

Center on Victimization and Safety



**Fewer than
1 in 10**

Ratio of crime victims
in the United States
who receive services

Every year many children and adults in the United States become victims of crime—including those who experience violent crime, typically at the hands of someone they know. Yet fewer than 1 out of 10 victims receive services to help them cope with the impact of crime on their lives, protect them from further harm, and help them to heal.

Fueled by a commitment to closing this gap, the Center on Victimization and Safety is cultivating a new generation of victim services. We're helping communities around the country fashion services that reach, appeal to, and benefit all victims. Our work includes initiatives focused on populations at elevated risk of harm who are often marginalized by mainstream services—in particular, people living with disabilities, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) individuals. Through efforts such as our Supervised Visitation Initiative, we also help systems that are not designed to serve crime victims—but intersect with them—learn how to meet victims' needs.

Changing Systems

The Center on Victimization and Safety helps states and localities expand and improve their approach to victim services. Our efforts in this area range from hosting national conferences and issuing reports to providing technical assistance tailored to meet the needs of a particular community.

Children with disabilities are **three times** more likely than children without them to be victims of sexual abuse.

The likelihood is **even higher** for children with intellectual or mental health disabilities.

Opening Doors. We're working nationally and with specific communities – more than 50 communities in 21 states since 2006 – to ensure that victim services agencies can provide informed and welcoming services to people with disabilities and Deaf people, and that disability organizations can offer safe and responsive services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Supervised and Safe. We work nationally to foster and refine programs that provide supervised parent-child visitation and safe exchange to families with a history of domestic violence, so that visitation and exchange don't become an arena in which perpetrators of violence can control and potentially harm survivors and their children.

Building Knowledge through Research

We still have much to learn about how individuals experience crime and its aftermath and what services are most responsive to their needs and effective in the long run. To build the kind of knowledge that makes a real difference in the lives of victims we rely on empirical studies and other rigorous methods of gathering and analyzing data.

Sexual Violence and Disability. With funding from the National Institute of Justice at the U.S. Department of Justice, Vera researchers are studying cases of sexual violence among women with disabilities. We'll learn what they do to seek help, how their cases proceed through the justice system and the outcomes. This study promises to illuminate a significant problem largely hidden from public view and for which there are no recognized best practices.

In partnership with the Ms. Foundation, we studied the prevalence and nature of sexual abuse among



As many as
1 in 2 people
with a disability
will experience
sexual assault
in their lifetime

children with disabilities and have begun to frame a national strategy for helping these young victims who are likely to suffer lifelong consequences unless they receive appropriate services. We are now creating the first national working group of experts to tackle the prevention of sexual abuse of children with disabilities.

Using Performance Indicators to Monitor Progress

We help government and nonprofit organizations use performance indicators (measures of how an organization is meeting its goals) to learn on the go—discovering what works and what doesn't—and track progress against specific goals and standards. We're currently monitoring two pilot programs to better serve victims of domestic and sexual assault.

Evaluating Services for LGBTQ victims. LGBTQ individuals experience domestic and sexual violence at rates comparable to or higher than heterosexuals, yet are much less likely to seek and receive services. We developed and are implementing performance indicators to track the progress and outcomes of a new initiative designed to increase the capacity of mainstream victim service agencies to reach and effectively serve LGBTQ individuals.

Assessing Services for Victims with Disabilities.

We're fashioning simple and practical indicators that disability organizations and victim service agencies can use to monitor their capacity to serve individuals with disabilities who have experienced sexual or domestic violence as well as the actual services they provide. We will be piloting the indicators nationally.

Recent Publications

> **Sexual Abuse of Children with Disabilities: A National Snapshot**

www.vera.org/pubs/sexual-abuse-of-children-with-disabilities-national-snapshot

> **Forging New Collaborations: A Guide for Rape Crisis, Domestic Violence and Disability Organizations**

www.vera.org/pubs/forging-new-collaborations-guide-rape-crisis-domestic-violence-and-disability-organizations-1

For More Information

The Center on Victimization and Safety works to ensure that traditionally under-served victims of crime have equal access to victim services and criminal justice interventions. We do this by fostering collaboration among and building the capacity of victim service organizations, population and/or culturally specific service providers, and the criminal justice system. The Center combines research, technical assistance, and training to help policymakers and practitioners close gaps in systems and ensure that all survivors of violence have access to the services and support they need and want. For more information, contact Nancy Smith at nsmith@vera.org.

The Vera Institute of Justice is an independent nonprofit organization that combines research, demonstration projects, and technical assistance to help leaders in government and civil society improve the systems people rely on for justice and safety.

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