

Promoting Student Involvement in Crime Victim Issues

Introduction and Note to Faculty

Due to the widespread nature of crime and victimization, all of us, both students and faculty, encounter victims of crime in our personal and professional lives. The National Scope Demonstration Project to Integrate Crime Victims Issues into University and College Curriculum aims to increase students' knowledge of crime victims' issues and foster their interest in pursuing careers in victim services. By increasing student exposure to information about crime victims and the issues they face, and by providing students with skills to respond to crime victims, we aim to improve their ability to respond in an appropriate and supportive manner when they encounter crime victims in the future, be it at home, in the community or in the workplace. Introducing students to crime victim issues and related careers should subsequently increase the number of graduates who work in victim services and allied professions and further improve the response to crime victims.

Your support as faculty is crucial to the success of these efforts. Whether students come to you for advising, are enrolled in your courses, work with you on research, or just generally see you as a source of knowledge, you can help promote student involvement in crime victim issues in multiple, complimentary ways. You can:

1. Include material on crime victim issues in your courses.
2. Encourage enrollment in courses and programs that focus on crime victims issues.
3. Promote internship opportunities with victim services agencies and allied professions.
4. Promote volunteer opportunities in crime victim issues on and off campus.
5. Act as a resource for students interested in crime victims' issues.

Below are more specific suggestions for what you as faculty can do to promote crime victims' issues to students.

Include Material on Crime Victim Issues in Your Courses.

Criminal victimization and the issues that crime victims face constitute appropriate topics for inclusion in courses across the college and university curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Such victim-oriented material is appropriate for use in a dedicated course, such as a Victimology course in a Criminal Justice, Sociology, or Psychology department.

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This material may, however, also be incorporated in a wide variety of courses in other disciplines, such as Business, English, Human Development, Human Services, Law and Legal Studies, Medicine, Nursing, and Social Work. It can provide a small part of the course, such as in an English course when a memoir of a victim of crime is assigned as a required reading, or in a Management course when one of the issues discussed is how to help support and manage employees who have been victims of a crime.

Crime victim issues can also constitute a significant portion of a course, such as in a Psychology course focused on trauma or a Criminal Justice course on intimate partner violence.

To facilitate inclusion of material on crime victim issues in your courses, we have produced a number of curriculum kits. These kits typically include an instructor's guide, PowerPoint presentation, exercises and assignments for students, and other supplementary materials. They have been designed for maximum flexibility so that you can adopt a kit wholesale or adapt whatever part of the kit suits your needs.

The kits have been reviewed by faculty and victim service practitioners, as well as piloted by multiple faculty and have been modified as a result of the feedback we have received. You can access more information about the specific kits and the kits themselves here. To help support faculty in teaching in a responsible and sensitive manner about crime victim issues, we have also developed *Teaching About Criminal Victimization: Guidelines for Faculty* and other resources in the Faculty Involvement section of this curriculum.

Encourage Enrollment in Courses and Programs that Focus on Crime Victim Issues.

Many students have an interest in studying about crime victims, but are at a loss about how to do so. Others have not thought much about the topic at all, but if it is brought to their attention, would become interested. As faculty, you can provide that critical link for students to participate in available and appropriate courses and programs. This can happen via individual meetings with students (for example, if you advise students on their course selections), announcements in courses, and publicly available promotional materials.

Depending on a student's level of interest and what is available, a student interested in learning more about crime victims' issues and perhaps pursuing a career in victim services may want to take courses in:

- Victimology.
- Intimate partner violence.
- Child maltreatment.
- Sexual assault.
- Trauma and coping.

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- Helping skills.
- Counseling skills.
- The criminal justice system.

While there is frequently no one particular major or degree required to work with victims of crime, students may want to consider programs and degrees that either focus on crime victim issues specifically, or help them develop skills that would assist them in working with victims of crime. These may include:

- Undergraduate or graduate certificates in Victims' Studies. For an example of a graduate certificate, see the Victims' Studies Certificate offered online and on campus at the University of Massachusetts Lowell:
www.uml.edu/catalog/graduate/colleges/fahss/criminal_justice/certificate.htm#victim_studies
- Undergraduate or graduate programs that offer a concentration in Victim Studies. For examples, see Bridgewater State University Department of Criminal Justice; the Fresno State University Department of Criminology; Seattle University Department of Criminal Justice; and the University of New Haven Department of Criminal Justice.
- Undergraduate or graduate degrees in Victim Studies. For an example, see Sam Houston State University: www.shsu.edu/~enrollment/see/victimstudies/.
- Undergraduate or graduate degrees in related fields, including Psychology, Counseling, Public Health, Law, Social Work, and Human Services.

If you have a relevant course, program, or degree at your institution, promote it to students. It is recommended that promotional materials include information on:

- The basics of the course content.
- The jobs and careers, for which the course may provide the requisite knowledge and skills The curriculum requirements the course fulfills.

An example of a flyer used by Assumption College of our partners when a new Victimology course was developed is in the Promoting Student Involvement section.

Promote Internship Opportunities with Victim Services Agencies and Allied Professions

Internships (also frequently referred to as field placements or practicums) are a valuable and often required component of a student's college education. Internship placements in victim services agencies or allied professions (such as counseling, healthcare, or the criminal justice system) provide students with an opportunity to apply course-based

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knowledge, acquire new knowledge and skills, and develop interest in a future career working with victims of crime.

However, many students may not think of interning with victim services agencies unless a faculty member suggests it. Having a list of local victim services agencies for students to contact about potential internships helps promote these to students as viable internship placements. Here are some suggestions of potential host sites to look for as you develop your own local list:

Victim Services

- Crisis lines.
- Child advocacy centers.
- Rape crisis center.
- Domestic violence shelter agency.
- Victim-witness office/advocate (typically located in the prosecutor's office).
- Victim-offender reconciliation or mediation programs.
- MADD.
- Survivors of Homicide/Parents Of Murdered Children.

Allied Professions

- Child welfare agencies.
- Mental health treatment services.
- Medical services.
- Human services.
- Substance abuse treatment services.
- Law enforcement.
- Criminal and civil court systems.
- Community corrections (i.e., probation and parole offices).
- Prevention program (e.g., bullying prevention programs).
- School counseling.

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- Suicide prevention and intervention services.
- Shelter agencies.

As a part of this project, we have also developed additional materials such as sample MOUs and curriculum kits to support faculty in facilitating internships in victim services.

Promote Volunteer Opportunities in Crime Victims Issues, On and Off Campus.

Student learning is not limited to work for which they can earn academic credit, such as in courses and internships. Learning extends beyond the classroom to the larger campus and the outside community.

Involvement in student groups and activities on campus and volunteering for victim service organizations can help students develop valuable organizational and leadership skills they can apply in future careers as well as provide critical support for victim services agencies, which are frequently understaffed and underfunded. Many victim services agencies require volunteers to complete training for certification before volunteering.

In some cases, this can be used by students toward curriculum requirements, such as community service learning, required community service hours, or an internship. This training may be provided by the agency itself or a larger entity, such as a State Victim Assistance Academy.

Act as a Resource for Students Interested in Crime Victims' Issues

Students often see faculty as a resource for just about everything, from advice on courses to suggestions of potential careers to guidance on life choices. This provides you with a great opportunity to promote the importance of crime victims' issues and suggest the possibility of a career in victim services.

To do so, you need to have a good answer for the question: Why study victim issues? We suggest the following answers:

- We all know a victim of crime, whether we are aware of it or not.
- When victims of crime are responded to in a sensitive and supportive manner, they fare better in both the short and long term.
- We all have the potential to help.
- Many people find a career in victim services to be fulfilling and rewarding.

While the National Scope Demonstration Project to Integrate Crime Victims Issues into University and College Curriculum provides a foundation, it is not exhaustive in providing material to faculty on crime victims' issues. To help you find additional information when you need it, we have compiled a partial list of helpful resources below.

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Victimology Section

www.acjs.org/victimology_section.cfm

The American Society of Criminology, Division on Victimology

www.asc41.com/divisions.htm

The American Society of Criminology, Division on Women and Crime

<http://ascdwc.com/>

American Society of Victimology

www.american-society-victimology.us/

California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CalCASA)

<http://calcasa.org/>

Crime Against Children Research Center

www.unh.edu/ccrc/

Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma

<http://dartcenter.org/>

Futures Without Violence

www.futureswithoutviolence.org/

Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse (Mincava)

www.mincava.umn.edu/

The National Center for Victims of Crime

www.victimsofcrime.org/

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.nctsn.org/

National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center at the Medical University of South Carolina

<http://colleges.musc.edu/nvcv/>

National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women (VAWnet)

www.vawnet.org/

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

www.nsvrc.org/

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Poynter Institute

www.poynter.org/

U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/

World Society of Victimology

www.worldsocietyofvictimology.org/