction with the court process and inability to attend court (due to scheduling difficulties or lack of notification). That study led to reforms that VSA has launched through its court programs such as restitution, mediation, and advocating for Orders of Protection. Another study that proved influential in shaping criminal justice policies was a study on witness intimidation. It found that threats against witnesses were all too common, that they often went unreported by witnesses, and that not enough was done by officials even when threats were reported.

Research on how the criminal justice, health, and social service system affects victims could benefit victims. However, such research, if conducted by VSA, could create tension between VSA and the systems under study. Outside agencies might perceive the research as a threat and withhold their cooperation or resent VSA if they do cooperate and the results uncover flaws in their procedures and policies.

**3. Model program evaluations:** An early study conducted by the Vera Institute and VSA evaluated a program that mediated felony arrest cases

in which victims and defendants were acquainted. The evaluation found that the program was an effective alternative to court and both the evaluation and the program received national attention. Another VSA study indicated that cognitive/behavioral counseling was more therapeutic in certain settings than crisis intervention counseling. However, thus far, VSA has not been successful in integrating this finding into its counseling strategies.

Other VSA assessment efforts (such as the evaluations of the Domestic Violence Prevention Project and the Victim Impact Demonstration Project) have found mixed or little evidence of program effectiveness. One reason may be that the programs were evaluated when immature and still working out start-up and early implementation problems.

VSA could be an important catalyst for launching, replicating and expanding innovative programs alone or in conjunction with other agencies by well-publicized evaluation reports that document under what condition the program works and why. VSA could use these data to press for criminal justice and legislative reform and for funds for replication. But the Agency should take a lesson from its past experience, and limit its major evaluations to mature programs with good potential for demonstrating success.

**4. Operational Analyses:** This type of research addresses the questions of whether programs fit the mode on which they were conceived and built and whether they are cost-effective. Unlike evaluations, operational analysis requires limited funds and often uses data being captured for other purposes. This kind of research ought to be conducted on new programs. The risks associated with uncovering negative information from such studies are slighter than full-scale evaluations since they are primarily for internal consumption -- helping VSA decide whether to continue or modify a program. When the results are positive the data can bolster arguments for refunding and expanding programs.

Some recent examples from VSA's work include: a comparison of notification procedures in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx (which led to a major redesign of procedures in some sites) and a comparison of how much it costs for a counseling session in various community offices.

Operational research can help VSA keep its programs efficient and lean. It is also among the least expensive types of research and can produce results in the shortest time.

**B. Conclusions and Questions:** Besides setting priorities for kinds of research it wishes to pursue, VSA must address the overall question of whether to commit more resources to research. In corporations, there is a guideline of 4-5% of income to be dedicated to research and development. At VSA, this would equal about \$750,000. While we are spending about \$400,000, most of this is for investigating system issues not assessing VSA operations. In making this decision, it is important to recognize the barriers in an Agency that primarily provides direct services. The imperative to help people who are suffering weighs heavily against the value of documenting, much less evaluating, the services. Another countervailing pressure is that there is immediate satisfaction for administrators in launching a new program; research takes much longer. Finally, despite the emerging interest in research, the pull on our hearts and minds for direct services remain stronger. These pressures raise the question of where best to situate a research department: If it is well integrated with operations, research staff may find it difficult to maintain separateness and neutrality, hindering their ability to interpret results impartially. A research department that functions as a distinct division may better resist the temptation to be involved in day-to-day operational problems but also may not enjoy open access to staff and clients.

## V. PUBLIC POLICY

As a pioneer in the delivery of direct services to crime victims, we have become aware of how existing laws and regulations affect them. When we contemplate future activities, the possibility of improving the lot of crime victims through changes in laws and public policies is appealing. Before considering the advantages and disadvantages of seeking a larger role in public policy, our efforts and those of other victim organizations should be reviewed.

**A. History and background:** In thinking about public policy, we have limited this discussion to crime victims because many established and effective advocacy organizations address the broader issues that affect our clients such as welfare reform, the protection of children, and the homeless. On the national level, the National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA) advocates effectively for federal victim legislation, and, national coalitions exist for victims of domestic violence and rape. More recently, the National Victim Center is spearheading an effort to amend state constitutions so that the victims gain the rights to participate in the court process. This discussion, therefore, primarily focuses on New York City for regulatory and policy changes and on the State for legislative reforms.

Because of the city's limited jurisdiction, the State offers the greatest opportunity and challenge for legislative reforms. The state's victim movement, however, has been disorganized and fragmented. State organizations which are concerned about crime victims include the Crime Victims Board, the Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Department of Social Services (domestic violence and child abuse), the Department of Health (sexual assault), the now defunct Assembly Task Force on Crime Victims, the Judiciary Committee in the State Senate, and the State Crime and Corrections Committee. Active outside of state government, have been regional coalitions of victim organizations (VSA chairs the Downstate Coalition), the State Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Parents of Murdered Children of New York State. Other advocacy groups include Victims for Victims, RID, MADD and SADD.

While there is enthusiastic support for the concept of victim participation in the criminal justice system and the spread of victims assistance programs, passage of bills that mandate specific rights (such as speaking to the prosecutor or judge before a bail decision) or services (such as child care) for victims have been nearly impossible to pass.

VSA has worked for and seen the passage of a fair treatment standards for crime victims; yet we have been unable to garner support for legislation which imposes sanctions for not complying with those standards, for example, tying an agency's funding to compliance. Some of the legislation VSA supports includes: insuring the confidentiality of victims' counseling records; giving the victim a right to speak on sentencing; and prohibiting the disclosure of a victim's address in open court. VSA has, through legislation, successfully helped to increase eligibility categories for victim compensation, strengthen laws governing the use of restitution, and obtain waivers of fees for replacing stolen documents.

While there is no strong state advocacy group to harness the disparate groups and lead reform efforts, it is not clear that VSA should (even if it could) become Nader's analog in the victim field. First, rarely are agencies both effective advocates and deliverers of direct services. Secondly, VSA would need to develop and adopt a more analytical approach to its projects before it could effectively assume the advocate role. There are also risks involved: wasting effort because of political vagaries; creating enemies from current allies such as the District Attorneys (for example, the State District Attorney's Association has opposed bills that VSA has supported concerning the victim's role in the courts); and cost.

On the City level while there are no groups dedicated to advocating for all types of crime victims, there is an Inter-Agency Task Force on Domestic Violence (co-chaired by VSA) and an Advisory Task Force on Rape (frequently chaired by VSA). VSA's staff also participate in committees that recommend policy changes such as the Child Protective Task Force, Committee on Civilian Complaints and School Safety Task Force.

Perhaps VSA's greatest successes in the public policy arena have been through research recommendations for procedure change and demonstration projects. For example, the Domestic Violence Prevention Project (DVPP), a joint program with the police department resulted in an explicit policy about how domestic violence incidents were to be handled. Through its Family of Victims of Homicide project, VSA secured a policy that provides immediate public assistance benefits to survivors. Data gathered by VSA which documented that battered women were increasingly returning to abusive homes after staying in emergency shelters encouraged the City and State to relax regulations to become more flexible on the 90-day stay limit for emergency shelter and to support the creation of transitional shelters. The Streetwork Project has been a model for two other city-supported programs for street youth.

**B. Future Directions:** VSA has many opportunities in shaping city and state policy toward crime victims over the next decade. Some strategies we could adopt include:

- Creating a policy group in New York City that would develop and review regulatory and program initiatives. The group could consist of representatives of criminal justice agencies, social services, aging, education, health, and housing agencies as well as victims and victim advocates. Some of the issues they might address are counseling protocols for victims of sexual assault in relation to AIDS, training requirements on victimology for different agencies, and a housing bank for intimidated crime victims.
- Expanding our research and program demonstration capacity (see earlier chapter) so that we can better review and promote legislative and administrative reform. For example, VSA could monitor the implementation of recent victim impact legislation so that we would know whether statements are being collected or victims are being advised of their right to submit a statement to the Parole Board. VSA might focus on developing programs that have replicability as an explicit goal. Our hospital-based Elder Abuse Assessment team is a good example. If successful, the project will create training materials and protocols and build the argument that an elder abuse coordinator should be a mandated position for every acute care hospital. Another avenue to shaping policy is research on issues facing city and state governments such as screening homeless families to identify battered women, the relationship between child abuse and domestic violence, and the court process for returning stolen property.

**C. Conclusions and Questions:** Through its excellent reputation for delivery of direct services, its research capacity and its contact with a wide range of institutions (criminal justice, education, health care, housing, and social services), VSA is positioned to have impact on several different public policy issues. But:

- Do we dilute the quality of services by getting more deeply involved in policy issues?
- Are there specific subject areas which we should concentrate on?
- Should we divert resources and energy now dedicated to direct services to policy changes because of the greater impact?

## VI. TRAINING AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

**A. Introduction:** A far-reaching goal for VSA is to ensure that crime victims in New York City are routinely treated with compassion and respect and spared a second wound at the hands of insensitive professionals. Training police, criminal justice, health, and social service workers is a means to fulfill the promise and is less costly than directly providing individual counseling and practical assistance to the approximately 1,000,000 crime victims in New York City each year. An even more ambitious way to achieve this agenda would be to train citizens to administer psychological first aid to crime victims (a la CPR) so that when a friend, neighbor, co-worker or family member is victimized he or she would receive the needed supportive responses. (A VSA research study showed that victims usually first seek help from a friend or family member). Public education, which informs the public about how people typically respond to victimization and the local resources that are available is another, if less direct, approach to lessen the suffering of victims.

**B. Background:** Training was not included in VSA's original blueprint. However, we quickly became aware of the need to train our staff; it took longer to feel confident to train others or develop a sufficient reputation for others to seek trainings from us. Starting with "brown bag" lunch seminars with outside speakers on subjects such as legal needs of the elderly and child sexual abuse, we have developed a required training curriculum of 30 hours for staff that covers interviewing, crisis intervention, rape, domestic violence, and elder abuse. Our approach to training professionals outside of VSA or educating the public about victimization has been, by and large, reactive: we have responded to requests, but have not developed a plan.

The major training activities for outsiders have included:

- A two-day training curricula which included a video that VSA produced, for 750 police chiefs throughout the country on developing and implementing policies on domestic violence.
- Child abuse and domestic violence trainings for social workers, nurses, and physicians at municipal hospitals.
- Trainings on the dynamics of domestic violence for child protective service workers.

- The development of a training film on police response to burglary in conjunction with the NYPD.
- Domestic violence trainings for Public Housing Authority managers, police and social service staff.
- Trainings on detection and intervention with elder abuse victims for physicians, nurses and social work staff of Mt. Sinai Medical Center. This curricula is being adapted for other voluntary hospitals as well as the Health and Hospitals Corporation.

VSA's approach to public education has been even more ad hoc than its approach to training. It has included distribution of reports, brochures and posters; presentations at community meetings, schools, and churches about crime prevention and victimology; and participation on radio and TV programs. VSA's school based programs have a public education component: the School Victim Assistance Program teaches about crime and crime prevention to junior high and elementary school students; and the activities of Project SMART (a school mediation program) include a classroom presentation for high school students about mediation. MAC's most concerted effort at public education has been Project Immigration, an effort through the press, radio, television, community meetings, and mailings which informed undocumented immigrants about the amnesty program.

**C. The Current Environment:** VSA faces many opportunities and obstacles in expanding and formalizing its training and public educational roles. As with research, the Agency's size, diversity and staff knowledge give it the potential to further develop and strengthen its training and public education agenda. Two areas appear ripe for further development:

1. **Training of Mental Health Providers:** As the victim field gains respectability, and state and federal funds for victim services become institutionalized, talk of certification for victim counselors wafts through state legislatures. The prospect of permanent funding means that the mental health professions will have added interest in developing and implementing curricula on the dynamics of and interventions with crime victims. If VSA's recent success at being licensed as a mental health center is replicated by other agencies, it could act as a stimulus for the state to require certification of counselors for reimbursement through Medicaid, health insurance, crime victims compensation and other third party payments. VSA's Crime Victim Center has the opportunity to assume a



role in training professionals which could be enhanced through its association with Columbia University's medical school.

**2. Training Criminal Justice and Social Services Personnel On Domestic Violence:** We could build on our national police training on domestic violence which has been well received, as well as other VSA trainings in New York City for different groups of professionals including judges, district attorneys, correction officers, and health insurance company workers.

If VSA were to undertake a more systematic approach, particularly on a national level, to marketing our training capacity we would need to be sensitive to the competition. For example, both the National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA) and the National Victim Center conduct regional trainings for victim advocates and counselors. In addition, there are New York organizations in both domestic violence and the rape field that regularly and effectively train other agencies. (For example, the New York State Office for Prevention of Domestic Violence is training police, parole and probation officers.)

In educating the public we could concentrate our energies on one or several issues: how to avoid crime; how to deal with victimization; what to expect of families or friends who are victimized; and where to find help. The questions and their concomitant market strategies differ significantly depending on the type of crime. For example, a public education campaign about burglary would look very different from one about family violence. The competition also differs: While there are many films designed to either train professionals or educate the public in the fields of domestic violence and child sexual abuse, there is limited video material on burglary and robbery. In terms of written materials the McGruff campaign has covered a wide territory with many brochures on crime prevention and facts about crime. NOVA has produced excellent written material on victimization in general while local organizations have produced material on specific crimes, domestic violence and child sexual abuse.

The gaps in written materials and videos are largest in the following areas:

- Protocols on how to serve victims (both for crimes in general as well as for specific crimes).

- Training for professionals or trigger films on burglary and robbery.
- Documentaries on victim issues for the general public.
- Teaching people how to identify themselves as victims (other than sexual abuse).

**D. Conclusions and Questions:** The areas of training and public education with the exception of family violence and sexual assault, are wide open. VSA needs to determine:

- Whether training and public education are a more efficient way to fulfill our mission than direct services.
- If either area is one that it should pursue aggressively (among the benefits are training could produce income and public education could enhance our visibility).
- Whether our strategy should be to focus one type of crime or prove the potential benefits of either training or public education.

## VII. PERSONNEL

Whatever direction MAC takes during the next decade, we will face the challenge of finding enough qualified staff. We are already experiencing difficulty, along with most other social service agencies, in filling counseling positions, and demographic projections suggest we can expect across-the-board staff shortages during the 1990s. If we continue our emphasis on direct services, just maintaining current programs might be the greatest challenge.

**A. Who is the work force?:** Currently, MAC employs about 400 full-time staff, 75 part-time staff, and 120 volunteers. (The largest group of volunteers are mediators; students make up the next largest group of volunteers.) The positions and salaries can be classified roughly as follows:

<i>Position</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Salary Range</i>
Senior Managers	14	\$ 45,000 +
Program Managers	112	\$ 22,000 - \$45,000
Social Workers	40	\$ 23,000 - \$30,000
Counselors	91	\$ 15,500 - \$28,000
Victim Advocates	54	\$ 13,500 - \$19,000
Fiscal, Computer, Research, Planning	51	\$ 14,000 - \$35,000
Data and Support Staff	86	\$ 12,500 - \$25,000
Other/Locksmiths	5	\$ 17,000 - \$22,000

Most of the staff are young (average age: 30), women (70%), and black or Hispanic (63%).

MAC is experiencing what feels like high turnover rates. A preliminary analysis, however, indicates that the rate is .24, similar to that reported for other social service agencies. Anecdotally, our impression is that, many MAC staff leave for more responsibility and better salaries at other victim assistance programs, perhaps reflecting that MAC provides excellent training, selects staff carefully in the first instance, and generally has a good reputation.

While the recruitment problems speaks to the decreasing labor pool and mediocre salaries and benefits, difficulties with retention speak also to morale. As discussed earlier, some staff have voiced concerns about MAC's rapid expansion and the resultant impersonal environment, other concerns voiced by staff include low salaries, lack of educational benefits, uncomfortable physical environment at some sites, few or undefined career ladders, poor supervision, and stress from the difficulty of the cases with which we work.

**B. Possible Solutions:** While MAC cannot increase the pool of high school and college graduates, we can strengthen our efforts at making MAC a more hospitable environment, retaining the good staff that we have, and perhaps looking to more radical (for us) innovations to attract new staff in a competitive market.

MAC has a personnel advisory committee made up of representatives of Agency staff. Their recommendations guide most personnel policy changes. (Most recently, we broadened the definition of sick days to include caring for an ill household member as-a result a survey of staff concerns.) In comparing salaries and fringe benefits to those of other not-for-profits, we know that ours are generally competitive. But we have lost some of our pioneer spirit, and there is no longer a glut of social workers that allowed us to attract high-quality staff in our early years. In considering ways to address the personnel crisis some ideas seem worth exploring:

1. **Flex time on a systematic and widespread basis:** While MAC prides itself on its flexibility, and while we accommodate part-time schedules for school and parenting, we should perhaps assume a more proactive posture. Since many of our services operate beyond regular business hours (and others, such as, community offices should open evenings and Saturdays) we could organize four-day weeks (nine hours per day) for some staff. Such a schedule might appeal to many employees (parents with young children, social workers with private practices, staff wanting to continue their education). It might also permit a more efficient use of expensive rented space because it would allow the space to be used more than 40 hours per week and, with careful scheduling, could accommodate more staff and clients per square foot.

2. **Enhanced training:** Although MAC had steadily increased required as well as optional training for staff, and as we learn more about the victim field, the need for training continues to outstrip our capacity. A more

rigorous and formal training program may not only be necessary it may also make MAC more attractive to potential employees. It could enhance possibilities for other jobs, promotions within MAC, or private practice and consulting. To use training as an incentive for retaining staff, policies could be instituted which would require employees to have been at the Agency for at least a year before he or she would qualify for certain courses.

Other approaches to training might include:

a. A one- or two-month assignment to the hotline for all new employees who are victim advocates, counselors or social workers. If a group were to start at the same time, there could be intensive, on-the-job training and perhaps some social or recreational events to create esprit de corps. Ideally, a common training experience would allow MAC to establish a basic standard of service as well as improve morale and sense of Agency identity because, when the group was dispersed, they would know staff at other Agency sites as well as be less alienated from the central office at 2 Lafayette Street.

b. A formal program of rotation or internships where employees, after a specific time with the Agency, would be offered the opportunity of working at another site for a given period. This would allow cross-fertilization of ideas, augment skills, and enlarge the employee's visions of job possibilities within the Agency.

3. **Educational benefits:** MAC employees have requested educational benefits and release time to attend school. If MAC could offer access to free or low-cost undergraduate and graduate courses (perhaps on return for staff teaching courses), skill levels would be improved. Another possibility would be a loan program where MAC would raise funds for education loans which would be forgiven if the employee stayed with the Agency for a specified number of years after receiving the degree.

4. **Attracting staff from clients:** Another variation on more training and educational benefits is to look to our clients as a pool of potential staff members. Some have expressed interest in working for us and helping others survive the trauma of victimization. While we have hired clients as full-time staff or group facilitators on occasion, we have not developed a specific program for recruiting and training clients. One concern would be whether the client has sufficiently integrated the pain from his or her own experience to help other victims effectively. In addition, supervisors may

handle these employees more gingerly, applying less rigorous standards of performance than for "regular" employees.

**5. More autonomy, more restraints:** If MAC were to follow some of the recommendations emerging from the boundaries section (Chapter II) and make its divisions subsidiary corporations with considerable autonomy, many morale issues might be resolved. Smaller, more focused divisions could be more personal, create a competitive spirit among the divisions, permit jobs to be more carefully tailored to the service, and give employees more stake in their work.

Paradoxically, another approach to improving staff morale would be to become more rigid about job requirements and insist on following agency developed protocols in responding to client's problems. (Such protocols might help empower staff because they would feel more secure about the approach, and ensure that standards for performance were equivalent across divisions.) The challenge of simultaneously creating more freedom and more constraints is daunting but perhaps critical to survival.

**6. Relying more on volunteers and part-time staff:**

**a. Volunteers:** Our successful experience with volunteers for the mediation program should teach us lessons that we could apply elsewhere in the Agency. The ingredients appear to be: the service depends on them (only volunteers mediate); the selection and training (25 hours) is as rigorous as for many paid jobs; the mediators derive enormous satisfaction from helping people solve their problems; and opportunities abound for mediators to take on more responsibility, develop more specialized knowledge and meet people and make friends. Perhaps other MAC services could be volunteer operated. For example, hotline calls in the evenings could be handled by volunteers (some corporations near 2 Lafayette Street have volunteer programs for their employees and not enough placements). Other possibilities include relying on volunteers to conduct police outreach and follow-up calls in the community offices and creating a practical assistance unit for Streetwork clients (washing laundry, preparing food, and advocating for welfare entitlements). Retired people might be another source of excellent volunteers.

**b. Part-time Staff:** VSA is finding it increasingly difficult to attract the highly skilled social workers needed to counsel clients who have suffered particularly intensive and extensive trauma. Possibly, clinicians who have private practices or other jobs, could work on a hourly basis carrying a clinical caseload and not be burdened by administrative responsibilities. The opportunity to

develop new skills, client hours during mid-day (the difficult hours for a private therapist to fill), and supervision on victim issues might combine to make such an arrangement attractive to trained therapists. Senior citizens offer a pool of people some of whom might be interested in part-time work whom we have not approached.

Whatever strategies are adopted, it seems that issues of attracting and keeping staff will consume much of MAC's energy in the years to come.

## VIII. CURRENT AND FUTURE FUNDING

Since VSA began in 1978 its budget has grown about 20 percent each year with the Community Development Block Grant and New York City tax levy funds providing the largest and most stable source of its FY89 \$15.5 million budget. While VSA has succeeded in developing diverse funding it is primarily dependent on government dollars. This chapter reviews MAC's funding, discusses the need to further diversify sources of funds, develop more sources to cover administrative expenses and create more capital and suggests ways in which these goals may be addressed.

**A. Government Contracts\*:** Table 1 reviews the history of city, state, and federal funding for the past several years.

**1. City Funding:**

**a. Community Development Block Grant (FY89 - \$3.3 million):**

The Agency's largest funding source is the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The CDBG program, established by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, allocates dollars for physical improvement and public services to persons of low and moderate income. Although these funds are federal in origin, the City determines their distribution and VSA receives them through a contract with the Office of the Coordinator of Criminal Justice.

Community Development funds, which cannot be used for general administrative expenses, support eleven community offices. CDGB support for VSA has stayed the same since FY85 and, therefore, its buying power has diminished.

**Future Prospects:** The Reagan administration repeatedly tried to eliminate the CDBG program and Congress saved it but with reductions. For the past two years, NYC has received \$178 million. It is expected that the Bush administration will try to reduce the program rather than eliminate it altogether.

**b. City Tax Levy (FY89 - \$3.9 million):** City tax levy is VSA's most important funding source because it offers flexibility and growth.

Tax levy funds, like CDBG funds, are contracted through the Office of

\* In categorizing funding sources, we have classified them by the level of governmental agency with which VSA has a contract, not the original source of funds.



the Coordinator of Criminal Justice which has allowed VSA to use the funds for administrative purposes as well as direct services. City tax levy is also a vehicle for supporting new projects and institutionalizing demonstration projects started with federal, state, and private funds. The increases (see Table 1) reflect inflation adjustments, new programs, and additional funds for administration, such as training and quality control.

Future Prospects: Despite the City's strained fiscal condition for FY90, tax levy funds will continue as the Agency's funding base. A downturn in the City's financial well-being could threaten tax levy funds.

**c. Other City Contracts**

(1) **HRA (FY89 - \$2.8 million)** VSA contracts with five different agencies within HRA. Each contract is for a particular service, mostly services for battered women and their children, victims of family violence, although day care programs and the Streetwork Project are also supported.

(2) **Youth Bureau (FY89 - \$329,000)** The Youth Bureau supports the runaway hotline, child victim programs in four family courts, and an incest program. The contracts, awarded through a competitive process, rarely grow year to year, and in several instances have matching requirements.

(3) **Board of Education (FY89 - \$637,000)** The Board of Education contracts are for the school mediation program (Project SMART) and school victim assistance programs. The primary source of the funds are from those allocated for drop out prevention.

Future Prospects: City contracts are vulnerable to changes in the City's financial state, political forces and to non-renewal for failure to achieve the contracted goals. Funds for administrative costs are limited or non-existent for most contracts and growth in contract size is usually not accompanied by a concomitant increase in funds for administrative expenses.

**2. State Funding**

a. **Crime Victims Board (FY89 - \$840,000):** The Crime Victims Board (CVB) has had two funding sources: state general purpose

funds and VOCA, the 1984 federal Victims of Crime Act. VOCA funds are financed through penalties assessed on federal criminals (\$80 million was collected nationally in FY88). CVB funding is largely limited to supporting personnel who provide direct services. In FY89, 95% of VSA's allocation is budgeted for service staff, and only 5% for administrative expenses such as rent, telephones, and postage. CVB supports a variety of programs, including Assistance to Families of Homicide Victims, the Crime Victims Clinic, portions of the court programs, and rape counseling services.

**Future Prospects:** State-purpose funds were first appropriated for victim assistance programs by the legislature in 1981. For the past two years the allocation has stood at \$3.2 million statewide. This year legislation created a criminal justice improvement account which will provide monies to crime victim and witness programs among other criminal justice needs. This account consists of all monies received by the state through a mandatory surcharge (\$100 for felons - and \$50 for misdemeanants) and the recently established crime victim assistance fee (\$2 per crime). This new law may result in additional monies for victim assistance programs but given the tight state budget may be used to supplant rather supplement state funding.

When VOCA, the state's federal source of funds, was created it had a sunset clause for 1988. In the fall of 1988 the Congress unanimously reauthorized its existence and extended it for six more years. VOCA provided \$2.7 million in FY88 for victim assistance programs in New York State.

**b. Other State Contracts (FY89 - \$1,000,000)** The number and amount of State contracts has grown steadily. VSA had eight State contracts in FY84 and had 23 in FY89. Most of these contracts are renewed annually and awarded for specific purposes: Office of Court Administration for mediation; Division for Youth for Brooklyn Arms Hotel adolescent program, the court-based Children's Center and Supervised Visitation programs; Department of Health for rape services and emergency food; and Department of Social Services (DSS) for domestic violence programs.

Future Prospects: Even though the state's fiscal picture worsens, the future of these funds appears relatively secure. Mediation funding, because mandated by legislation, and because ours is a well-respected program, is perhaps the most secure. Some of the DSS funds are troublesome because the amount is reduced each year with the expectation that local sources will pick up the costs.

**3. Federal Funding (FY89 - \$706,000):** The federal government contracts are usually non-renewable. Currently they include three research projects and a national training contract on domestic violence. As Table 1 shows, MAC has been building a relationship with federal agencies.

Future Prospects: Federal funding has increased with the interest in crime victims sparked by the 1982 President's Task Force on Crime Victims and the 1985 Attorney General's Task Force on Domestic Violence. Interest in crime victims may fade under the current administration and even if VSA continues to win federal contracts, they will be time limited.

## **B. Non-Government Sources**

**1. Private Funding (FY89 - \$492,000):** This is MAC's weakest area and may hold the greatest potential. Table 2 describes MAC's private funding history.

**a. Foundations:** Foundation funding has increased gradually but VSA's efforts have not been sufficiently systematic or comprehensive. While in FY87 we received grants of at least \$5,000 from 13 foundations, there are more foundations in New York and, to a lesser extent, in other parts of the country that might be interested in supporting our work. Thus far, we have been far more successful in attracting foundation monies for specific programs (such as the Domestic Violence Prevention Project) than for general operating costs. Currently, with the guidance of a fund raising consultant, we are seeking to raise \$2 million over three years for a new Division of Program Evaluation, Planning and Advocacy.

Future Prospects: Except for the size of our budget, considered too large by some foundations and the fact that the government is our major funder, we are attractive to foundations because we both provide direct services and design and implement experimental

projects (with potential for replication); have an excellent track record at institutionalizing privately funded projects with public funds, and are concerned with a wide variety of issues some of which are likely to conform to a foundation's particular interest.

**b. Corporations (FY89 - \$135,000):** Our record with corporations, with the exception of the Port Authority and Chase Manhattan Bank, has been dreary. As with foundations, we have neither been systematic nor persistent in pursuing corporate funds.

Future Prospects: Corporations are probably a fertile source because they increasingly support social welfare programs, and services for crime victims are relatively non-controversial and inexpensive. In addition to convincing corporate funders of our worthiness, two other approaches could be tried: 1) a market-related campaign in which a corporation supported activities of ours that would provide publicity for corporation; or 2) approaching a corporation through its human resources department to offer crime - victim training or counseling to its employees, and on the basis of that experience, appeal for support through its philanthropic arm.

**c. Individuals:** Travelers Aid Services is the only component of MAC that has received substantial funds from individuals. Contributions to VSA with the exception of one benefactor have been paltry. And since the merger, as Table 2 shows, individual contributions\* to TAS have decreased.

Future Prospects: Individual gift giving could be increased by:

- Revitalizing the Travelers Aid network. Since the merger, there have been no new Industry Chairs (people who solicit gifts from colleagues and friends) added to the roster and several have dropped out.
- Creating a network of industry chairs to specifically support VSA or a combined TAS/VSA effort.
- Developing a cadre of gift givers or solicitors among our more affluent clients. We do not routinely request contributions or other types of support from clients with

\* TAS receives several small foundation contributions solicited through individuals accordingly they are classified here as individual gifts.

the exception of Project SAFE (the lock replacement program) where small donations are requested.

- Organizing special events: We are currently planning a benefit for January 1990 and have started to develop a benefit committee.
- Targeting some fundraising to specific projects that have appeal to individuals. For example, we have received unsolicited gifts from individuals in response to articles about our Streetwork Project. We also have received two large gifts toward the renovation of a building for battered women and their children suggesting that building projects might be more attractive to individual donors than services.

2. **Other Income:** Table 1 also reviews MAC's other sources of income.

**Service Income (FY88 - \$741,000):** VSA and TAS charge for some services. VSA fees come primarily from computer programming and notification work performed for three District Attorney's Offices and secondarily from training contracts. The batterers program, the Crime Victim Center, and the offender component of the incest project program that charges (if the client can pay) a nominal fee. In FY88, \$6,500 was collected from the batterers programs. The other two programs did not start charging until February 1989.

**Future Prospects:** As we establish collection procedures and a fee schedule for training, the income from services should continue to increase gradually.

**Indirect Cost\* :** Some grants (all federal, most private and some city and state) allow us to charge an administrative or indirect rate. It has recently been increased from 12.5% to 17.6%. This income (which can be collected on some grants and contracts) can be used without restrictions and has increased steadily. With an increase in federal contracts and foundation support, this amount may continue to grow.

3. **Interest and Dividend Income (FY88 - \$190,000):** The rate of return has been fairly stable. Without an effort to significantly enlarge the endowment or a decline in the stock market, we can expect a steady source

\* Indirect costs are subsumed under the funding source which awards them.

**2. Developing A Reimbursement System With The Crime Victims**

**Board:** Many services we provide could be covered by compensation payments from the Crime Victims Board. The Board is mandated to provide compensation to victims of violent crimes and victims of property crimes who are over 60 years of age for lost earnings, medical costs, funeral benefits, security services, transportation to court and counseling. The compensation fund has no cap and is decided on a case-by-case basis. Recent changes in the law should make it easier for us to tap into these funds and because they offer a relatively permanent source, it is probably worth the effort to access them. Two obstacles, however, are that the victim is required to apply for compensation and fees need to be regularly charged for the service.

**3. Encourage Legislative Solutions:** VSA could seek both to insure that recent federal benefits for victims organizations be used to the fullest and advocate for new avenues. This might involve:

- lifting the cap of \$120 million on the federal pool of funds for local victim programs;
- pressing for a large proportion of the new criminal justice fund (created by surcharges on offenders of felonies, misdemeanors, and violators) be dedicated to victim assistance agencies;
- seeking new sources of revenues such as imposing surcharges on insurance policies or marriage licenses.

## IX: RECOMMENDATIONS

Ten years ago in laying out the plans for VSA, we could not have predicted the impact of AIDS, crack and homelessness on the City - nor the impact of the Steinberg or Central Park jogging case on the public's consciousness about crime, particularly domestic violence and rape. Recognizing this humbles us as we set an agenda for the next decade. In setting goals, we also need to recognize and incorporate the political, financial and social environment in which VSA will survive or thrive.

Beyond an effort at rationally weighing the benefits and risks of various types of activities (summarized in Appendix A) is the more organic or intuitive task of figuring out what might work and be feasible for the agency. A first pass at answering the questions raised in this paper follows:

- 1. Boundaries:** The way to address MAC's boundary problems is not to impose rigid limits on our activities, rather create firmer boundaries for the individual divisions. This would respond to the internal discomfort about MAC's identity. The external issue of how the public perceives VSA and MAC requires giving the Agency and its varied activities more visibility.
- 2. Comprehensive Services:** Despite its apparent rationality it seems unlikely that we alone could, in an orderly way, fill all the gaps in services. To achieve the goal of comprehensive services, we would need to convince high level decision makers in the federal, state or city government that an investment in victim services was of critical importance. The current financial climate will not permit an organized widescale approach (the political climate is less sure). Rather a step-by-step approach could perhaps be accomplished through incremental efforts (e.g., adding homicide services in one borough, rape services in another) or a highly publicized crime that mobilized attention and resources toward one type of crime (e.g., child sexual abuse for very young children). The goal of comprehensive services is probably where we have least control because: it is the most costly; it could be accomplished in parts by a myriad of other organizations; it is least appealing to foundations and corporations (which favor tilling new ground); and it might raise the most hackles among other organizations. Perhaps the first steps (while we wait for a more rosy economic climate and the Mayoral election), is to describe a minimum level

of services that should be available to crime victims; build consensus among other victim assistance programs; and seek to have minimum requirements mandated through legislation

**3. Research:** The need and desire to better understand VSA's clients, the effectiveness of our programs and the systems in which we work will probably increase as the amount of money committed to direct services grows. Consequently, we should probably build our capacity for program-related research, but adopt an opportunistic posture toward basic research – which does not have immediate program implications – by taking advantage of accessible resources rather than creating them.

**4. Public Policy:** Despite the resistance of some staff to the policy arena, it seems an appropriate activity because it may be the vehicle through which we can have the most impact on victims. Our strategy could be incremental, to tackle a few issues at a time. The thrust of VSA would not change but there would be an added dimension and greater ability to take our field knowledge and translate it into policies that affect large numbers of people. Without the infusion of private funds, however, this would need to remain an ad hoc activity.

**5. Training:** We are now positioned to train professionals in other organizations. Like public policy, it has the potential for widespread impact as well as enhancing VSA's visibility and stature. It has the added benefit of boosting staff morale and the potential to pay for itself or even bring in surplus funds. Given the advantages, training seems an area where resources should be invested in both the short and long term.

**6. Public Education:** To carry out public education in an organized and systematic manner would require resources that may be available from government sources or even private sources but probably only sporadically and for issues in fashion. Given our lack of experience in public education, it probably makes the most sense to limit efforts to specific projects as appropriate and as opportunities arise, for example mounting an AIDS prevention campaign for street youth.

**7. Personnel:** Until now the Agency has adopted a reactive posture in dealing with personnel issues: solving problems as they develop and letting program requirements guide most personnel decisions. Given the expected labor shortage, in considering new programs we should weigh the difficulties in recruiting and maintaining staff. At the same time we need



to establish scholarship or educational loan programs and provide more intensive training for staff. We might also aggressively and systematically build a volunteer corps.

**8. Funding:** To increase its capital base and supply of unrestricted funds, the Agency should consider organizational changes as well as explore new or strengthen old avenues of support. Organizational changes might include merging with another organization that has an endowment or other assets and/or creating a profit making division (such as a training institute).

Other strategies for generating unrestricted gifts would benefit from a restructured Board that explicitly included members who were willing to raise private funds for the organization. These include:

- Organizing special events: We are currently planning a benefit for January 1990 and have started seeking corporate sponsors and recruiting a honorary benefit committee.
- Developing and publicizing a "victim fund" to which the public might contribute when people are particularly distressed by a crime that attracts publicity such as the Central Park "jogger" case.
- Initiating fundraising for specific projects which have appeal to individuals. For example, we have received unsolicited gifts from individuals in response to articles about our Streetwork Project. We also have two commitments of large gifts (\$75,000 and \$50,000) toward the renovation of a building for battered women and their children.
- Mounting a direct mail solicitation, perhaps focusing on affluent victims who have been helped by VSA. We do not routinely request donations or other types of support from clients.
- Creating a network of donors who in turn solicit individual gifts annually from colleagues modeled on the Travelers Aid network.

Although individuals and corporations are probably the most fertile source for generating flexible resources public funds should not be overlooked. For example, VSA should press for legislative changes that would create a larger and steadier stream of funds for victim programs, such as imposing surcharges on insurance policies or marriage licenses, increasing the victim assistance fee (a \$2 fee assessed on convicted felons and misdemeanants) and permitting judges to order restitution payments

to a victim fund in cases where the victims were too numerous to name or could not be identified.

**Appendix A:**

Summary of the environment, benefits and risks in which proposed and current activities operate.

	<b>EXPRESSED CLIENT NEED</b>	<b>FINANCIAL RISK OR BENEFIT</b>	<b>POLITICAL RISK OR BENEFIT</b>	<b>VISIBILITY/ LEADERSHIP/ COMPETITION</b>	<b>STAFFING</b>
<b>1. DIRECT SERVICES (Chapter III)</b>					
<b>A. Courts</b>	strong	public funds available but limited room for expansion or carrying full administrative expenses	useful for establishing credibility with legal community; possible conflict with prosecutors	few other agencies involved except for prosecutors	data entry positions in competition with financial sector: advocate jobs rely on entry level workers, salaries not competitive
<b>B. Mediation</b>	court system relies on service	public funds probably secure	new intuitive possible for mediating conflicts; racial issues;	lots of competitors; backlash from lawyers; risk criticism for diverting these cases from court system	volunteers create pool of trained counselors
<b>C. Community</b>	strong among rape and domestic violence victims -	support possible from local politicians; limited funds for new services	local support	community groups feel threatened	difficult to attract staff; untapped potential may exist among community residents

	<b>EXPRESSED CLIENT NEED</b>	<b>FINANCIAL RISK OR BENEFIT</b>	<b>POLITICAL RISK OR BENEFIT</b>	<b>VISIBILITY/ LEADERSHIP/ COMPETITION</b>	<b>STAFFING</b>
<b>D. Special Victims</b>	strong	most likely to attract public and private funds because of special interests	possibly large gains	many competing groups in areas of domestic violence, rape and elderly. celebrity victims give opportunity for visibility	social work students and survivors create possible pool
<b>E. Special Services</b>					
<b>1) Housing (emergency transitional &amp; permanent)</b>	strong	lots of public and private funding available; risks if we become owners	possibly large gains	limited competition	a new field attracts pioneers
<b>2) Legal</b>	strong among victims and service providers	limited except for mal- practice insurance	possibly large gains	limited competition visibility in legal community	at sufficient salaries many lawyers available
<b>3) Drugs</b>	strong among victims of substance abuse particularly for treatment for abusers when family members	lots of public and private funding available	possibly large but VSA needs to define who are the victims	limited competition	competition because of infusion of funds; extra training and supervision needed

**EXPRESSED CLIENT NEED**      **FINANCIAL RISK OR BENEFIT**      **POLITICAL RISK OR BENEFIT**      **VISIBILITY/ LEADERSHIP/ COMPETITION**      **STAFFING**

**2. RESEARCH**  
(Chapter IV)

in direct

rarely sufficient funds to complete and disseminate reports but can retrieve full administrative costs

possible risks of offending institutions which are being evaluated; visibility among academics, press, policymakers and legislators

opportunity for national leadership; few other organizations so positioned;

qualified candidates available but lack of job security and limited opportunities for publishing may discourage applicants

**3. PUBLIC POLICY**  
(Chapter V)

strong for better procedures

public funds rarely support; too much lobbying could risk 501(C-3) status and federal funds

both are possible depending on what policies are being affected; working with coalitions could protect us

could heighten visibility among politicians, government officials; also could antagonize or improve relations with other groups working on same issues

easy to attract candidates for this type of work

**4. TRAINING**  
(Chapter VI)

indirect

little risk, possible moneymaker if marketed particularly to corporations (employee assistance programs)

beneficial but competition particularly in domestic violence field

trainers available: using existing staff boosts morale

<b>EXPRESSED CLIENT NEED</b>	<b>FINANCIAL RISK OR BENEFIT</b>	<b>POLITICAL RISK OR BENEFIT</b>	<b>VISIBILITY/ LEADERSHIP/ COMPETITION</b>	<b>STAFFING</b>
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not articulated but important particularly for victims who do not report crimes; crime prevention de- sired by public	difficult to raise public money in large amounts (corporations a possibility)	beneficial	gaps in certain areas which, if filled, could spread reputation	good writers difficult to find
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**5. PUBLIC EDUCATION**  
(Chapter VI)

**STAFFING**

**VISIBILITY/  
LEADERSHIP/  
COMPETITION**

**POLITICAL  
RISK OR  
BENEFIT**

**FINANCIAL RISK  
OR BENEFIT**

**EXPRESSED  
CLIENT NEED**

good writers  
difficult to  
find

gaps in certain  
areas which, if  
filled, could  
spread reputation

beneficial

difficult to raise public  
money in large amounts  
(corporations a  
possibility)

not articulated  
but important  
particularly for  
victims who do  
not report crimes;  
crime prevention  
information de-  
sired by public

**5. PUBLIC EDUCATION**  
(Chapter VI)

## Activities of Victim Services Agency

A Victim Services Agency would have the following objectives:

- o Provide services to reduce trauma and inconvenience associated with being the victim of crime, reporting the crime, and prosecuting the crime. (Desired outcome: increased reporting and court attendance.)
- o Provide voice for the victim so that the DA and court can know what he wants from the criminal justice system and so that alternatives to prosecution are available. (Desired outcome: reduce court delay, increase victim satisfaction and participation.)
- o Reduce court delay through better scheduling of cases and other management procedures.
- o Generate savings in dollars and productivity to police, DAs, and courts.

The Victims Services Agency would be responsible for conducting a referral service for the following activities: (The activities are listed in chronological order as the victim moves through the process). The activities in parenthesis are now being performed or developed by other agencies and would be conducted by V.S.A. but would not be incorporated by it.

### (A. Crime Prevention:)

1. Lock Installation, minor repair to make homes more secure.
2. Installation of Buddy Buzzer systems in homes of elderly and disabled so they can contact neighbors in case of
3. Training and education in crime prevention techniques.
4. Target hardening, (Block Watchers, better lighting, more foot patrols, etc.)
5. Congregate living for elderly.

### B. Victim Services if the Crime is Reported, Regardless of Whether Arrest is Made

1. Hotline for crisis counseling, referral and information about criminal justice system.
2. Counseling and referral of problems relating to crime (Police, Rape Units, etc.).



3. Services - referral and delivery

- a) welfare (emergency assistance, relocation, food stamps).
- b) medical (referral, hospital transportation, determine eligibility and enroll in Medicare or Medicaid, facilitate reimbursement for private health insurance).
- c) emergency food, clothing, shelter (Family Abuse Center - Henry Street, Urban Court Center).

4. Financial services

- a) arrange bank loans
- b) emergency cash grants
- c) assist and guide through application to Victims Compensation Board
- d) document retrieval (assist or provide in replacement of half-fare card, medicaid cards, SSI, charge accounts, etc.)

5. Burglary repair

C. Victim Services if Arrest is Made and Cases Enter Criminal Justice System

- 1. Transportation to and from court.
- 2. Reception Center - comfortable waiting room, place to talk to DA in quiet.
- 3. Counseling services as above and also in response to court appearances.
- 4. Children's Center
  - a) preparation for children's testimony
  - b) determine eligibility and enroll in daycare
  - c) screening for medical and emotional problems - referral to hospitals, clinics, etc. and followup.

D. Services to Facilitate Processing of Cases (these services would benefit both the victim and DA, as well as the court by screening out cases inappropriate to criminal court.)

1. Complaint Room interviewing of complainant to:

- a) explain court process
- b) determine alert eligibility
- c) determine excusal eligibility (if a stipulation [property] case)
- d) obtain contact information
- e) explain victim services

2. Screening, referral and advocacy of cases for non-traditional dispositions:

a) Pre-arraignment

- 1) Mediation -- (a) for DATs and misdemeanor referrals would come directly from precinct  
(b) if CW present or available, referral to CR for up to one third of interpersonal felonies
- 2) Diversion -- into CEP, drug programs, etc.

b) Post-conviction

1) Disposition panel

Using the Neighborhood Youth Project forum concept on a referral basis from judges, DAs, and victim would participate in a forum with community residents and professionals (e.g. lawyer, social worker) to determine the sentence. The victim would participate. This alternative would be responsive to those victims who prosecuted because he wanted the defendant to get help (6% of stranger-to-stranger victims), or to protect self from defendant (6% of stranger and 54% of close relation crimes)

- 2) Restitution - 17% of victims (21% of stranger-to-stranger crimes) wanted restitution. If defendant did not have resources, he could be offered day labor or some other scheme to earn money to pay back victim.

3. Act as go-between court and victim as case is processed. For each court date, determine eligibility for excusal and alert for DA.
4. Notify victim of outcome of case if absent or on alert on sentencing day and explain reasons for sentencing.
5. Facilitate property return.
6. Administer stipulation procedure.

E. Procedures to help District Attorney

1. Notification of civilian and police witnesses of court dates.
2. Information to DA of the likelihood of appearance of either civilian or police witness for each court appearance the morning of the appearance.
3. Appraisal of the civilian's interest in prosecuting case and
4. Reliability of information from police officer about victim and verification of victim's address and phone number.
5. Psychological preparation of witnesses for testimony.
6. Preparation of statistical tables on tracking, conviction rates by individual ADA, court part, team.
7. Respond to inquiries for ADAs about case calendar, status of case.

F. Procedures to help police officers (NYPD, transit police, housing police).

1. Excusal procedure
2. Alerts
3. Better scheduling of cases to reduce scheduling to police officers' regular days off.
4. Notifying police of outcome of cases
5. Provide precinct commander with Bulletin Board List
6. Facilitate property return through computerized lists: Property Lists include voucher numbers, property descriptions, docket numbers, defendant names, etc.
7. Do away with teletype, replace FATN system.

G. Experimental Projects:

1. Precinct experiment: A plan would be developed and tested in one or two precincts. V.W.A. staff would:
  - a) provide victims on-site counseling and referral to social and other services
  - b) provide information to victims on court and court processing
  - c) record contact information
  - d) if arrest made, determine eligibility for alert
  - e) if property crime, have victim sign stipulation form so no court appearance would be necessary until trial
  - f) screen and refer cases for possible mediation and diversion
  - g) if case is to be processed, assign victim case worker (see experiment #2).
2. Victim case worker: Develop volunteer corps of victim case workers who would be assigned to victims at the precinct or court house and be a buddy to victim through court processing or in lieu of court processing (?) Victim case workers would have low caseload (about 2 or 3 cases at a time) and would have been rigorously trained (in criminal justice, social services, etc.) and selected.
3. Victim participation in court decisions: (whether to prosecute, in setting bail, in plea process and in sentencing). It is proposed that a limited experiment be conducted to study impact of such intervention on case outcome, victim cooperation and victim satisfaction.
4. Develop procedures with insurance companies: to limit the necessary attendance of civilian victims.
5. Develop legislative unit to take initiatives to:
  - a) provide for increase and payment of victim fees by having state make appropriations
  - b) more \$ and easing procedures for Victim Compensation Board (perhaps create new jobs in private sector of "compensation adjuster" who would process victim compensation requests and keep a percent of share).

6. Midtown Victim Services: To aid crime victims in Midtown area, reduce victimization of visitors to the area. In Midtown Complaint Center (42nd Street Police Station) cases with CW or victim would be processed (booked, DA interview without complete package), given speedy arraignment downtown - us victim alert, transportation, liaison with hotel security forces.
7. Small Business Assistance Project: Police, DAs in cooperation with Office of Economic Development would develop crime prevention, apprehension, investigative and court alert techniques to reduce victimization of small store owners, small business (payday robberies, hold-ups) and reduce trauma and inconvenience associated with court processing (cannot leave store to testify, fear of reprisal) (conduct in neighborhood stabilization area and get HUD Commerce \$).

file: Mayor's office  
(NSA, 10)

Statement on Criminal Justice

by

The Honorable Edward I. Koch,  
Mayor of the City of New York

Association of the Bar of the City of New York

March 28, 1978

not doing the priority tasks well enough. Our major commitment is to improve the essential city services we all rely on. But there are some areas where carefully designed new policies and new programs are necessary.

In studying the criminal justice system over the years, I have been consistently dismayed by the treatment accorded the victims of crime. We are not merely indifferent to crime victims. More often than not we impose on them burdens of cost and inconvenience that go beyond insensitivity and indifference. As has too often been said, victims of crime are twice victimized; once by the criminal and once again by the system.

We have all heard some of the worst examples:

- We insist that victims come down to court, at great personal inconvenience, and wait for hours for the case to be called, even when all parties know that an adjournment will be granted.
- The victim appears in court and has no place to go and no one to help him. While the defendant has a lawyer, the victim must hang

around the courtroom now knowing what is going on. And if there is a plea or a final judgment, no effort is made to inform him of the outcome.

- If there is property involved, it is taken for evidence and the victim may find the State more difficult to deal with than the criminal. The cash he needs for business can sit for years, allegedly because it is needed to prove the case.

The list of grievances goes on. But the point is simple. With all the rhetoric in recent years about crime, and the many new programs mounted with federal and local funds, little attention has been given to the victims of crime. Like so much that government does, we seem only to be able to deal in grand anonymous strategies.

Most of our efforts are directed at increasing the level of protection our government provides. Yet we all know that no amount of effort will eliminate serious crime in this city. Regardless of what we do, numerous residents of our city will suffer the physical, psychological and



material injury of crimes committed in the coming months and years. I believe that the City government has an obligation to assist these individual victims by dealing directly with the inconvenience, cost and trauma imposed on them through crime. Victims of crime deserve a special level of public support and assistance, and my administration will institute the programs necessary to see that they get it.

We will begin by building on and coordinating existing efforts by various groups to assist crime victims, particularly to such special groups of crime as the elderly, battered women and rape victims. There are, for example, more than 20 groups concerned with crimes against the elderly and more than 100 that deal with battered women. These groups provide important services, but they are fragmented and uneven.

In the coming months, we will create a special agency to deal exclusively with the needs of victims. The City's Victim Services Agency will serve as an umbrella for other service organizations, to provide technical assistance and to help eliminate duplication. Where important services are not being provided the agency will itself develop programs to meet the need.

When you think of it, the victim is the only participant in the criminal justice system who has no representation or voice in the process. Now technically he or she may be represented by the prosecutor. But in actuality, prosecutorial policy and decisions are made on behalf of 8 million New Yorkers not present in the courtroom -- "The People" -- rather than the one victim actually sitting there. I believe that each individual victim deserves to have a vehicle through which he or she can express his or her needs.

The Board of Correction has established minimum standards for the treatment of pre-trial prisoners. We must also establish minimum standards of convenience and courtesy for the treatment of crime victims in our courts. Victims often appear in court during periods of fright and confusion. They come alone and they are left alone; no one tells them what happens. And, certainly, no one asks them what they want.

To make participation in the court process more humane the agency will look to create reception centers in the criminal courts of each borough -- modelled on a Victim/Witness reception center in Brooklyn. These

centers will provide a comfortable place to wait, but they will also do more. Specially trained caseworkers in the reception centers will explain court procedures to crime victims, tell them what the prosecution and the court will want of them, and find out what they -- the victims -- expect from the court. The caseworkers will also work to get prosecutors and courts to explain their decisions to crime victims. We owe it to a man who has been mugged, a woman raped or a merchant robbed, to explain why an assailant is let out on bail, why an adjournment is granted, why the prosecutor and court have accepted a plea to a lesser charge, or even why technical reasons require dismissal.

Each caseworker will stay in contact with persons he/she interviews in the reception center throughout the life of the case. He will try to ensure that the victim knows of all court dates. He will arrange to provide transportation for those who need it to and from court, and will tell the victim what happens at each stage of the process when the victim cannot be present; he will ensure that if the case reaches a disposition, the victim is fully informed.

Representation and participation will provide real and symbolic evidence of our concern. Reception center caseworkers will also help victims obtain the services needed to recover from the material consequences of crime, such as food stamps and emergency cash grants up to fifty dollars. Similarly, they will also help victims fill out insurance forms and negotiate the bureaucracy of the State's Crime Victim Compensation Board.

Often the court process makes unnecessary demands on victims. Prosecutors require both police and civilian witnesses to appear in court unnecessarily. Agency caseworkers will work with the District Attorneys to develop standards for determining when witnesses, police and civilians, may be excused. And, in cases where the DA is uncertain about whether he will need a particular witness, the Victim Services Agency will operate -- in cooperation with the DA's, courts, and police -- an alert program, allowing witnesses to stay out of court so long as they can be contacted by telephone and get to court promptly.

A similar program operated on an experimental basis in Brooklyn has shown that unnecessary court appearances

by victims can be reduced substantially without injury to the administration of justice.

In its role as the victims' advocate, the new agency will explore ways in which the outcomes of the criminal justice process can be made more fully to reflect victim goals.

In about half of all felony arrests the victim is either an acquaintance or family member of the defendant. Frequently, the victim invokes the criminal process because the police are the most visible source of help in an emergency. At the same time, though, the victim may have no desire to see the defendant locked up; his goal may be more personal. Both victim and defendant may want help, for example, in working out the anger that led to the incident, and the victim may want a remedy that the criminal justice system is unequipped to give and for which the use of its resources is unnecessary, such as restitution or an enforceable order regulating future conduct.

An experiment conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice and the Institute of Mediation and Conflict Resolution, of which Basil Paterson was director before

becoming deputy mayor, shows that even some felony charges can be mediated to the satisfaction of both parties. The Victim Services Agency will help make programs such as this more widely available.

The new agency will place special emphasis on providing crime prevention assistance to the elderly, whose age, isolation and physical frailty make them especially vulnerable to crime and give them a special right to call on us for help.

Our concern for victims goes to the heart of the quality of justice in our City. We do not have "justice" where those aggrieved by crime are ignored, frustrated, and embittered by the criminal justice process. We must find ways to deal effectively with their individual needs. Otherwise, the slogans carved in marble above the entrances to our courts will be no more than hollow rhetoric to the thousands of victims who leave our courts dissatisfied each year.

We will work to protect defendants' rights, through programs as I've described. We will strive to increase efficiency and performance of the various agencies. We will adhere absolutely to the highest standards in appointing judges. And we will bring a direct, personal concern to the problems of victims who bear the burdens of crime in our City.