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**OVC  
Webinar Transcript**

**OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center**

**Faith and Community Based Approaches to Victim Services**

**November 15, 2012**



## Welcome

Brian Ganjei: Hi, everyone. This is Brian Ganjei from the OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center. Thank you all for joining the Webinar today. Just a few general housekeeping announcements. This will be recorded and posted later. There will be information about that in the followup e-mail. Participants, you have all been muted so if you need to ask any questions, there is a chat box in the lower left-hand corner of your screen so please submit any concerns or questions through that. Up next, we will have Joshua DuBois start things off from the Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in the Executive Office of the President of the United States.

Joshua DuBois: Thank you all for joining the call. It is a pleasure to be on with you and thank you for taking the time to talk about this really important topic. Again, my name is Joshua DuBois and I am Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and I helped coordinate President Obama's engagement of faith communities and nonprofit organizations across 13 federal agency offices. On behalf of the President, I want to welcome you to this Webinar and express his tremendous thanks for the work you all do every single day to help those all across the communities around this country. I am so glad you all decided to join this important call on *Faith and Community Based Approaches to Victim Services*. We have assembled a great set of subject matter experts, some folks who are going to share some practical ways in which you and your organizations can assist victims of crime and violence. As you all know, faith based and community organizations are already playing a major role in preventing and responding to victimization, and what we are going to do on this call is learn a bit more about what is already happening and ways in which we can deepen our partnerships with each other. We are very excited to have a wonderful Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships right there at the Department of Justice, led by our Director, Eugene Schneeberg. One of the key outcomes from this call is we want to make sure you all are connected to Eugene and Mark Roscoe and their entire Center, and that you follow up with them after this call if there are more resources you need or other approaches that you want to take. So listen, I just wanted to say thank you for joining, on behalf of President Obama, again, and thank you for the tremendous work you are doing. Now we are all going to sit back and listen and learn and ask questions and engage in this very important topic. So thanks again, and I hope to connect with you all soon.

Brian Ganjei: Thank you very much, Joshua. Our next speaker will be Eugene Schneeberg from the Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in the U.S. Department of Justice.

Eugene Schneeberg: Thank you, Brian, and thank you, Joshua. I want to start off by thanking my colleagues at the Office for Victims of Crime(OVC), Shelby Jones Crawford, Sharron Chapman, and the whole OVC TTAC staff, but in particular, I want to thank our presenters today, Tina Chéry, Dr. Katherine Lawson and Danielle Sered, who collectively bring years and years of experience. They have won awards, they are recognized nationally, and they all look at the issue of victim services from really distinct and unique perspectives. Our office at the Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the Department of Justice is excited about partnering with you, and I do hope that you reach out to our office. So like all of you, I am ready to listen and learn. I have got my pen and pad out, and I am going to shut up now so I can learn from our presenters, so thank you.

Brian Ganjei: Okay, we will try to speak a little louder for those of you having some issues. Up next, we have Shelby Jones Crawford from the Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice.

Shelby Jones Crawford: Hello, everyone. Thank you, Brian. As Brian indicated, my name is Shelby Jones Crawford, and I am with the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. On behalf of OVC and our Acting Director Joye E. Frost, I would like to also welcome you. OVC is honored to support this very important and we hope very beneficial Webinar. The faith community remains a very important force in helping victims and, since established in 1988, OVC has remained steadfast in its commitment to the field of victim service providers as well. We understand the many challenges faith and community based organizations like yourselves face in your daily work. We understand that multiple, complex challenges prevent the victim assistance field from realizing the common goal of reaching every victim in need of hope and help. We also know that new types of crime have emerged as a result of changes brought on by technology, by globalization, and by demographics. Meanwhile, longstanding types of victimization endure, demanding a renewed commitment to action.

Shelby Jones Crawford: We are dedicated to helping meet these challenges. We have heard the call for a better way of doing things and it is our strong hope that we can create a conduit with a plan we call Vision 21, the details of which will be released in the coming months. Vision 21 highlights enduring and emerging issues and identifies steps toward building the field's capacity to serve victims. The goal of Vision 21 is to permanently alter the way we treat victims of crime in America. You know, although we grapple with understanding the number of crimes that are committed, the numbers that are reported, the numbers of victims who struggle alone to overcome the impact of crime, we do know you are working hard to achieve more with less and to keep your doors open so the victims have some place to go for help. You know, successfully positioning the crime victims field in 21st century is, frankly, the responsibility of many. We are grateful to all of you for your hard work towards this end. So today, my wish for you is that this Webinar will provide great information for your work and, in the long run, will enable you to begin formulating plans that can bring about effective results. When this occurs, victims win, communities win, and we all win.

Shelby Jones Crawford: Now, before we launch this session, I want to recognize the efforts of OVC's Training and Technical Assistance Center, and you will hear more about the Center later, and my colleagues with the Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Again, a special thank you to our presenters and all of you who are participating today. Welcome and thank you very much for being with us.

Brian Ganjei: Okay, thank you very much, Shelby. We will continue our presentation. Ms. Chéry or Tina, if you are ready, please go ahead. Clementina Chéry is the Executive Director of the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute. She founded the Survivors Outreach Services program to assist families immediately after a murder. She is co-author of *PEACEZONE*, an elementary school based program, and is the co-author of an article entitled "Homicide Survivors: Research and Practice Implications," published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. She also developed a crisis response manual titled "What To Do After Leaving the Hospital: A Step-by-Step Burial Guide and Workbook." Ms. Chéry's work has been recognized nationally and she has received numerous honors for her leadership and service, including the Lady in the Order of St. Gregory the Great, the highest honor bestowed by Pope John Paul II. Ms. Chéry also received an honorary doctor of law degree from Regis College and Mount Ida College. She was also awarded the 2011 Citizen of the Year Award from the National Association of Social Workers. In February 2012, Ms. Chéry was ordained a senior chaplain with the International Fellowship of Chaplains, Inc. So Ms. Chéry, please go ahead.

## **Transforming Pain and Anger Into Power and Action – Survivor Based Tools and Techniques**

Clementina Chéry: Thank you very much. What an honor it is to be able to share our approaches from a perspective of a community based survivor-led organization, and also our years of experience in working with 98 percent of families impacted by murder in the city of Boston. We are going to talk about just tools and techniques from a survivor based perspective which really came out of my own personal experience, with validations from those who have allowed us into their hearts in their greatest time of need. Like many survivors or co-victims, I needed to do something after the murder of my son. I needed to channel this rage that was inside of me. I needed to find ways to heal and be there for my 11 children and to honor my son. I also needed to shift the ways families were treated when a murder happens, especially those who live in poor urban areas or designated “hot spots.” So I looked at what was helpful, what was hurtful, and what was missing, and I also wanted to take away the stigma that black youths have, that they do not have any goals or dreams, and I wanted to teach about Louis. You see, he wanted to be the Nation’s first black president.

## **Rise in Survivors of Homicide Victims (Co-Victims) Population**

Clementina Chéry: The rise of survivorship, the impact of homicide survivorship is one of the most critical and neglected public health issues facing our country today. In 1991, random digit dialing survey of a nationally representative sample of over 12,000 individuals estimated that approximately 5 million adults have experienced a murder of an immediate family member to homicide, 6.6 million have experienced the murder of a relative other than a family member, and 4.8 million have experienced the murder of a close friend. This brings the total number of people impacted by homicide in the United States on an annual basis to 16.4 million. Homicide is a unique crime, lacking a direct survivor. Rather, homicide results in a network of survivors, the families and friends of the homicide victim. We are often referred to as survivors of homicide victims or co-victims, and this network is left to cope with the murder of a loved one without adequate services and support to help manage to heal from the significant psychological and physical effects. The response of the community to survivors or co-victims is often so inadequate that it has been called secondary victimization. Although victim services have expanded rapidly since the 1980s, statistics indicate that only 2 percent to 15 percent of victims access these services and less than 4 percent receive any financial assistance or compensation.

## **Transforming Pain and Anger Into Power and Action – Survivor Based Tools and Techniques**

Clementina Chéry: In this world, more than anyone, survivors of homicide victims can articulate what needs to happen to restore hope, because we have walked the path from pain and anger to power and action, to productive feedback and concrete solutions. So we did what we all want to do and we transformed our pain and anger into power and action. The mission of the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute is to create and support an environment where families can live in peace and unity. Our work is guided by seven core principles: love, unity, faith, hope, courage, justice, and forgiveness. Our approach is to acknowledge, listen, collaborate, and mobilize. Our foundation is built upon peace, and within this foundation, we have a strong commitment to work with both victims’ and offenders’ families. Our philosophy is simple yet complex: to reach people where they are on their journey in order to assist them and their families to become more involved in the change process. We believe peace is possible, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days out of the year.

## **Goals and Objectives – Our Methodology**

Clementina Chéry: Our work is divided into three sectors, our goals and objectives: our schools, families, and community. Just to give you a quick glimpse of how we got there in the evolution, Louis was 15 and a tenth grader in West Roxbury High School and a member of Teens Against Gang Violence. He could not understand why adults were always blaming the youth for the ongoing problem. He truly believed that peace is possible and if it is to be achieved, it would be up to his generation, regardless of which side of the streets they came from. So when Louis was killed is really when I woke up and the blinders came off. I then understood his questions and his concern. So we really started within the schools. We started with primary prevention. There was a captive audience. We wanted to educate about Louis' dreams and visions, remember those who were killed before and after Louis, and to give the students the opportunity to be heard and to share their goals and vision for peace. Gandhi tells us if we are to reach real peace in this world, we must start with the children. So we worked with the English Language Arts Department in the Boston Public Schools and developed the Peace Curriculum. Because we were in the school and when homicide happens, the Mayor of the City of Boston, the Police Department, Public Health Commission, the hospital, the Governor, and [the] faith based all started referring families to the Peace Institute, and so our work and working with families was born. At the same time, we know that violence is not only on the individual or a family, so we engaged the entire community in an ongoing peace awareness and peace promotion campaign. We wanted to shift the mindset from the problem to the solution, and we wanted to begin to see the assets and not the deficits, and in order to create an environment where young people are valued by adults and by their peers for their peacemaking efforts.

## **Survivor Based Tools and Techniques**

Clementina Chéry: I want to share with you just a little bit about our survivor based tools and techniques. These tools and techniques were created, again, out of my own personal experience and those who allowed us into their hearts. We started with the Peace Curriculum in 1994. They are a set of teaching guides and novels which give teachers tools to teach their students the value of peace through literature and community service learning. In 1996, the curriculum received national recognition as one of the programs which contributed to the reduction of juvenile crime in the city of Boston – titled “One City’s Success Story.” Then we went to elementary schools and that is our PEACEZONE curriculum, and that really came out of the need for younger students. It is a school based program that is designed to increase students’ ability to heal from trauma, loss and grief, make positive decisions, and avoid this type of behavior. This work is done in partnership with the Harvard School of Public Health, Lesson One Company, and the Boston Public Schools. Of course, again, because we are in the schools, we were called by the teachers in the schools to run a group for students who have lost close relatives, not necessarily to homicide, but to illness or who have had loved ones incarcerated, to create the Survivor Leadership Group. These students are given the space and the opportunity of their own where they can transform their pain and anger into power and action.

Clementina Chéry: Our Survivor Based Tools and Techniques, again, continue with the work with families whose loved ones have been murdered. The Federal Bureau of Investigation defines murder as “the willful killing of one human being by another.” However, asking the mother of a murdered victim provides a different definition: the dark as hell accompanied by a pain so intense that even breathing becomes unendurable labor. This describes exactly how I felt in 1993 when I was at the hospital and was told my son was brain-dead. There was nothing anyone could do so I left the hospital empty-handed, both physically and within my soul.

Clementina Chéry: So I developed the Survivors Toolkit and, within that, it is really tools to empower and focus families during one of the most challenging times of our lives. These tools help us in being intentional and consistent with our work. No matter who a survivor or co-victim meets with, they will receive the same experience each time. In the Toolkit, we have the *Step-by-Step Burial [and Resource] Guide* and it is really designed to offer support, guidance, and strategies for peace after the murder of a loved one. It is not meant to take the place of information that is provided by any funeral home or place of worship, victim service providers, advocates or trauma responders, or anyone else who offers support.

Clementina Chéry: Included in the Toolkit is *Always in My Heart: A Workbook for Grieving Children*. When Louis was killed, I did not know what to do for my younger children, and there were not really any resources readily available to help guide me and my children. So I did what any mother would do, gave them a piece of paper, markers and crayons, and told them to draw and write what they were feeling: sadness, anger and fear. These activities really helped them understand and express the many feelings and emotions, both bad and good, that come with grief.

Clementina Chéry: In the last part of this Toolkit is what we offer families, the SandTray/Worldplay, an interactive therapeutic practice in which participants express their feelings and experiences through a natural self-guided, self-healing process. Sand provides a means of self-discovery and healing. SandTray is used for healing and spiritual development with people of all ages. This was developed by Gisela De Domenico.

## **Training, Education and Community Engagement**

Clementina Chéry: So you have heard us talk about what we do in schools and what we do with families coming from a survivor based methodology. It is equally important that we also engage the community. We do this in many ways. For the Webinar, I will focus on the Survivors of Homicide Victims Awareness Month, again, by personal experience. When Louis was killed, people wanted me to come and talk about my pain and the impact of losing a child to murder, and I did willingly. Yet, I realized when I wanted to talk about the needs and services, I was not received in the same way. So I gathered survivors from across the State of Massachusetts and providers and legislators who were concerned that there was not much when it came to co-victims or survivors of homicide victims. We really took a page out of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Awareness Month and created the Survivors of Homicide Victims Awareness Month. Research tells us that holidays are the worst, especially with those whose lives have been impacted by violence, and so November 20 – December 20 seemed very fitting for these. The Peace Institute continues to work to ensure that survivors' voices are heard and needs understood on all levels. Our theme for this year's awareness month is Pain, Purpose, and Peace from Beacon Hill to Capitol Hill.

Clementina Chéry: Another way of engaging the community is the Mother's Day Walk for Peace. We know Mother's Day is a day of celebration and a day of joy. Yet, for those of us whose loved ones have been murdered, it is really a mixed emotion. We have to celebrate with our living, yet, given permission to celebrate, to honor those who are no longer here with us. So we really engage the community to come out, to work together to make a public commitment to protect each other's children, to say peace is possible, and also to raise money for the work of the Peace Institute. And, quietly along the survivors of homicide victims and the elected officials, are the families of those whose loved ones are incarcerated or deported for the violence within our community. In working in a message for peace, we must engage all of our members of the community.

Clementina Chéry: Lastly, our public and academic partnership with University of Massachusetts Boston is just one of those and, again, engaging the community. Since the fall of 2010, we have worked with the Department of Applied Sociology at the University of Massachusetts and collaborated in a way that informs the best practices in public academic partnership with a simple overarching goal of sharing expertise to better educate graduate students on the public health and social policy ramifications, not only on violence and on homicide but also on survivorship from victimization.

Clementina Chéry: In closing, since 1994, the Peace Institute has served as a center for teaching, healing, and learning for families impacted by violence. Also in partnership with the City of Boston, communities, academia, human service providers, the faith community, law enforcement, hospitals, the criminal justice system, and our legislators, we are a survivor based multiservice agency that is committed to providing trainings which are thorough, relevant, with a multicultural lens. We offer these trainings and workshops and seminars on how to implement our survivor based tools and techniques with a goal to challenge myths and stereotype stigma about survivors of homicide victims or co-victims in order to shift institutions to a more receptive survivor-centered response and prevent secondary victimization. It was truly a pleasure being a part of this Webinar, and for more information on our training tools and techniques, you can contact Rachel Fazzino, Director of Training and Education. I truly leave you in peace and in prayer. Thank you.

### **Presenter Question and Answer**

Lenna Reid, OVC TTAC: We will have a question and answer session at the end of the Webinar after our presenters. However, at this moment, I would like to invite folks to submit questions through the chat. I would also like to mention that the presentations will be available on a Web site with the Webinar recording, as well as all of the questions and answers to this session. In addition, electronic certificates of participation will be provided to attendees. If there are no questions, we will move on to our next presenter.

Brian Ganjei: Okay, it looks like we do not have any questions so thank you very much, Ms. Chéry. We move on now to Dr. Katherine “Kitty” Lawson. She is the Founder and Executive Director of Victims to Victory, Inc., a nonprofit organization initiated in 1995 to provide faith-centered counseling and support to families grieving losses from homicide. She has trained faith leaders and victim service providers in spiritual dimensions of grief, trauma, and victimization and has worked in crisis response, including helping clergy after the 9-11 terrorist attacks. In addition, she has provided training and faith based consultation to healthcare and university partners engaged in violence reduction, intervention, and research projects. Dr. Lawson earned her doctorate in educational psychology and counseling in 1991 from the University of Memphis where she served as an adjunct and assistant professor for nearly 4 years before moving into full-time congregational ministry. Dr. Lawson’s service has been recognized with the NIA Purpose Award from the Tennessee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, the Champion of Victim Rights Award from the Trauma, Faith, and Resilience Initiative of the Center for Just and Caring Communities of Union University, and the Tennessee Board of Probation and Parole’s 2011 Voice for Victims Award for Outstanding Service on Behalf of Victims of Crime. Dr. Lawson continues to educate and advocate for families and youth affected by violence through partnership with the Shelby County Defending Childhood Initiative and Operation Safe Community. Dr. Lawson, if you are on the line, if you could please go ahead.

[no response]

Brian Ganjei: Dr. Lawson, we are not hearing you right now. If you had muted your line before, if you would press star 6 again to unmute.

### **Academic and Community Partnerships Enrich Faith Based Victim Services**

Dr. Katherine Lawson: Thank you. Victims to Victory was developed in 1995, in the aftermath of several murders amongst a church family, which brought to the attention that even within spiritual communities, murder is the kind of trauma and tragedy that deserves and needs the attention of a faith based community. Victims to Victory was founded with the mission that exclusively addressed the spiritual and emotional needs of survivors and co-victims of homicide with the belief that when people are steeped in faith tradition, they need to have [inaudible / poor audio] which will honor that tradition. [inaudible / poor audio] then in Memphis have been delivered against the backdrop of a community culture which, importantly, has a strong, a very strong tradition of faith. For Memphis, we are known as a city of churches, sometimes the buckle of the Bible Belt, and faith almost seems to be part of our DNA. So it is within this context that an estimated 70 percent or greater of the violent crime victims contacted through Victims to Victory for services expressed that they identify themselves as people of faith or express some spiritual interest. The majority of these people who we see are adult co-victims of homicide who are disproportionately African-American. Victims to Victory has continued to keep as its centerpiece the services to co-victims of homicide, but alongside that, we also provide outreach and services to victims of other violent crime. Unfortunately, in our area of the city and of the state, we are a leader in domestic violence as well, and so integrating those co-victims of domestic violence homicides along with those who are co-victims of community homicide has been a thrust that we have pursued. In serving victims of violent crime, and particularly co-victims of homicide, there are some things that we feel are quite important to take into consideration in framing services.

### **Academic and Community Partners**

Dr. Katherine Lawson: First of all, again, looking at the important cultural context that formulates the backdrop against which African-Americans primarily become family members of those who have lost their lives in tragic and violent ways. We also look at the role of religious faith and the role of the faith community in the coping and rebuilding process that is used by these co-victims as they process through their journey of healing. In doing that, Victims to Victory has found it very important and strategic to partner with those who are in our research community, particularly the University of Memphis which has within its Psychology Department leaders, nationally and internationally, in bereavement studies. This partnership has been very, very instrumental for us in that it has helped us to understand better who our particular co-victims are, who they are uniquely, and how they cope with the trauma of homicide specifically, as well as better understanding how the faith community has been a resource in that coping process. Through the University of Memphis, there have been two research initiatives in recent years which we have partnered with. These are Project Bravehearts and Project INSPIRIT. Both of these, separately and then coming together, have been very, very valuable in providing for us a snapshot of those co-victims whom we serve, and also helping us to formulate a better approach for reaching and providing services to those who are so distressed in the aftermath of violent crime.

### **Project Bravehearts: Survivors**

Dr. Katherine Lawson: Through Project Bravehearts, a sample of Victims to Victory clients has been looked at from a qualitative perspective primarily to better understand, again, what the

experience of homicide loss is for them and how we might learn from that experience in terms of targeting services. Our information has shown that the survivors who come to Victims to Victory overall are indicating more incidence of complicated grief than those who are non-African-American, they tend to have more depressive symptoms, and the posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which is experienced oftentimes is more intense. On the other side of this, however, we also feel it important to look at the social support networks that they bring, understanding that with homicide as well as any other type of violent crime, those who have been victimized come not just as sufferers, but also those who have support systems and networks for resilience. We have found through the research with the University of Memphis that the African-American homicide co-victims whom we serve tend to have very large social support networks. These networks can be very culturally specific in that they include not just family members, but also those in the broader community, those who are part of the kinship network, who may not be biologically related, but godparents, those aunts, those relatives who may be caregivers as well, who help the family to be nurtured. Also within that social support network, we find that with our particular target population, God is frequently nominated as a social support entity of importance, so there is a very strong endorsement of a faith-oriented social support which we cannot ignore when we begin to do outreach and try to frame services to reach the needs of this population.

### **Project INSPIRIT**

Dr. Katherine Lawson: The second research initiative through the University of Memphis gives us a better picture even of how the religious community and religious faith helps those who have been affected by homicide cope and rebuild. Through Project INSPIRIT, which was really a process for investigating some of the spiritual processes associated with trauma, the information that was gathered by very qualitative as well as some quantitative means indicated to us that in our population of homicide co-victims, there is also a very strong incidence of complicated spiritual grief which may accompany some of the other more clinically-oriented symptoms. With this complicated spiritual grief, we find that some of the people whom we reach out to struggle with, of course, understanding the relationship with God that perhaps previously had been strong, but now feels as if there has been abandonment, as if there may have been even a betrayal. Because of this and some of the other parts of that construct of spiritual grief, the struggle to find meaning in the aftermath of violence may be very much dislocated. In that process, it can lead to greater complications and more clinical kinds of symptoms, which prolong the trajectory of healing for those who are affected.

Dr. Katherine Lawson: In looking at the complicated grief and complicated spiritual grief, we noticed there is a need to develop specific interventions that will target those aspects for people who are facing crime, that will help them to learn how to use spiritual processing in ways that help them come to some meaning and this, in turn, can possibly mitigate the crisis of faith which seems to be so unshakable for many of them. In working with the universities and looking, again, at some of the more clinical symptoms associated with the violent loss and the aftermath of homicide, we have found that the capacity of people to actually heal is sometimes made more difficult by the fact that, among African-Americans, homicide can be a very silencing and isolating kind of experience. By that I mean that because of the faith community in some cases not knowing exactly how to come alongside those who rely on them so strongly, there may actually be a muting of the voice of co-victims which makes it difficult for them to express their processes and their feelings.

## **Playback Memphis: Drama**

Dr. Katherine Lawson: To that end, one of our community partnerships with a wonderful theatrical group called Playback Memphis has been a wonderful resource for healing through drama. Playback Memphis is actually an improvisational theater troop which is quite adept at taking the stories of some of the people whom we have served and transforming them on stage, so that co-victims actually are able to step outside of themselves, push away from their pain in such a way that they can see portrayed before them their strengths and their resiliencies. Through this process then, they are given a voice so that they can begin to express their loss in a way that garners support, in a way that also gives them the ability to see that there is resolution, even if it is a long trajectory, and also it provides them with some sense of who they are even apart from the pain of their homicide loss. Through Playback Memphis, many of the dramatic recreations have been just transformational for some of the co-victims we have served, even to the extent that their personas have continued with them in other support group activities, and they now see themselves in a very different way.

## **Healing Homes Training**

Dr. Katherine Lawson: Finally, as we begin to look at the importance of partnership, and especially against that backdrop of a faith community which is so vital to the process of homicide co-victims, we have engaged in partnership with the University of Tennessee through their Academic Consortium of Applied Research. This particular partnership focuses on the epidemic of domestic violence which exists in our local community. As a result of faith based surveys and studies that have been done some years ago, we have discovered that within our community, the incidence of family violence is as great in those who are connected to church families and faith communities as it is in the more general population. In response to that, we have also understood that religious groups and faith leaders, unfortunately, will sometimes misunderstand the dynamics of family violence and also fail to know how to connect with community resources or even know what resources are available that might be able to help those within their congregation. So through a curriculum that was developed based on some of the survey results from the University of Tennessee, a curriculum called “Healing Homes,” which is a family violence education training, was developed. That is a training for clergy and lay ministry leaders who are serving African-American congregations in high violent crime areas of Memphis, Tennessee. It specifically provides the opportunity to educate lay and faith leaders in how to recognize signs of abuse, how to refer in crisis situations and in non-urgent crisis or in non-urgent situations, and then also how to connect those families in need, whether they be adults or children and youth, to resources that will help them to deal with their practical, emotional, and spiritual symptoms of violence.

Through the faith based survey from the University of Tennessee, we found there was almost 28 percent of respondents here who reported being in abusive relationships. In those relationships, most of the people felt like their church community was a source of support for them, and this was the case with both victims and perpetrators. So it sent the message that we need to be working with our faith communities to respond to family violence from a holistic perspective so that we can not only educate but [also] prevent and provide resources that will help children to receive the counseling and support they need, as in the case of the Defending Childhood Initiative which provides trauma-focused therapy. Also, we are working with the Youth Violence Prevention Strategy here to bring some attention to those issues related to teens and youth, particularly dating violence, cyber violence, and bullying. And then, to make sure that the faith community has its capacity built and strengthened so that they can be a social support network and a spiritual network of positive support for those who have been affected by family violence.

## **Best Practices and Partnerships**

Dr. Katherine Lawson: The partnerships that we have utilized have helped us to go from seeing homicide co-victims in particular and other violent crimes more generally, in the context of a faith community, but engaging academia and engaging the community in ways that help us to inform our knowledge of those populations more specifically, and also utilizing techniques which will help to educate and develop the skills of faith leaders in the community so that they can be more supportive in the recovery and in the rebuilding process for those violated by violent crime. Thank you.

## **Question and Answer**

Lenna Reid: Thank you very much, Dr. Lawson. There are a few questions that have come in. The first question is: Who is responsible for providing victim services and when does that process begin?

Dr. Katherine Lawson: Victim services through our organization are provided by victim advocates initially. We offer services to local law enforcement connections, who then make it possible for us to do that initial outreach and that happens through our victim advocates.

Lenna Reid: Great, thank you very much. There are a few more questions that have come in. In the interest of time, I will just take one more question and we will save them for the end. Again, Dr. Lawson, I am a victim advocate and my biggest challenge is lacking funds. I am in a rural area so that is also challenging. How can we get funds for our programs and jobs when it continually gets cut from Congress and then trickles down to the individual states and gets cut further? (Let me just add, if I could ask the speakers to please speak a little bit louder so our participants can hear you clearly. Thank you.)

Dr. Katherine Lawson: It certainly is difficult to provide services when funding is not as available or as much as it should be, and particularly in rural communities this may be felt very, very profoundly. I would suggest to that caller that one of the first things you might explore is what can be provided to victims and co-victims that do not require special funds. I know there is always cost involved, but certainly when you are working with a faith community, the faith community are stakeholders in what happens in our communities. So if you can connect with churches that perhaps have amongst their congregations folks who have identified themselves as having been victims and, therefore, have a natural kind of advocacy, there may be a buy-in which will engage them in ways which will benefit them in terms of meeting the needs of the congregation, as well as providing some resources, if not funds, even in-kind resources which will help to serve victims more effectively.

Brian Ganjei: Okay, thank you very much, Dr. Lawson. We are going to move on to our next presenter now, Danielle Sered. Danielle Sered currently directs Common Justice, a demonstration project of the Vera Institute of Justice. Before planning the launch of Common Justice, Ms. Sered served as the interim deputy director Vera's Adolescent Reentry Initiative, a program for young men returning from incarceration on Rikers Island. Prior to joining Vera, she worked at the Center for Court Innovation's Harlem Community Justice Center, where she led its programs for court-involved and recently incarcerated youth. Ms. Sered has also designed and directed a program to teach conflict resolution through the arts in inner-city Atlanta schools and juvenile detention centers. She has had extensive involvement in gang intervention work, and has experience with a variety of mediation and conflict resolution techniques. Ms. Sered received her B.A. from Emory University and her master's degrees in poetry and European literature from

New York University and Oxford University, where she studied as a Rhodes Scholar. So, Danielle Sered, if you are online, if you could take it away and please remember to speak as loudly and clearly as possible.

### **The Vera Institute of Justice Common Justice Project: Using Participatory Justice To Support Victims of Violent Crime**

Danielle Sered: Thank you so much and I just want to begin by thanking Ms. Chéry and Dr. Lawson for your really extraordinary and inspiring work. It has been such a privilege to work alongside so many advocates like yourselves and I am excited for this opportunity to share a little bit about Common Justice with you all.

### **Surviving Trauma: What Victims Need**

Danielle Sered: So I thought it would be useful to open up, and you have heard many of these things from the previous speakers, to talk about surviving trauma and what it is that victims need when we are harmed by somebody. The literature in the field about trauma teaches us that certain things can be incredibly important to victims in being able to heal through what happened to them and in overcoming the symptoms of posttraumatic stress. These are things which many of us know intuitively but still have a hard time accessing. The first is having one's voice heard. That means expressing the impact, talking about how it affected our lives, the lives of those close to us, our daily routines, the depths of our hearts and spirits, having that experience validated and recognized and taken seriously, both by people we love and by the institutions in our community. Being able to assemble a coherent narrative, which means being able to understand what happened, why it happened, who did it, what kind of world allows something like that to happen and how we can live in that world. And being able to ask our questions and getting those questions answered. Those may be: Who are you? Why did you do this? Was that gun really loaded? What would you have done if I had done this? Why did you target me? Whatever it is people need to know. Having the holes in their experience filled in so they can begin to move through their healing can be incredibly powerful.

Danielle Sered: The next thing victims need is to develop a sense of control relative to the event as much as possible, knowing there are limits on that. But that can include, barring being able to go back in time, the things we can do is help victims have a say in shaping the outcome of what happens to them, what happens with the case, what happens to the person who harmed them, helping them to develop a safety plan that helps them recoup a sense of control over their own lives, and a bit of control over their safety and the safety of those they love, and then integrating the experience sustainably into their world view. So that means being able to think about what kind of world would allow this to happen and how they can continue to live in that world in a way that still allows them to be as healthy and as well as they possibly can.

Danielle Sered: We know that receiving restitution is important. That means direct and financial restitution, having property that was damaged replaced, having costs reimbursed. But we also know that restoration in the form of community service and other actions can often be very helpful, but for many victims, seeing that something positive has come out of what happened to them helps us to make meaning of the terrible things we endure.

Danielle Sered: Then also, seeing the defendants held accountable. Some victims prefer jail or prison sentences for those who harmed them. For them, it ensures a sense of justice and safety which is responsive to their experience. For others, more participatory alternatives will align more closely with their needs for justice and safety. At Common Justice, we believe that all

victims deserve to be heard and to shape the outcome of what happens to them. What we know, too, is that for all too many victims, these needs are frequently not met in traditional court processes. I say that because we also know courts are not designed to be healing venues, so when they fail to achieve a healing outcome, we should not be surprised.

### **Expanding the Range of Services**

Danielle Sered: At Common Justice and at Vera, we are interested in expanding the range of victim services. One thing that makes me proud to be a part of the victim service field is that I think, as a whole, we regard our responsibility and our role as continually asking the question: Who is being hurt by a crime and what do they need? Asking that over and over, no matter how good our current services are and how many people we are reaching. In developing Common Justice, Vera set out to serve victims of crime such as robbery and assault equitably and effectively, so I am talking particularly about those crimes, not about domestic violence, sexual assaults, or homicide, for instance.

Danielle Sered: Contrary to a great deal of popular perception (both the speakers today have spoken so powerfully to this fact), the person most likely to be harmed by a violent crime, both nationally and in New York where I work, is a 16 to 24-year-old man of color. He is six times more likely than I am, for instance, as a white woman, to be the victim of a robbery. And, yet, we know that very, very few young men of color receive services when they are victims of crime. This happens for a variety of reasons, none of which has to do with the intentions or integrity of victim service providers, but rather with a variety of barriers that exist. One of those barriers is the popular conceptions about who victims are impact how young men see themselves and how they are seen. We very rarely see images of young men of color as victims of crime. We do not see them on our televisions and we do not see them in victim services, for the most part. We also know that young men of color rarely seek services from traditional victim service agencies, whether that is because of the above reasons or because those agencies very often focus primarily on victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, which is extraordinarily important work, but can leave many victims without somewhere to go. Even young men do seek services, sometimes those services are not what they need. Our experience at Common Justice, in our early years and in the planning process, is very often young men will say they want employment so they can get off the corners where they were harmed in the first place. They want help getting back into school, they want substantive support in developing safety plans in their life, and that at the outset, referrals to mental health counseling and even crime victims compensation may not be on the top of the list of the things they seek.

### **Facing the Challenge: The Common Justice Demonstration Project**

Danielle Sered: So in trying to rise to this challenge, the Vera Institute of Justice is the home of Common Justice, the demonstration project I direct. Vera has been around since 1961, working to make the justice system fairer and more efficient. One of the ways it does that is through demonstration projects where we identify a problem, an intractable challenge that somehow touches on the lives of communities and people in the justice system, and we test solutions to those problems. They are informed by existing best practices, they are extensively evaluated to determine whether they achieve their intended impact, and Common Justice is one of those. Common Justice is a restorative justice based victim services, an alternative to incarceration program being piloted in Brooklyn. We work with the Brooklyn District Attorney's office. I will tell you on the next slide about our process, but we work with the felony cases such as robbery and assault. We only do so when the victims want to participate, so their veto will stop the process but they can always still get services. The defendants we work with are 16 to 24, and our

victims can be of any age, but because of the people most likely to be hurt, the majority of our victims are men of color and the majority of those are under the age of 30.

### **The Common Justice Model**

Danielle Sered: What we do in Common Justice is we begin with providing urgent and ongoing services and support to victims. That includes victim compensation but also some of the things I mentioned, like education and employment, referrals to mental health counseling when people want it, and culturally appropriate safety planning. We supervise defendants and we hold them accountable, and we do that with an eye to an understanding of how accountability can be supportive of a victim's healing process. Our defendants are seen 5 days a week in a one-on-one process in a 3-month preparatory period and 3 days a week in the year following that. They are supervised closely as they go to school, as they work, as they make positive contributions to their community, and are held very seriously and rigorously accountable by the program, by the District Attorney's office, and by the court. We also in this period prepare the victims, the defendants and their support people, who may be family, friends, neighbors, clergy and mentors, for a dialogue which the victim always has the option of attending or not attending as is most suitable for their healing. Our emphasis with defendants in this preparatory period is on violence cessation and accountability as the avenue to dignity. We do not believe we have to shame defendants. We believe that in respecting them, we hold them fully accountable for what they did, and that they are fully responsible for repairing that damage as much as they can. Then our emphasis with victims is on culturally responsive and appropriate healing and support.

Danielle Sered: We convene a dialogue, which we call a "circle," with the victim, defendant, and those support people to reach agreements about what defendants can do to make things as right as possible. Those agreements include things you would expect, like restitution, community service, school, work, and things you might not expect, like one victim who wanted to meet the children of the young man who robbed him, who said, "I want you to meet the kids whose father you almost took away that night with your gun, and after this dialogue, I believe in the father you can be to your baby girl and I want to say that to her face." Those agreements, if they are upheld over the course of the year and if the defendants commit no new crimes, replace the prison or jail sentences they would otherwise have served. In the meantime, we work extensively with the victims for at least a year following that dialogue to support them in their recovery, in their lives generally, in the hopes of providing a process that can meet victims' needs to be heard, to develop that sense of control relative to the event, to get restitution, both direct and symbolic, and to see the defendant held meaningfully accountable.

### **Why We Do the Work**

Danielle Sered: Vera's Common Justice project, there are a few emerging efforts, including some of those led just courageously and with real powerful vision by the Office for Victims of Crime, some work done by a number of hospital based violence intervention programs that have been at this for quite a while, and the number of small emerging victim service providers who are working together to rise to the challenge of providing effective and equitable services to young male victims of color. We do this for a couple of reasons. First, we do it because it is right. We believe that all victims of crime, no matter what their race, their class, their gender, their age, their ability, deserve culturally appropriate help and support when they have been harmed. But as a field, we have not yet risen to the challenge to do that and that it is our responsibility to do so now. Then we also know it is the practical thing to do. We know that when people who are harmed and do not get well, they are far more likely to go on to harm others. So when we provide effective support to victims, we can halt cycles of violence and improve the public safety in our

communities. Our hope is that by offering victims more options, we can move toward building a criminal justice system in which the greatest possible portion of victims experience a sense of justice and safety as a result of their decision to engage law enforcement. We believe in order to do that, we need to have as many options on the table as possible to meet the wide variety of victims' needs.

### **Directions for Research**

Danielle Sered: Finally, we are conducting research to assess the efficacy of our work. Vera initiated a process evaluation for the first 3 years, which was recently completed. There is also an ongoing outcomes evaluation which looks at client satisfaction with the program, specifically their sense of fairness, safety, utility of the process, and overall satisfaction.

Brian Ganjei: Okay, we are back.

Danielle Sered: Hi and I will just wrap up very quickly. We also look at the defendant's recidivism and have been working hard, despite the real challenges in the research, to try and assess victims' mental health, particularly around depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress symptomatology. We do not yet have enough victims to form a meaningful sample to demonstrate significant outcomes but are working to that end. So, thank you all very much for your time and it is an honor to participate alongside the earlier speakers.

### **Question and Answer**

Lenna Reid: Thank you, Ms. Sered. In the interest of time, we will take only one question. This Webinar was scheduled to end or is scheduled to end at 1:30. We may go slightly over but we will take one question and, again, I would just like to remind folks that we will be presently or publishing the PowerPoint presentation, the Webinar recording, as well as the question and answer sessions after the session. Our question, Ms. Sered, is: Since you see the barriers that prevent young men of color from seeking victim services, what is being done to remove those barriers?

Danielle Sered: I think it is a wonderful question and I do want to acknowledge OVC's really extraordinary work to this end. Their recent field based, field initiated demonstration projects program included young male victims of color as one of the target populations, and I think it is those types of efforts of building new programs that are responsive to the needs of young men, where people can listen to them, can learn from them, can build the field the same way we have built it for the survivors of victims we already serve, which is through a practice of mutual learning and caring and compassion are extraordinarily important. So we see new efforts being started, we see existing victim serving programs working harder to try and reach young men of color, especially the comprehensive victim serving programs that have always struggled to do that. Then we also see the emergence of trauma-informed care models, which I think can be an extraordinarily powerful tool in churches, in community based organizations, in reentry programs even, so that wherever victims are, they can be met with somebody who is ready to understand, respond to, and help them move through their trauma. I think it will take that sort of multifaceted approach to transform the field in the short and long term.

Brian Ganjei: Okay, thanks very much. Finally, for our last speaker, it is going to be Lenna Reid, the OVC TTAC Operations Director. She is going to tell you a little bit about how you can bring all the resources you have just heard about to your organization.

## **Organizational Capacity Building – Resources for Victim Service Programs**

Lenna Reid: Thanks so much, Brian. Again, in the interest of time, I am going to amend the OVC TTAC presentation. Before I go into that, I would like to invite participants to submit any questions and answers through the chat line. If, after the session, you have additional questions, please feel free to submit them to OVC TTAC; our e-mail address is [TTAC@ovcttac.org](mailto:TTAC@ovcttac.org). We will compile the questions and responses and post them up on our Web site after the session. Thank you. You will receive the presentation on OVC TTAC after the Webinar. However, in the interest of time, I am just going to talk very briefly about some of the services and resources that are available from OVC.

Lenna Reid: As the training and technical assistance arm of OVC, our mission is to really build the capacity of victim assistance organizations across the Nation. OVC also, I would like to say, maintains a clearinghouse of information resources which are available through their resource center as well as the National Criminal Justice Reference Service. We will just take a look at their Web site at the end of this presentation.

## **OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center Resources and Services**

Lenna Reid: Some of the major resources and services which are available through OVC TTAC include in-person and online training. A lot of this you can find on our Web site. We have about 20 standardized trainings through our catalog, and you can get this through our Training by Request program.

Lenna Reid: I am going to go ahead and jump to our Web site, if that is okay, so you can take a look. If you are looking for information, you can jump to [www.ovcttac.gov](http://www.ovcttac.gov), and under the “Trainings and Training Materials” section you will find our training catalog where you can browse through the 20 standardized trainings that are available. Through the TBR, Training By Request program, we can provide the training for you. We provide the trainings and the materials, such as the instructor materials as well as the participant materials. All your organization needs to do is really provide the location and the participants. On our Web site, what you will find is all of the information in terms of eligibility as well as an application to request the training.

Lenna Reid: I also want to direct everyone to the “How We Can Help” section of our Web site where you can obtain information on professional development scholarships, customized training and technical assistance, as well as information on our online training. So a lot of these resources from OVC TTAC are available right through our Web site and I encourage everyone to go to the site and browse around. I am going to jump very quickly to the OVC’s Web site as well. If you are interested in listening or looking at some previous Webinars that have taken place, OVC has a collection of previous Web forums on their Web site, and their Web site is [www.ovc.gov](http://www.ovc.gov). You can click on their Web forum and down below you will get a link to all of the previous Web forums that OVC has supported.

Lenna Reid: Finally, I am going to jump to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, which is really a clearinghouse of information. If you are interested in searching resources and other materials, you can go to a library and abstracts database for additional information there. I realize I have gone through this whole section of our presentation very, very quickly, but I want to remind everybody that the presentation and information from OVC, as well as OVC TAC, will be made available once we have the materials accessible through the Web.

Lenna Reid: At this moment, I would like to go ahead and end the session. Once again, if there are other questions that you would like to submit, please feel free to send them to OVC TTAC at [TTAC@ovcttac.org](mailto:TTAC@ovcttac.org).

Brian Ganjei: Okay, thanks everyone. We are going to sign off now and there will be followup information being sent to you about when the recording will be posted online and additional followup information. Again, if you have any questions, please e-mail [TTAC@ovcttac.org](mailto:TTAC@ovcttac.org). Thanks a lot and have a great day.