The Impact of Victimization
Integrate Crime Victims’ Issues Into University and College Curricula

The project is designed to:

- Broaden college and university students’ awareness of crime victims’ issues and knowledge of appropriate responses.
- Increase the number and diversity of students exposed to and educated in crime victims’ issues.
- Give victim issues a new level of prominence in university and college curricula.
Resources for Students

Campus resources to list typically include:

- Counseling.
- Health services.
- College chaplain/Faith community.
- Dean of students.
- Women’s centers.
- Campus police.
Local community resources to list typically include:

- Rape crisis center.
- Domestic violence shelter agency.
- State or county victim-witness office (often a part of the prosecutor’s office).
Overview

1. Introduction
2. The Personal Impact on Victims
   a. Financial and Physical
   b. Psychological and Emotional
   c. Secondary Victimization of a Victim
3. The Impact of Crime on Society
   a. Financial Costs
   b. Secondary Victims
Over 26 million people ages 12 and older were victims of crime:

- 6.8 million in violent crimes
- Over 19.6 million in property crimes

Consequences can be immediate and long term.

NCVS, 2008
Does crime have the same impact on all victims? No.

Crime affects victims differently.
Who is Impacted by Victimization?

The Victim
- Physical
- Financial
- Psychological and emotional

Society
- Financial
- Secondary victims
Physical Consequences

Death
- 2008: More than 14,000 people were victims of homicide

Injury
- 36% of robbery and 23% of assault victims were injured

Illness
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Psychosomatic illness

Injury: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007
Financial Consequences

Healthcare
  - Medical and psychological treatment

Lost Wages
  - Attendance and productivity can suffer

Other Related Costs
  - Attorney fees, child care costs, moving expenses, changing phone numbers, the loss or need to change employment

Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007
Emotional Consequences

Common reactions among victims:

- Shock/Disbelief
- Numbness
- Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns
- Difficulty concentrating
- Confusion
- Anger
- Fear
- Anxiety
Factors That Influence the Emotional Impact on Victims

- Prior victimization.
- Personal characteristics and coping strategies.
- Type of crime experiences.
- Reaction of others.
- Support networks available to victims.

It is important to be aware of cultural variations in reactions to crime and in response to and interventions designed to support crime victims.
Psychological Consequences

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Is a medical diagnosis (DSM V)
- Re-experiencing of the traumatic event
- Avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma
- Increased arousal or anxiety
- Stress and fear
Psychological Consequences

- PTSD symptoms seem to be worse if they were triggered deliberately by another person, as in a mugging or rape.
- PTSD rates are higher with victims of violent crimes than other crimes.
Depression and Anxiety

Possible clinical diagnoses of victims post-crime.

Fear can cause victims to make major lifestyle changes. Examples: relocating, not working, or seeking new employment.

Agoraphobia: intense fear of crowds and being alone in public places.

- Self-isolation
- Refusal to leave their home or travel far from home
- Avoid crowded places
Cognitive and Behavioral Impact

Self-Blame and Attributions = Negative Self-Esteem

- Low work productivity
- Nature of relationships with others
- Carry weapons and “target harden”
- Substance use and abuse
- Antisocial behavior
Secondary Victimization

- Negative response from family, friends or law enforcement.
  - Were they made to feel blamed, at fault, responsible or that they used poor judgment or unnecessary risks?
- Criminal justice process experience.
- Can influence a victim’s future willingness to report a crime.
Secondary Victims

Witnesses and those close to the victim may experience:

- Shock
- Anger
- Thoughts about the event
- Fear for the victim’s safety
- Be reminded of their own past traumas
- Having to help the victim with expenses related to the crime
Children Witnessing Violence

- In 2008, 60% of children surveyed were exposed to violence within the past year, either directly or indirectly.
- Many children suffer long term physical, mental, and emotional harm:
  - Negative impact on adult interpersonal relationships and parenting ability
  - Possible cycle of violence

What is the Impact of Crime on Society?

- There are many different ways to calculate the costs of crime to society. In 2007, the economic cost of crime was estimated at over 17 billion dollars.

- Victims bear 77% of the costs associated with violent crimes.
  - Taxpayers cover an additional 14% and employers cover the remainder

- Average cost of each homicide = more than $8 million dollars

Societal Costs of Crime

- Violent crime accounts for 3% of U.S. medical spending and 14% of U.S. injury related medical spending
- Lost work time adds up to financial loss for a victim’s place of employment and for the victim
- Cost to maintain the Criminal Justice System
- Violent crime by juveniles alone costs the United States $158 billion each year

Impact on Communities

Community fear due to awareness of crime in their neighborhood or region.

- People who live in the same neighborhood as the victim are just as likely to relocate as the victim.
- Victimization also can force victims to relocate or become homeless, increasing the need for society to provide services.
Conclusions

- Victimization has immediate and long-term consequences.
- Victims of crime can experience physical, financial, emotional, psychological, and spiritual consequences.
- Victims can be re-victimized by the response of others and the criminal justice system.
- Witnesses and those close to the victim can experience similar symptoms as “secondary victims”.
- Crime is both financially and psychologically costly to society.