

Assignments

Responding to Victims of Crime: Basics for Interns

Alison C. Cares, Ph.D., Assumption College

Assignment 1

Encountering Victims of Crime in Internships and Field Placements

Faculty Guide

The *Responding to Victims of Crime: Basics for Interns* curriculum focuses on developing appropriate response skills for students to use in their role as interns. This writing assignment reinforces the link between classroom learning and internship application by asking students to work through many of the issues victims face related to their internship. This assignment may be due before implementation of the lecture portion of the curriculum to give students material as a basis for class discussion. It can also be assigned after the lecture portion, to reinforce what was learned in lecture.

This assignment requires you to learn about how victims of crime are related to your particular placement. To do this, it is expected that you will have to ask questions and gather materials at your placement site, so please plan accordingly.

Please submit answers to the questions below. You may not attach materials from your placement in lieu of written answers. Any information relevant from your placement should be included in your written answers. Remember to include your name on the assignment, and indicate clearly which questions go with which answers. Your assignments should be at least two to three double spaced, typewritten pages with one inch margins and 12 point Times New Roman font.

If you include specific examples, please remember to maintain confidentiality and do not share any names or other information that would allow the victim to be identified (such as addresses or enough description of a victimization to identify the victim).

Questions:

1. What is your internship or field placement site and what is your role there? In your role, how might you encounter victims of crime? If there is no potential for encountering victims of crime, why not?
2. What services, if any, does your placement offer for victims of crime? Are these services specifically designed for victims of crime, or are they more general services that might be helpful to victims of crime? If your placement does not offer any services that might be used for victims of crime, why not?
3. What policies are in place at your placement regarding victims of crime? What are the guidelines and protocols for working with victims of crime? If there are no policies in place, why not and what happens if a victim of crime is encountered at your placement?

Assignment 2

Building Empathy Writing Assignment

Faculty Guide

One goal of the *Responding to Victims of Crime: Basics for Interns* curriculum is to teach students how to respond appropriately to victims of crime, which includes building empathy. This exercise is a short writing assignment to help students understand how victimization may impact people so they can identify with and build empathy for victims of crime. This involves using short videos or readings from victims of crime, and asking students to write a short response paper. Please note that the video segments used in this assignment are the same one used in the curriculum in class, so plan accordingly.

While disclosures are relatively infrequent, this is an assignment that may lead some students to disclose their own experiences with victimization. This is not a reason to avoid this exercise or to be nervous. Clear and easy guidelines are provided in the *Teaching About Criminal Victimization: Guidelines for Faculty*.

Below are a few key points:

- When introducing the assignment, if the papers are going to be exchanged between students for discussion, make that clear so that students do not write anything they would not want to share with their classmates
- Let students know that these stories can be emotionally difficult to read or view. Faculty should provide resources for support either in hard copy in class, in the syllabus, on a course web page, or, preferably, in multiple places. In the student version of the assignment below, customize resources to your campus location.
- Create a short resources list for your campus and community to include on the assignment.

Possible prompts for the response paper include:

- Discuss the variety of victim responses to crime: what did they say, do and feel? Were there any reactions that were consistent across more than one story? What, if anything, about the reactions surprised you?
- How did those around the victims (such as family, friends, co-workers, criminal justice system personnel) respond to the victim? What did other people do that the victims in the videos/readings found helpful? What did other people do that the victims did not find helpful? What do you think of their responses?
- What kind of assistance or resources were the victims provided? Were there any resources consistently provided? How have these resources helped or not helped? What other assistance or resources might the victims need?

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The writing assignment may be followed up in class in a number of ways:

- Full class discussion of the papers.
- Small group work, where students read each other's papers and discuss them.

This exercise may also be adapted to other formats not using a writing assignment: For example:

- View the video segments in class with related discussion.
- Assign the readings out of class for discussion in class.

In either of these cases, the writing prompts above can be used as class discussion questions.

Resources

Faculty can select for themselves which video segments or readings to use. The best practice is to use at least three video segments or readings so students are exposed to a diversity of victim responses.

Suggested Videos

Victim Impact: Listen and Learn. This DVD includes 14 short segments with victims of crime. It is available from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. The DVD is free and shipping and handling is \$5. It can be ordered from their website: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/library/videoclips.html>. Some of the segments that have worked well in the past are 2: Alan and 9: Teri.

Suggested Readings

Transcending: Reflections of Crime Victims (2001) by Howard Zehr. This paperback book with photos is published by Good Books and is available through major online retailers. The list price is \$18.95.

Victim impact statements from the federal prosecution of Bernie Madoff. These are available online by searching for "victim impact statements Bernie Madoff." Some of the statements that have worked well in past classes are those by Ronnie Sue and Dominic, Norma Hill, Carla Hirschhorn, and Caren Low.

Victim impact statement written by Nancy McAlley on behalf of her daughter Jane Mosher-Buyno. This is included along with this exercise and is used with permission of Nancy McAlley.

Assignment 2

Building Empathy Writing Assignment

For this assignment, you will either:

- Read three victim impact statements

OR

- View three short segments of victim stories.

After reading or viewing, please write a short two-page paper addressing the questions below:

- Discuss the variety of victim responses to crime: what did they say, do and feel? Were there any reactions that were consistent across more than one story? What, if anything, about the reactions surprised you?
- How did those around the victims (such as family, friends, co-workers, criminal justice system personnel) respond to the victim? What did other people do that the victims in the videos/readings found helpful? What did other people do that the victims did not find helpful? What do you think of their responses?
- What kind of assistance or resources were the victims provided with? Were there any resources consistently provided? How have these resources helped or not helped? What other assistance or resources might the victims need?

Stories from victims of crime can be difficult to read or watch. If you feel upset or in need of support after viewing or reading the stories, there is support available. Please refer to the resources listed below.

On Campus

Faculty will need to develop a list of relevant resources for their campus before using this assignment.

UMass Lowell Counseling Center 978-934-4331

UMass Lowell Student Health Services 978-934-4991

UMass Lowell Police (non-emergency) 978-934-2398

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Off Campus

Alternative House 24 Hour Crisis Hotline (Domestic Violence) 888-291-6228
www.alternative-house.org

FOCUS Program (Victims of Violent Crime and Drunk Driving)
of Mental Health Association of Greater Lowell 978-458-6282
www.mhalowell.org/focus

Center for Hope and Healing 24 Hour Hotline (Rape & Sexual Assault) 800-542-5212
www.centerforhopehealing.org

Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance 617-727-5200
MOVA.state.ma.us