



Victim Services Assessment

Philadelphia Police Department (PA)

September 2024

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In 2024, Philadelphia Police Department engaged with Amy Durall, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) Fellow to explore possible support for their goal of improving how they meet the complex needs of victims and co-victims who interact with their agency. Through the OVC Fellowship, law enforcement agencies can receive tailored assistance to implement the Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims (ELERV) Strategy, establish or enhance internal Victim Services Units (VSUs), and improve overall agency victim response efforts. The Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) requested the completion of a Victim Services Assessment to review current practices and provide recommendations for the incorporation of a Victim Services Director and multiple victim services personnel.

Philadelphia is the most populous city in Pennsylvania with a population of 1,550,542 residents.¹ The PPD is the primary law enforcement agency responsible for providing public safety services to these residents and is staffed by over 6,000 sworn personnel and over 775 professional personnel. NIBRS data² show that the PPD reported a total of 15,549 violent crime incidents in 2022. Of this total, the PPD reported 483 homicide incidents, 810 rape incidents, 5,792 robbery incidents, 8,374 aggravated assault incidents, and 5,995 burglary incidents.

Activity associated with this assessment was completed from June through August 2024 and included:

- Review of policies and information pertaining to victim response efforts
 - Aggregate data on reported victimization categories
 - Policies – 20 Directives and 20 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
 - Victim assistance resource information

This data helped inform interviews and contributed to the formation of recommendations.

- Agency personnel and stakeholder interviews
 - Semi-structured interviews of agency personnel to include Victim Assistance Officers, investigators, sworn supervisors, and select professional personnel – 26 personnel
 - Semi-structured interview of select external organization personnel – 1 personnel

Some interviews were held in groups and others were conducted individually. Interview guides were used, but organic dialogue was encouraged. Discussions included participants' experiences and perspectives and the information gleaned contributed to the formation of recommendations.

The current assessment involved limited contact with external organizations and did not include interviews with victims and co-victims of crime reported to PPD. Multiple interviews included a question similar to the following: "How would external partners/victims and co-victims describe the effectiveness of PPD responses?"

This report details the observations and recommendations identified by Amy Durall, OVC Fellow. Terminology definitions used in this report are listed in Appendix A. This report is intended to depict PPD's current victim response efforts and support additional efforts to refine, expand, and sustain practices for more comprehensive responses to victims and co-victims.

¹ "QuickFacts: Philadelphia city, Pennsylvania," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed June 18, 2024, [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/philadelphia-city-pennsylvania).

² "Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer," FBI, accessed August 30, 2024, <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend>.

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Victim and Co-Victim Needs



Despite progress in establishing federal and state crime victims' rights legislation, only a small percentage of victims and co-victims obtain the information and services they are entitled to receive.³ The criminal justice system has historically focused on apprehending, prosecuting, adjudicating, and punishing offenders – often leaving the critical needs of crime victims and co-victims unmet.⁴

Victims and co-victims may experience trauma from the crime itself, their injuries or losses, and their involvement in the criminal justice process. Additionally, previous trauma may affect their current experiences. Law enforcement agency personnel should follow a victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive approach to address the needs of victims and co-victims.⁵

Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to expand victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive practices to all contact points experienced by victims and co-victims. Effective response should be an agencywide priority and written policies should be developed to guide personnel actions.⁶

“For too long, the victims of crime have been the forgotten persons of our criminal justice system.”
~ Ronald Reagan

³ Heather Warnken “[What Does the Data Tell Us About Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services?](#)” *Police Chief Online*, August 28, 2024.

⁴ [IACP | ELERV - Introduction to the ELERV Strategy](#)

⁵ [DOJ | The Attorney General Guidelines for Victim and Witness Assistance 2022](#)

⁶ [IACP | LEV - Key Considerations](#)

PPD leadership personnel conveyed that after taking office in January 2024, Commissioner Kevin Bethel identified enhanced victim response as an agency priority. Current plans involve the hiring and incorporation of a Victim Services Director and multiple victim services personnel. The primary responsibility of these professional personnel will be to focus on the rights and needs of crime victims and co-victims, facilitate their engagement with the investigative process, and help them navigate multiple complex systems.

Current Structure

Victim Assistance Officers (VAOs) represent the primary mechanism for victim response efforts by PPD. VAOs are sworn officers, and one VAO is assigned to each of the 20 identified districts ([Districts | Philadelphia Police Department](#)). The number of victim-related reports vary among districts and each VAO is expected to review Part One and domestic violence reports daily according to the review of agency policy ([Directive 4.14 | Victim/Witness Services and Crime Victims Compensation](#)). Each VAO uses discretion to determine which victims to contact and whether contact them via phone or field response. District VAOs rarely have more than one contact with each victim.

Additionally, assigned responsibilities for VAOs vary among district Captains and include ancillary duties that support administrative (e.g., CompStat reports), investigative, and community relations functions (e.g., community events). There are no established position descriptions, recruiting efforts, or formal onboarding and training practices for VAO positions. There are also no redundancy plans to ensure the completion of victim contact during VAO absences.

During interviews, district VAOs were described as a component of each district's Community Relations Team that also includes a Community Relations Officer – focuses on events and initiatives that encourage engagement efforts with community members; and a Crime Prevention Officer – focuses on education and initiatives about crime trends that highlight safeguarding businesses, residences, vehicles, and individual property. District VAOs rely on Crime Prevention Officers for accompaniment when completing contact in the field.

Documents provided by PPD indicate VAOs are assigned to specialized units and personnel interviewed offered the following:

- ▶ Crash Investigation Division and Aviation Unit – unaware of VAO positions or responsibilities.
- ▶ Special Victims Unit (SVU) – VAO completes administrative functions and no victim contact.
- ▶ Shooting Investigations Group – rely on district VAOs to complete victim contact.
- ▶ Homicide Unit – two VAOs (one sworn officer, one detective) provide information and referrals to co-victims identified as legal next of kin. These VAOs use discretion to make contact via phone or field response and typically have a minimum of two contacts with co-victims per case, with some cases resulting in multiple contacts. These VAOs also coordinate quarterly next-of-kin meetings for unit personnel to discuss case status and outstanding needs with co-victims of homicide cases.

During interviews, PPD personnel described the Victim Services Unit (VSU) as a component of the Community Relations Unit. Historically, multiple personnel were assigned to this unit and review of agency policy ([Directive 4.14 | Victim/Witness Services and Crime Victims Compensation](#)) includes assigned VSU responsibilities specific to Domestic Violence, Hate/Bias Crimes and Human Trafficking, and Victim Services sections. Currently, the VSU is comprised of one sworn officer who is tasked with being a liaison for external agencies and providing training to all VAOs. This training consists of coordinating monthly meetings that primarily involve community agencies providing information on their services related to victim response efforts.

Challenges: Role Clarification

Victim services personnel are most effectively incorporated into law enforcement agencies when clear roles and responsibilities are established and understood. This clarity supports the ability of agency leadership to function as strong ambassadors, establishment of reciprocal relationships with internal and external partners, the ability of personnel to confidently conduct assigned responsibilities, and effective contact with victims and co-victims.

Victim services personnel can help promote victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive practices throughout the agency and the community it serves. Victim services personnel can provide a wide range of services that are distinct from, but complementary to, the responsibilities of sworn personnel. These often include direct services, advocacy on behalf of those served, collaboration with other professionals, development and delivery of training content, addressing compliance with constitutional and statutory victims' rights responsibilities, representing agencies during external meetings and events, managing funding and budgetary processes, and ensuring operational oversight of victim services – all with intentional focus on the rights and needs of victims and co-victims.

During interviews, multiple personnel relayed that blended responsibilities of VAOs contribute to role confusion for themselves and those served. Review of agency policy ([Directive 4.14 | Victim/Witness Services and Crime Victims Compensation](#)) includes direction that VAOs will “be cross-trained in the duties of the Domestic Violence Officer”. VAOs are assigned responsibilities commonly recognized as sworn personnel duties such as, serving protection orders to respondents, helping complete proactive patrols in designated areas, conducting investigations, and accompanying service providers during home visits to ensure safety of all parties.

Because VAOs are sworn personnel, they wear uniforms and standard equipment (e.g., weapons, body-worn cameras, badges) that identify them as such. Review of agency policy ([Directive 4.21 | Body Worn Cameras](#)) reflects the inclusion of direction for officers to activate body-worn cameras “whenever taking a statement or information from a victim or witness” with no distinction or exception for personnel assigned as VAOs.

Blended responsibilities are further illustrated through review of agency policy ([Directive 5.12 | Stalking](#)), which includes direction that VAOs will “Contact the complainant...and interview the person(s)....Based on your interview, determine if a crime has been committed.” After acting in an

investigative capacity, this policy reflects expectations for VAOs to provide referrals to support services and organizations.

When asked how VAOs explain their role and responsibilities to those served, multiple personnel relayed these conversations often start with VAOs asking victims and co-victims about additional information that may be helpful to the investigation. This is often followed by discussions centered on victim compensation and referrals to community organizations identified on the Victim Compensation Assistance Program claim forms.

Blended responsibilities also reportedly contribute to professional pressure of non-compliance with agency policy for victim contact. While agency policies do not include time frame expectations for victim contact, several personnel described delays in initial contact up to several weeks post-report and being unable to contact all domestic violence victims and victims of other crimes who could benefit from support. During interviews, multiple personnel attributed assignments to ancillary responsibilities as a factor that inhibits victim contact.

Recommendations: Victim Services Personnel Positions

The expressed intention of PPD to hire a Victim Services Director and multiple victim services personnel positions demonstrates a commitment to enhancing overall victim response efforts. Securing qualified and suitable candidates for victim services personnel positions is an essential component of effective agency responses to crime victims and co-victims. An equally essential component of effective agency responses is the ability to retain qualified and suitable personnel. Competitive salaries, comprehensive benefits, positive work environment, training, professional development, and career growth are elements that contribute to personnel maintaining motivation for high quality performance of assigned responsibilities.

Selection of the direct supervisor is a key component that has a cascading effect on operational decisions and planning for VSU expansion. Placement of victim services personnel – on the organizational chart and in physical workspaces – directly impacts effective implementation, incorporation, sustainability, and outcomes. Organizational chart placement reflects the perceived value of victim services from agency leadership and can influence the ability to incorporate contact with and services to multiple victimization categories across the agency. Physical workspace locations for victim services personnel can facilitate organic dialogue with colleagues about connected responsibilities and ultimately affects contact with and services to victims and co-victims.

Based on the review of information and documents provided by PPD interviews with multiple personnel, PPD is encouraged to incorporate the planned victim services personnel as indicated below (see **Figure 1** – additional details described in **Victims' Rights, Funding, Services and Collaboration, Training, and Policies**):

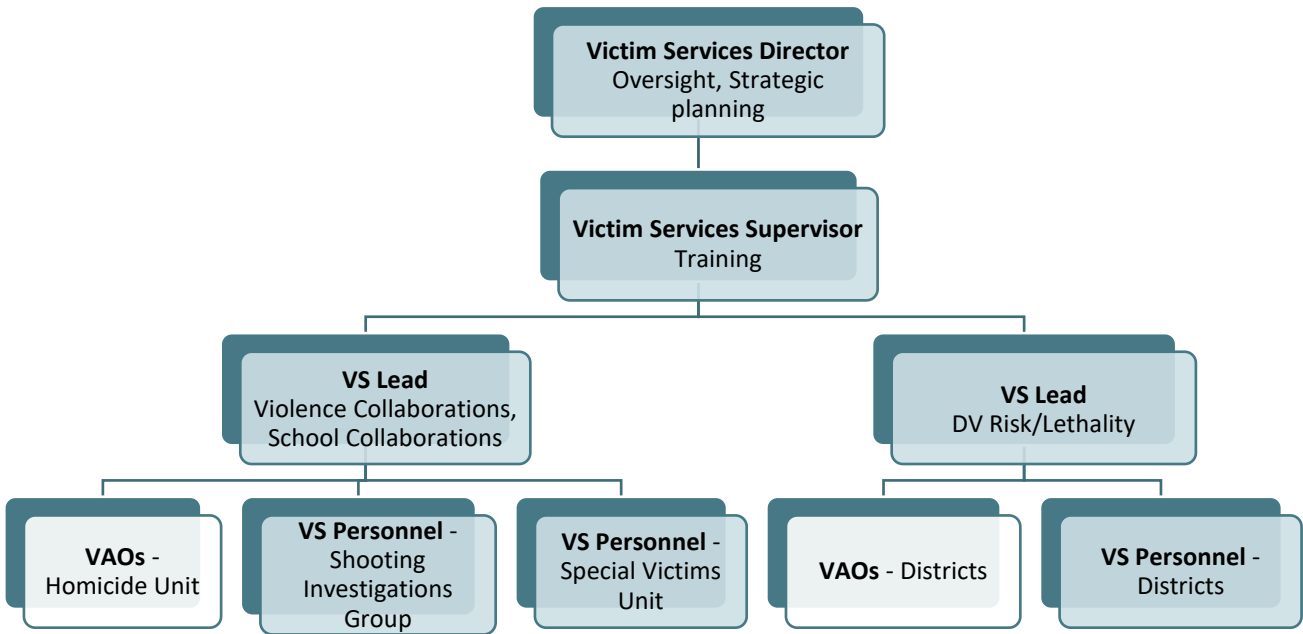
- Victim Services Director – prioritize applicants who understand the role of law enforcement-based victim services, demonstrate knowledge around information-sharing and documentation practices

(e.g., open records, Brady disclosure considerations, and confidentiality and privilege limitations), have experience serving multiple victimization categories, and have management skills.

- ▶ **Victim Services Supervisor** – prioritize applicants who understand the role of law enforcement-based victim services, demonstrate knowledge of training development and delivery, have experience with service delivery, and have supervisory skills.
- ▶ **Victim Services Leads** – prioritize applicants who demonstrate working knowledge of victims’ rights, have experience with service delivery, and demonstrate leadership skills for initiatives.
- ▶ **Victim Services Personnel** – prioritize applicants who demonstrate working knowledge of victims’ rights, understand collaborative service delivery, and have experience with service delivery.

PPD is encouraged to focus on establishing a professional environment in which victim services personnel work with other agency personnel as colleagues with equally valuable skills and knowledge. This environment should reinforce that victim services personnel do not work for other agency personnel (e.g., being treated as assistants to detectives) or against other agency personnel (e.g., discouraging engagement with agency and system processes, using their positions to audit or monitor actions of other agency personnel).

Figure 1
Recommendation: VSU Organizational Chart



The recommended structure supports clear delineation of assigned responsibilities for victim services personnel and personnel assigned as VAOs. PPD leadership is encouraged to transparently communicate all decisions related to the incorporation of victim services personnel, not only to VAOs, but also other agency personnel.

The recommended structure also supports the future expansion of the VSU. During interviews, personnel consistently relayed being unable to complete contact with all victims and co-victims that are within their current assigned responsibilities.

Beyond the current commitment to hire a Victim Services Director and multiple victim services personnel, PPD can develop a long-term staffing plan that would address the following:

- ▶ Victim Services Personnel – additional positions could be added as natural attrition occurs with personnel currently assigned as VAOs.
- ▶ Victim Services Personnel – additional positions could be added for expanded availability (e.g., non-traditional work hours, on-call response) to enhance victim response efforts.
- ▶ Victim Services Lead – an additional position could be added to oversee the incorporation of interns and volunteers to supplement victim response efforts. Philadelphia is a city with a robust list of colleges and universities. Interns and volunteers can positively contribute to law enforcement-based victim services. Through the assignment of suitable tasks, understanding the associated risks and liabilities, and active oversight that aligns with agency standards, interns and volunteers can help with the expansion of services.

Table 1

Recommendations: Staffing

1.1	Recruit and hire a Victim Services Director and multiple victim services personnel positions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Template Package I: Getting Started <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource contains sample position descriptions, sample interview questions, and a sample onboarding checklist.
1.2	Review information about the role of law enforcement-based victim services to support hiring qualified and appropriate personnel for the Victim Services Director and victim services personnel positions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCVLI Law Enforcement-Associated Victim Service Providers and the Brady Rule • NCVLI Considerations Regarding Obligations of Law Enforcement-Employed Victim Advocates with Social Work Licenses
1.3	Review victimization data to support the development of future staffing plans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Incidents - OpenDataPhilly • Shooting Victims - OpenDataPhilly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These resources contains data on crimes related to victims and co-victims.
1.4	Review information related to interns and volunteers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Template Package III: Student Interns & Volunteers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The resource contains sample recruiting, application, screening and selection, onboarding, and oversight tools.
1.5	<p>Develop a Staffing Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan – Template ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.

Funding

VSUs can augment the overarching mission, vision, and values of law enforcement agencies. Knowledge of funding models and sources can help agencies incorporate comprehensive victim services into overall agency practices.

Current Approach

As sworn personnel, all VAOs are funded through the agency budget. PPD leadership personnel conveyed plans to hire a Victim Services Director and multiple victim services personnel through the agency budget process.

Challenges: Planning with Purpose

During interviews, it was evident that PPD personnel have a strong desire to provide beneficial contact and information for victims and co-victims. Funding is one component of an overall agency plan that can reinforce a commitment to effective victim response efforts. During interviews, several personnel were unaware of agency plans to hire a Victim Services Director and multiple victim services personnel. For those who were aware, they were unable to provide any substantive information about agency funding plans to support these positions.

Recommendations: Sustainability

Law enforcement agencies should be intentional and strategic when identifying and securing funding for victim response efforts, specifically for the establishment and expansion of VSUs. Funding models often include a combination of agency budgets and external funding to support the identified operational needs (e.g., salaries and benefits, workspace and furniture, equipment and supplies, training) and needs of victims and co-victims.

External funding, frequently in the form of grants, can be used to demonstrate the viability of proposed initiatives and serve as a component of long-term sustainability plans for victim response efforts. Funding models may change over time and should be based upon agency data (e.g., crime reports) and victim services data (e.g., people served, types of services provided outcomes, gaps in response efforts, and victim and co-victim feedback).

PPD is encouraged to develop a funding plan that aligns with **Figure 1** – see **Table 2** for additional details. Establishing a career ladder for victim services personnel can encourage retention of qualified and appropriate personnel for their assigned responsibilities. Raises and benefits can also be retention factors that should be included in the funding plan. Placement of workspaces for victim services

personnel will also need to account for possible building modifications, dedicated spaces for meetings with victims and co-victims that afford some privacy, and furniture. Assigned responsibilities for victim services personnel will also affect the inclusion of equipment and supplies in the funding plan. For example, if victim services personnel are expected to complete field responsibilities, they may need access to vehicles and cell phones. The funding plan should also address the ongoing need for professional development opportunities (e.g., conferences, webinars) to ensure that victim services personnel maintain optimal skills to address the needs of those served.

Table 2***Recommendations: Funding***

2.1	Review funding model information to support the development of future funding plans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP ELERV Strategy – Strengths and Challenges of Funding Sources • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Agency Incorporation
2.2	Review funding source information to support the development of future funding plans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COPS Office Documenting and Advancing Promising Practices in Law Enforcement Victim Support: Identifying and Securing Funding for Victim Response Efforts • PCCD Funding and Grants Process • PPD Directive 7.18 – Grant Applications, Processing and Administration
2.3	Develop a Funding Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan – Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.

Victims' Rights

Rights for crime victims and co-victims have been formalized in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the federal government. These rights are available throughout multiple stages of the justice system but obligations to ensure access to those rights start when crimes are reported to law enforcement agencies. During law enforcement contact, victims' and co-victims' rights often relate to reimbursement for specific financial losses, the exchange of information about criminal justice processes and case dispositions, consideration of their interests, information about processes and services, notice of specific events and court proceedings, limitations on access to personal information, prompt return of property, and the presence of support persons during specific events and court proceedings that affect their interests. Interpreters and victims' rights attorneys can also support meaningful access to rights for victims and co-victims.

Current Process

PPD policy ([Directive 4.14 | Victim/Witness Services and Crime Victims Compensation](#)) is the primary mechanism that establishes personnel expectations related to victims' right information and access. Review of this policy reflects the following responsibilities related to victims' rights:

- ▶ Patrol Officers – provide victims with the “Law Enforcement Victims Rights Guide,” which contains victims’ rights and community resources information, and a Victims Compensation Assistance Program application.
- ▶ District Supervisors – ensure officers provide material to victims and co-victims and route appropriate information to VAOs daily.
- ▶ Investigators – inform victims of investigative procedures, refer victims and co-victims to VAOs, encourage registration with Pennsylvania’s automated victim notification system, and complete Police Questionnaire forms associated with Victims Compensation Assistance Program applications.
- ▶ Commanding Officers – ensure recruit-training curriculum inclusion, adequate supplies of “Law Enforcement Victims Rights Guide,” access to Victims Compensation Applications Program information, and ensure monthly reports from VAOs are submitted to the VSU.
- ▶ VAOs – review Part One and Domestic Violence reports; contact victims to discuss rights, services, referrals; assist victims with completing and submitting Victim Compensation Assistance Program claim forms; and complete and submit monthly reports to the VSU.

Challenges: Compliance and Access

During interviews, most personnel relayed basic knowledge of victim compensation. However, none of the personnel interviewed were able to describe other rights available to victims and co-victims, or intersections of those rights with assigned responsibilities.

Beyond providing a pamphlet and helping with Victim Compensation Assistance Program applications and claim forms, interviewed personnel were unable to specify any actions taken to help victims and co-victims exercise their rights. During interviews, it was also conveyed that “Law Enforcement Victims Rights Guides” are not consistently provided to victims and co-victims during initial contacts. Most personnel described having access to a language line service and interpreters for the deaf community to assist with addressing language access needs, but none of the personnel acknowledged using these services to discuss victims’ rights when contacting those they serve.

In 2022, amendments were made to the Pennsylvania Crime Victims Act, which pertains to victims’ rights. Review of agency policy ([Directive 4.14 | Victim/Witness Services and Crime Victims Compensation](#)) reflects that it was last revised in 2014. Ensuring comprehensive and current written guidance is vital to the ability of personnel to effectively execute their responsibilities.

Recommendations: Gateway to Engagement and Services

Victims and co-victims have unique experiences and desires for justice system engagement. Ensuring practical access to victims’ rights during law enforcement contact can be an effective gateway to meet their unique needs.

PPD is encouraged to develop a victims’ rights plan that aligns with **Figure 1** – see **Table 3** for additional details. In connection with their assigned responsibilities, VAOs and victim services personnel can collaborate with sworn personnel to ensure that victims and co-victims have practical access to their

rights. For example, the following intentional discussions can occur related to specific victims’ rights in Pennsylvania:

- ▶ VAOs – Homicide Unit
 - Victims’ Right to Disclosure of Information Regarding the Status of Analysis Performed on Evidence Collected During the Investigation.
 - Victims’ Right to Reasonable Notice of Release or Escape.
- ▶ Victim Services Personnel – Shooting Investigations Group
 - Victims’ Right to the Prompt Return of Property.
 - Victims’ Right to Refuse an Interview, Deposition or Other Discovery Request Made by the Accused.
- ▶ Victim Services Personnel – SVU
 - Victims’ Right to Disclosure of Information Regarding the Submission of Evidence for Forensic Testing That Was Collected from the Victim During the Investigation.
 - Victims’ Right to Receive Written Notification from the Appropriate Official with Custody of a Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit or Its Probative Contents Relating to the Victim Not Later Than 60 Days Before the Date of the Intended Destruction or Disposal.
- ▶ VAOs and Victim Services Personnel – Districts
 - Victims’ Right to Be Informed of All Constitutional Rights.
 - Victims’ Right to Information Concerning Services.
 - Victims’ Right to Be Restored to Pre-Crime Economic Status.
 - Victims’ Right to Information Concerning Availability of Protective Orders and Policies Related to Enforcement.

The victims’ rights plan should include a comprehensive review of all rights specific to Pennsylvania⁷ (beyond the examples above) and the intersections of those rights with the assigned responsibilities of VAOs and victim services personnel. The victims’ rights plan should also include remedies to address victims’ and co-victims’ language access, physical, cognitive, and cultural needs. Access to and inclusion of victims’ rights attorneys upon request of victims and co-victims should also be included in the plan.

Table 3	
Recommendations: Victims’ Rights	
3.1	<div>Review information to support access to victims’ rights throughout agency processes.</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCVLI Victims’ Rights During Significant Stages of the Criminal Justice Process• NCVLI Victims’ Right to Receive Copies of Police Reports• NCVLI Pennsylvania Select Victims’ Rights• PCCD Law Enforcement Victim Rights Notification<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ These resources provide information about constitutional and statutory obligations to support unprompted and practical access to rights for victims and co-victims through agency practices.

⁷ [NCVLI | Pennsylvania Select Victims’ Rights](#)

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3.2 Develop a Victims' Rights Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan.

- [Integrity Institute | VSU Strategic Plan – Template](#)
 - This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.

Services and Collaboration

Victims and co-victims have critical needs when interacting with justice system personnel and processes – safety, support, information, access, continuity, voice, and justice.⁸ Victim services personnel often represent the most effective response during law enforcement contact to address victims' and co-victims' rights and needs. In addition to direct services, victim services personnel can contribute to collaborative strategies that enhance community trust. Victims and co-victims who are contacted by victim services personnel may remain engaged with justice system processes, receive services beyond the scope of law enforcement actions, report lower levels of distress, use resources again in the future, and experience follow-up justice system actions.⁹

Current Actions

As previously described, VAOs represent the primary mechanism for victim response efforts by PPD. Through policy review and interviews, it was clear that victim contact by district VAOs on domestic violence reports is emphasized. Due to blended responsibilities and variances in victim-related reports among districts, it is not feasible to expect victims and co-victims of all Part One and domestic violence crimes will receive contact. Some VAOs are unable to contact all domestic violence victims. Other VAOs relayed attempts to contact elder fraud victims when time permits.

Review of agency policy ([Directive 3.09 | Domestic Abuse and Violence](#)) reflects direction for district VAOs to review domestic violence reports, record number of reported incidents by each victim, and forward copies of reports to the VSU via interoffice mail for ultimate provision to Women Against Abuse, a community-based organization that serves persons experiencing intimate partner violence. The third report by the same victim prompts mandated action by the PPD Detective Division.

During interviews, no VAOs mentioned contact with victims of aggravated assault, residential burglary, and robbery. Review of 2023 criminal incidents¹⁰ reflects large numbers of victims in these categories:

- ▶ Aggravated Assaults – 8,450 incidents
- ▶ Burglaries (residential) – 3,801 incidents
- ▶ Robberies – 5,257 incidents

Additionally, victims of sexual assault, non-fatal shootings, and other crime types are not benefitting from contact from VAOs to discuss their rights, available services, and connections with appropriate agencies and organizations.

⁸ [IACP | Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims \(ELERV\) Strategy](#)

⁹ [IACP | Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims \(ELERV\) Strategy](#)

¹⁰ [Crime Incidents - OpenDataPhilly](#)

In connection to Homicide cases, some district VAOs contact next of kin to offer support and resources. Other district VAOs defer this contact to the VAOs assigned to the Homicide Unit, who routinely contact the legal next of kin within 1-2 days of the incident. Homicide Unit VAOs are also expected to send next of kin contact information to multiple external agencies and community organizations.

Documentation expectations for contact with victims and co-victims by VAOs are minimal. Review of agency policy ([Directive 4.14 | Victim/Witness Services and Crime Victims Compensation](#)) includes direction that district VAOs maintain a log of calls for victims contacted by phone, but no direction for expected documentation related to contact via field visits. District VAOs receive copies of hand-written reports that are completed by patrol officers and personnel confirmed there is no shared documentation system across districts and specialized units. VAOs are unable to review contact and service information from prior incidents or when victims move from one district to another. During interviews, personnel relayed that call logs are inconsistent in format and content.

Review of SOPs for specialized units reflect no written guidance for VAO documentation standards. During interviews, personnel relayed that VAOs in the Homicide Unit document basic information (e.g., date of contact, name of person contacted) in a database that is separate from the database used by detectives in the unit.

VAOs do not complete narrative documentation of their contact with and on behalf of victims and co-victims. They do not discuss limitations to communication protections or information sharing practices (e.g., *Brady* disclosure obligations, open records processes), and multiple personnel conveyed they have experienced victims and co-victims spontaneously disclosing case-related information during their contacts. There is no written guidance for these circumstances in the directives and SOPs provided for review.

During interviews, some personnel relayed their beliefs that contact by VAOs is confidential and protected from the discovery process. Other personnel conveyed that narrative documentation is limited to sworn personnel responsible for investigating reports of criminal allegations, although policy review and practice descriptions indicate VAOs are expected to complete investigative responsibilities. Multiple personnel expressed a desire for a shared documentation system to enhance their ability to provide contact and services for victims and co-victims.

All VAOs are expected to submit monthly reports to the VSU that contain statistical information on actions taken.

Challenges: Responses and Communication

Victims and co-victims benefit from receiving high-quality services that are coordinated, collaborative, culturally responsive, multidisciplinary, and trauma-informed to address their rights and needs.¹¹ During interviews, personnel consistently described limited contact with each victim and co-victim. Comprehensive contact and services often require multiple conversations related to victims' rights,

¹¹ [IACP | Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Advocacy Parameters](#)

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engagement options, and resources to meet emotional, informational, and tangible needs as cases progress through investigative processes. Page | 16

In collaboration with sworn personnel, VAOs and victim services personnel can communicate with victims and co-victims around multiple milestones (e.g., case status changes, key investigative actions, media engagement, property decisions, personnel changes).¹² VAOs and victim services personnel can also communicate with sworn personnel about factors that may influence engagement of victims and co-victims in investigative processes (e.g., work/school schedules, transportation needs, location preferences). This level of incorporation supports a team approach, allowing each discipline to effectively apply their time and skills for optimal outcomes. Victims and co-victims can also benefit from the incorporation of VAOs and victim services personnel for support and accompaniment during agency practices (e.g., interviews, press conferences, property returns, U/T visa certification requests).

In addition to the previously described challenges of blended VAO responsibilities and the volume of victim-related reports, comprehensive contact and services are inhibited by the overarching sense that responses throughout the agency are siloed in nature and that PPD personnel view victim and co-victim support as a function that is separate from the investigative process.

The current process for VAOs to classify domestic violence reports and the lack of shared documentation systems across districts may contribute to inaccurately recording the number of prior reports for victims. Routing of domestic violence reports via interoffice mail to the VSU may contribute to delays in referrals to Women Against Abuse. Additionally, this process is not grounded in evidence-based assessment of risk or lethality factors for victims of domestic violence.

During interviews, multiple personnel relayed there is an oversaturation of responding personnel in the immediate days after homicide incidents. Multiple personnel conveyed that representatives of District Attorney's Office Crisis Assistance, Response, and Engagement for Survivors (CARES) program occasionally show up on crime scenes. None of the personnel interviewed were able to provide the criteria that determine when these representatives are contacted for response. In addition to response from CARES personnel, next of kin also receive contact from VAOs (district and Homicide Unit at times), and multiple community organizations who receive the contact information provided by VAOs in the Homicide Unit. This oversaturation combined with a lack of coordination contributes to confusion for next of kin and other co-victims.

VAOs consistently described referring victims and co-victims to community agencies, but often could not describe details associated with those services and conveyed these referrals were completed due to a desire to comply with policy. When time permitted, some personnel interviewed described a sense of satisfaction when they were able to see more tangible outcomes of those referrals (e.g., securing safe housing). None of the personnel interviewed described participation in multidisciplinary teams and meetings by VAOs as a component of PPD's victim response efforts.

¹² [SAKI | Communicating With Individuals Impacted by Cold Case Violent Crimes: Strategies for Ongoing Engagement](#)

It is not feasible to expect VAOs to provide comprehensive contact and services to victims and co-victims of all crime types. Even with the addition of victim services personnel, gaps are likely to remain. PPD is encouraged to identify collaborative opportunities that facilitate enhanced victim response efforts. PPD is also encouraged to maintain the spirit of collaboration among Community Relations personnel, VSU personnel, and VAOs as the Victim Services Director and victim services personnel are incorporated into the agency.

As a starting point, PPD is encouraged to complete community asset and resource mapping to gather information about existing agencies, organizations, and initiatives that can serve as potential partners in the collective responses to victims and co-victims of multiple victimization categories. This effort can include civic organizations, faith organizations, government agencies, higher education institutions, hospitals and health care providers, private businesses, schools, and social service agencies. PPD is also encouraged to review victimization data for reported incidents in all victim-related categories. This information can be used to inform decisions on currently assigned responsibilities for VAOs and victim services personnel. This information can also be used to plan for VSU expansion in the future.

In connection to domestic violence reports, PPD is encouraged to consider implementation of an evidence-informed tool to provide reliable context upon which to base sworn personnel actions and enhance timeliness of referrals for assistance. Many law enforcement agencies implement these tools during the process of patrol officers taking initial reports taken by patrol officers. The following tools can be considered:

- ▶ Arizona Intimate Partner Risk Assessment Instrument System (APRAIS) – identifies potential risk of severe re-assault, lethal/near-lethal intimate partner violence, and possible future threats to officers.
- ▶ Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement (DA-LE) – identifies victims at the highest risk of intimate partner homicide and near-lethal assault.
- ▶ Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) – estimates risk that a domestic violence offender will assault a partner again and higher scores are related to frequency and severity of future assaults and shorter time until re-offence.

Another possible collaboration example could include implementation of initiatives aimed at trauma-informed school-based responses. The following initiatives can be considered:

- ▶ Handle with Care – creates a network of communication between law enforcement and schools when children have been exposed to or witnessed violent crimes.
- ▶ The “I Love U Guys” Foundation programs – resources to support coordinated crisis response and post-crisis reunification efforts.

PPD is encouraged to develop a services and collaboration plan that aligns with **Figure 1** – see **Table 4** for additional details. In connection with their assigned responsibilities, VAOs and victim services personnel can collaborate with sworn personnel to ensure comprehensive contact and services for

victims and co-victims. To augment these efforts, it is essential that consistent practices are implemented related to role introduction, information sharing practices, and documentation expectations for contact with and on behalf of victims and co-victims. Documentation by VAOs and victim services personnel of victim and co-victim contact can enhance PPD's victim response efforts and the ability to conduct robust victim-centered, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and offender-focused investigations. Documentation can include information about crisis response, desires and support related to victims' rights, and connections to internal (e.g., records requests) and external (e.g., victim compensation) resources to meet identified and expressed needs. Documentation can also include desires related to engagement in investigative activities, preferences for communication plans, and spontaneous case-related information that is conveyed during contact.

PPD is also encouraged to incorporate the implementation of the iMPROVE (Measures for Providers Responding to Victimization Experiences) platform to measure the impact of services, and service quality outcomes through input from those individuals receiving contact and services.

Table 4

Recommendations: Services and Collaborations

4.1	<p>Review victimization data to support the identification of appropriate caseloads for VAOs and victim services personnel; and to support development of future staffing plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Incidents - OpenDataPhilly • Shooting Victims - OpenDataPhilly
4.2	<p>Review information to support the completion of community asset and resource mapping.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C4 Innovations A Toolkit for Community Assessment • CJI Mapping Community Resources Factsheet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These resources contain practical tools to support the identification and documentation of local assets to help with collaborative solutions to meet victim and co-victims needs.
4.3	<p>Review information related to establishing and maintaining effective internal and external partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims - Partnering • IACP Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims - Partnership Agreement Framework and Sample Language • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Effective Partnerships
4.4	<p>Review information related to service delivery to victims and co-victims to support responses and supportive handoffs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Template Package II - Next Steps • Integrity Institute VSU Response Checklists - Templates • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Template Package V - Pamphlets • IACP Enhancing Response to Victims - Communication with Victims • Integrity Institute VSU Resource Guide - Template • IACP Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims – Engaging a New Partner Template

4.5	<p>Review domestic violence assessment tools in collaboration with Women Against Abuse to support implementation of evidence-informed responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DV RISC Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Tools, Strategies, and Assessments • ASU APRAIS • Geiger Institute Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement • Waypoint Centre ODARA
4.6	<p>Review initiatives to support trauma-informed school-based collaborative responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handle with Care: IN Handle with Care / TN Handle with Care • The "I Love U Guys" Foundation
4.7	<p>To minimize role confusion and multiple contacts with co-victims, review homicide case response to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify the role, response criteria, and processes for DA CARES (DAO CARES Peer Crisis Responders for Homicide Survivors); and • coordinate contact by VAOs, victim services personnel, and external agencies and organizations.
4.8	<p>Review information related to victim services role and documentation practices to support enhanced contact and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Documentation Standards • NCVLI Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services in PA: Privacy, Privilege, and Confidentiality
4.9	<p>Collaborate with agency personnel to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a process to route reports according to assigned responsibilities, • establish documentation expectations, and • implement a shared documentation system among VAOs and victim services personnel.
4.10	<p>Implement the iMPRoVE Platform to measure the impact of services and service quality outcomes through input from those individuals receiving services: The iMPRoVE Platform.</p>
4.11	<p>Develop a Services Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan - Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.

Training

Onboarding and ongoing training are essential for personnel to establish and maintain skills needed to execute policies, role expectations, and services. VAOs, victim services personnel, and other agency personnel whose responsibilities include victim and co-victim contact should be provided training that clearly reinforces their own roles and responsibilities, roles of other agency personnel, and roles of external agencies and organizations. Discipline-specific and cross-training opportunities that include line-level personnel (sworn and professional), supervisors (sworn and professional), and command staff can help support effective victim response efforts.

The primary mechanism for onboarding newly assigned VAOs to their assigned responsibilities involves other VAOs conveying how they independently approach daily tasks. There is no structured plan for consistent onboarding and ongoing training.

Review of agency policy ([Directive 4.14 | Victim/Witness Services and Crime Victims Compensation](#)) includes direction that VAOs will receive training through VSU Monthly meeting on topics to include Crime Victimization, Basic Crisis Intervention Techniques, PA Victims Compensation Assistance Program, Dependable Access for Victims' Expenses (DAVE), Ethics Awareness, Interpersonal Communication, and Victim Resources. This policy also details an expectation for VAOs to provide remedial and supplemental training to personnel within their assigned districts on unspecified topics. None of the personnel interviewed indicated that VAOs have been requested to provide this type of training and several VAOs relayed they would not feel adequately prepared to train other agency personnel. Additionally, this policy includes direction for the Police Academy Commanding Officer to ensure information about basic crisis intervention techniques and the Victims Compensation Assistance Program are components of the recruit-training curriculum.

Review of agency policy ([Directive 6.9 | Selection and Training](#)) reflects the inclusion of direction that "All personnel, sworn and civilian, shall attend all training that is appropriate for their assignment." There are no training expectations in this policy specific to victim response efforts.

Challenges: Expectations and Accountability

During interviews, most personnel were unable to provide basic descriptions of the responsibilities of other agency personnel and external partners. For example, investigators were unclear on the assigned responsibilities of district VAOs and VAOs were unclear on the distinctions among community organizations related to services provided and populations served. Some personnel interviewed acknowledged that despite being employed for multiple years and having assigned responsibilities that are directly connected to victim response, they have minimal contact with VAOs.

During interviews, multiple personnel relayed receiving no training related to victim response since completing recruit training. Several personnel confirmed receiving DAVE training, some personnel conveyed participating in multiple training opportunities during SVU assignment, and other personnel relayed pursuing self-initiated training opportunities at their own expense. Several personnel expressed appreciation for presentations from community organizations that occur at the VSU Monthly meetings. None of the personnel interviewed mentioned receiving training specific to crisis intervention, victimization-specific dynamics beyond domestic violence, ethics, and interpersonal communication. Additionally, during interviews, none of the personnel mentioned receiving training on documentation practices to include expectations related to spontaneous disclosures of case-related information by victims and co-victims. Multiple personnel expressed interest in expanded training opportunities aimed at enhancing victim response efforts.

Comprehensive and ongoing training can amplify the confidence of agency personnel when carrying out assigned responsibilities. Because victims and co-victims intersect with law enforcement agencies through multiple avenues, all agency personnel should receive training related to victim response efforts. Cross-training among personnel on core responsibilities can also amplify effective collaboration with internal and external colleagues.

Despite VAOs being the primary mechanism for victim response efforts, it was clear during interviews that personnel assigned to these positions have not received training on their assigned responsibilities that supports the ability to provide comprehensive contact and services to all victims and co-victims of crime. As an example, it was consistently conveyed that district VAOs primarily focus on contact with victims of domestic violence crimes. Safety planning is often associated with domestic violence, but it is relevant to multiple victimization categories and several personnel recognized that they would benefit from training on current processes related to all available protection orders. As another example, multiple personnel relayed that district VAOs focus on elder victims of crime, but there have been no training opportunities focused on responses to this population.

Victim services personnel are often expected to collaborate with sworn personnel around complex circumstances while maintaining a clear focus on the rights and needs of victims and co-victims. Interdisciplinary training opportunities can support these efforts. PPD is encouraged to identify opportunities for sworn personnel, victim services personnel, and VAOs to participate in training together to reinforce roles and responsibilities, encourage enhanced teamwork, and offer smooth transitions for victims and co-victims as they navigate complex processes.

One example of this would be to coordinate death notification training for Homicide Unit personnel and include any victim services personnel and VAOs assigned to the Homicide Unit. Effective delivery of death notifications is essential for a compassionate response to those impacted and to encourage ongoing engagement with investigation processes. Many law enforcement agencies employ a team approach for death notifications, often including victim services personnel in the responding team. Death notifications are commonly described by law enforcement personnel as a responsibility that is a source of stress, in part due to the lack of training provided. During interviews, personnel relayed there are no formal training opportunities for death notification delivery.

Other examples of interdisciplinary training opportunities could include joint participation in convenings focused on crisis intervention, victimization dynamics, and effects of trauma. Upon hiring the Victim Services Director and victim services personnel, PPD is encouraged to have coordinate ride along and sit along opportunities to encourage personnel to become familiar with internal agency roles and responsibilities.

PPD is encouraged to develop a comprehensive training plan related to victim response efforts that aligns with **Figure 1** – see **Table 5** for additional details. In connection with assigned responsibilities,

victim services personnel and VAOs can benefit from expanded training aimed at enhancing contact and services specific to the unique needs of victims and co-victims.

The training plan should include steps to ensure that personnel receive consistent onboarding and ongoing training. This is beneficial for agency personnel, external agencies and organizations, and victims and co-victims. Clarifying roles and responsibilities can help with personnel retention, navigation of ethical dilemmas, and professional wellness. Supervisors can hold personnel accountable for assigned responsibilities and find opportunities for professional growth. Consistent guardrails can be reinforced through training and can promote self-accountability for personnel. Those same guardrails can also help with supportive handoffs with – *both to and from* – agency personnel and external partners.

Table 5

Recommendations: Training

5.1	Review options to support foundational victim services training for the Victim Services Director, victim services personnel, and VAOs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVC TTAC Victim Assistance Training Online • PCCD PA Victim Services Training
5.2	Review options to support training specific to the role of law enforcement-based victim services for the Victim Services Director, victim services personnel, and VAOs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP IACPlearn: Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV) Webinar Series • Integrity Institute JCH Webinar Series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider purchasing a Justice Clearinghouse Organizational Membership for on-demand access to recorded webinars.
5.3	Review information to support targeted training for the Victim Services Director, victim services personnel, and VAOs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Template Package V: Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource includes trainer manual, training plan, scenario-based activity workbooks, 12 adaptable modules, peer/partner feedback forms, and training evaluation.
5.4	Review information to support future training efforts associated with information sharing and documentation practices for the Victim Services Director, victim services personnel, and VAOs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCVLI What are <i>Brady</i> Disclosure Obligations? • NCVLI Quicktool: An Overview of <i>Brady</i> Obligations • NCVLI Law Enforcement-Associated Victim Service Providers and the <i>Brady</i> Rule • NCVLI Considerations Regarding Obligations of Law Enforcement-Employed Victim Advocates with Social Work Licenses
5.5	Review information to support future training efforts associated with Protection from Abuse Orders, Sexual Violence Protection Orders, and Protection from Intimidation Orders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Office of Victim Services Protection Orders
5.6	Review information to support victim response training for agency personnel.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims - Victim Response Training Templates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These resources include adaptable slides decks for crisis intervention, critical needs of victims, effective communication and documentation, effective victim response, and victim-centered response: patrol, investigation, and post-investigation.
5.7	<p>Review information to support death notification training for Homicide Unit personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FBI Trauma Notification Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource includes a self-guided course and material to support delivery of training to others. • Integrity Institute Death Notifications Training Material <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resources includes trainer guide, scenario-based activity worksheets, adaptable slide deck, and recommended handouts.
5.8	<p>Develop a Training Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan - Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.

Policies

Policies are a key component of managing professional conduct. Written guidance that is founded on ethical standards can help law enforcement agencies elevate victim response efforts, specifically in the establishment and expansion of VSUs. Effective policies establish clear expectations of victim services personnel, for collaboration with victim services personnel, and for the inclusion of the role of victim services personnel in agency practices that affect victims and co-victims.

Current Guidance

PPD policy ([Directive 4.14 | Victim/Witness Services and Crime Victims Compensation](#)) is the primary policy that establishes expectations for victim response efforts. Review of agency policy ([Directive 3.09 | Domestic Abuse and Violence](#)) sets expectations for VAOs related to the review and routing of domestic violence reports. Review of agency policy ([Directive 5.12 | Stalking](#)) details expectations for VAOs to act in both investigative and victim support capacities. There are no documented VAO expectations in the following agency policies: [Directive 3.24 | Human Trafficking](#), [Directive 3.26 | Protection From Sexual Violence Or Intimidation](#), [Directive 5.15 | Deaths - Natural and Sudden](#), and [Directive 5.25 | Rape and Other Sex Offenses](#).

As the Victim Services Director and victim services personnel have not yet been hired, there are no existing policies related to their roles and responsibilities. As previously described, documentation expectations for contact with victims and co-victims by VAOs are limited to the maintenance of call logs and submission of statistical information to the VSU.

Challenges: Clarity and Purpose

As previously described, victims and co-victims have critical needs of safety, support, information, access, continuity, voice, and justice when interacting with justice system personnel and processes. Comprehensive policies related to victim response efforts should clearly detail expectations of agency

personnel to meet those needs.¹³ Documentation of contact with and on behalf of victims and co-victims is a professional responsibility that complements comprehensive services and resource connections. As previously described, there is value in establishing clear roles of VAOs and victim services personnel related to communication protections and information sharing practices. It is essential that VAOs and victim services personnel clearly understand and communicate *Brady* disclosure obligations, open records, and documentation expectations. It is also essential to include a supervisory review process of documentation in policies.

To further reinforce victim response efforts, policies can be developed that include the role of VAOs and victim services personnel in agency practices that affect victims and co-victims. For example, policies can reflect the ability to accompany victims and co-victims during requested participation in investigative actions (e.g., interviews with investigators, completion of photo line-ups), notification to victims and co-victims of press releases, and coordination of property returns to victims and co-victims.

Recommendations: Professional Relationships and Professional Wellness

Establishing professional standards through policies can also contribute to enhanced professional relationships. Policies can punctuate the guardrails established through training, promote professional collaborations, assist with the navigation of ethical dilemmas, and lay the groundwork for professional wellness. Personnel can feel lower levels of professional pressure when they receive training associated with assigned responsibilities and those responsibilities are clearly articulated through written guidance.

PPD is encouraged to develop a policies plan that aligns with **Figure 1** – see **Table 6** for additional details. The policies plan should include written guidance to establish behavioral expectations for the Victim Services Director, victim services personnel, and VAOs in connection with their assigned responsibilities. Comprehensive policies that are periodically reviewed and revised (e.g., every 2-3 years) can help law enforcement agencies elevate victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive practices. Policies can also contribute to comprehensive training and accountability efforts with agency personnel connected to their assigned responsibilities. Developing and consistently executing policies can contribute to long-term VSU sustainability.

Table 6

Recommendations: Policies

6.1	<p>Develop and implement policies for victim services personnel and VAOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services - Template Package I: Getting Started <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource contains sample Victim Services Code of Ethics, policies, and protocols that set expectations for victim services personnel.
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¹³ [IACP | Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims \(ELERV\) Strategy](#)

6.2	<p>Review and revise agency directives to include the role of victim services personnel in actions that affect victims and co-victims. This may include PPD Directives and SOPs for specialized units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute Law Enforcement Policy Template Series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These resources provide sample language for use when developing or revising policies to guide victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive agency practices.
6.3	<p>Develop a Policies Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan - Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.

Enhanced Engagement and Trust

The decision by PPD to hire a Victim Services Director and multiple victim services personnel is a tangible and positive step towards serving and supporting Philadelphia. Through focusing on enhanced victim response efforts, PPD can be a leading contributor in the realization of the following benefits:

- Law Enforcement – increased crime reporting and case resolutions, improved job satisfaction, and increased community confidence and trust.
- Victims and Co-Victims – expanded knowledge of and assistance with exercising their rights, increased knowledge of and access to services, greater ability to participate in investigations, and improved ability to engage in post-victimization activities and heal.
- Communities – increased confidence in and ability to engage with law enforcement, improved mutual trust, and increased feelings of safety.¹⁴



Enhanced victim response efforts and the ability to successfully incorporate and sustain law enforcement-based victim services rely upon agency readiness, enthusiastic partnerships, and the commitment to ongoing strategic planning.

Amy Durall, OVC Fellow, is available to assist PPD with recommendations detailed in this report (see **Appendix B**) and for additional tailored support to further guide discussions and actions related to victim response efforts (see **Appendix C**).

“It always takes a group of people working together with a common purpose in an atmosphere of trust and collaboration to get extraordinary things done.”

~ James M. Kouzes

¹⁴ [IACP | Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims \(ELERV\) Strategy](#)

This resource was produced by the OVC ELERV Fellow under 15POVC-22-GK-01519-NONF, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this resource are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Appendix A – Terminology

Co-Victim – An individual who has lost a loved one to homicide, including family members, other relatives, and friends of the decedent.¹⁵

Culturally Sensitive – Awareness and acceptance of differences, promotion of cultural knowledge, the ability to adapt practice skills to fit the cultural context of victims, and understanding of the dynamics of differences between the culture of the Department personnel and the culture of the victim.¹⁶

Next of kin – one or more persons in the nearest degree of relationship to another person; denotes a person’s legal status to receive information related to a criminal homicide or suspicious death investigation and authorize transfer of the decedent’s body to a funeral home or other facility.¹⁷

Trauma-Informed – Approaches delivered with an understanding of the vulnerabilities and experiences of trauma survivors, including the prevalence and physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma. A trauma-informed approach recognizes signs of trauma in staff, clients, and others and responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings. Trauma-informed approaches place priority on restoring the survivor’s feelings of safety, choice, and control. Programs, services, agencies, and communities can be trauma informed.¹⁸

Victim – An individual who is an independent participant in the criminal case under federal or state victims’ rights laws or tribal victims’ rights codes, denotes a person’s legal status (unavailable to the general public), and defines the level and extent of participation that the individual is entitled to in the criminal matter.¹⁹

Victim-Centered – Placing the crime victim’s priorities, needs, and interests at the center of the work with the victim; providing nonjudgmental assistance, with an emphasis on client self-determination, where appropriate, and assisting victims in making informed choices; ensuring that restoring victims’ feelings of safety and security are a priority and safeguarding against policies and practices that may inadvertently re-traumatize victims; ensuring that victims’ rights, voices, and perspectives are incorporated when developing and implementing system- and community-based efforts that impact crime victims.²⁰

¹⁵ Definition used in [Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services \(LEV\)](#) publications, produced by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

¹⁶ Definition used in [Attorney General Guidelines for Victim and Witness Assistance, 2022 Edition](#), produced by the Office for Victims of Crime.

¹⁷ [Next of kin Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#); Definition used in [Communicating With Individuals Impacted by Cold Case Violent Crimes: Strategies for Ongoing Engagement](#), produced by RTI International.

¹⁸ Definition used in: [OVC Model Standards](#).

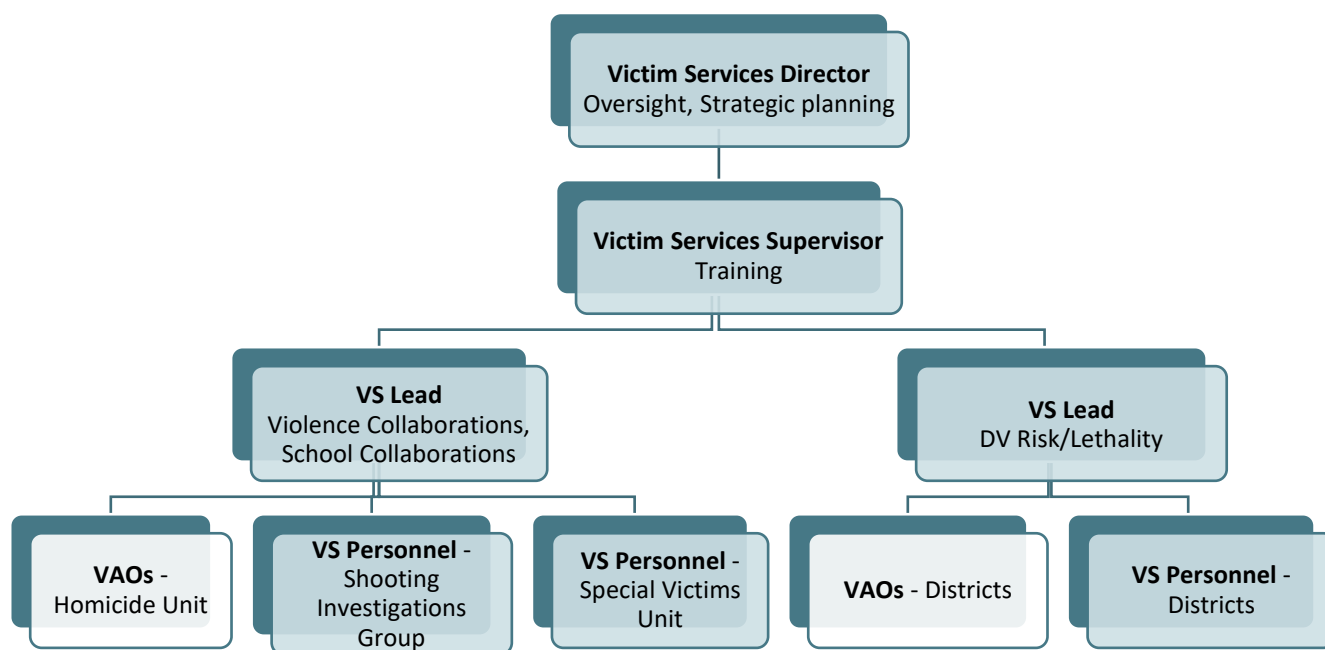
¹⁹ Definition used in [Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services \(LEV\)](#) publications, produced by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

²⁰ Definition used in: [OVC Model Standards](#).

Appendix B – Recommendations

The list of recommendations can feel daunting. PPD is encouraged to embrace them with the knowledge that while they each vary in complexity; they are fully attainable. All recommendations are structured to include concrete actions and resources that support implementation. With intention and commitment, PPD can advance comprehensive victim response efforts on a positive trajectory.

Recommendation: VSU Organizational Chart



Recommendations: Staffing

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1.1 | Recruit and hire a Victim Services Director and multiple victim services personnel positions. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Template Package I: Getting Started<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ This resource contains sample position descriptions, sample interview questions, and a sample onboarding checklist. |
| 1.2 | Review information about the role of law enforcement-based victim services to support hiring qualified and appropriate personnel for the Victim Services Director and victim services personnel positions. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCVLI Law Enforcement-Associated Victim Service Providers and the Brady Rule• NCVLI Considerations Regarding Obligations of Law Enforcement-Employed Victim Advocates with Social Work Licenses |
| 1.3 | Review victimization data to support the development of future staffing plans. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crime Incidents - OpenDataPhilly• Shooting Victims - OpenDataPhilly<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ These resources contains data on crimes related to victims and co-victims. |
| 1.4 | Review information related to interns and volunteers. |

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Template Package III: Student Interns & Volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The resource contains sample recruiting, application, screening and selection, onboarding, and oversight tools.
1.5	<p>Develop a Staffing Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan – Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.
Recommendations: Funding	
2.1	<p>Review funding model information to support the development of future funding plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP ELERV Strategy – Strengths and Challenges of Funding Sources • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Agency Incorporation
2.2	<p>Review funding source information to support the development of future funding plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COPS Office Documenting and Advancing Promising Practices in Law Enforcement Victim Support: Identifying and Securing Funding for Victim Response Efforts • PCCD Funding and Grants Process • PPD Directive 7.18 – Grant Applications, Processing and Administration
2.3	<p>Develop a Funding Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan – Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.
Recommendations: Victims' Rights	
3.1	<p>Review information to support access to victims' rights throughout agency processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCVLI Victims' Rights During Significant Stages of the Criminal Justice Process • NCVLI Victims' Right to Receive Copies of Police Reports • NCVLI Pennsylvania Select Victims' Rights • PCCD Law Enforcement Victim Rights Notification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These resources provide information about constitutional and statutory obligations to support unprompted and practical access to rights for victims and co-victims through agency practices.
3.2	<p>Develop a Victims' Rights Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan – Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.
Recommendations: Services and Collaborations	
4.1	<p>Review victimization data to support the identification of appropriate caseloads for VAOs and victim services personnel; and to support development of future staffing plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Incidents - OpenDataPhilly • Shooting Victims - OpenDataPhilly
4.2	<p>Review information to support the completion of community assest and resource mapping.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C4 Innovations A Toolkit for Community Assessment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CJI Mapping Community Resources Factsheet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These resources contain practical tools to support the identification and documentation of local assets to help with collaborative solutions to meet victim and co-victims needs.
4.3	<p>Review information related to establishing and maintaining effective internal and external partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims - Partnering • IACP Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims - Partnership Agreement Framework and Sample Language • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Effective Partnerships
4.4	<p>Review information related to service delivery to victims and co-victims to support responses and supportive handoffs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Template Package II - Next Steps • Integrity Institute VSU Response Checklists - Templates • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Template Package V - Pamphlets • IACP Enhancing Response to Victims - Communication with Victims • Integrity Institute VSU Resource Guide - Template • IACP Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims – Engaging a New Partner Template
4.5	<p>Review domestic violence assessment tools in collaboration with Women Against Abuse to support implementation of evidence-informed responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DV RISC Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Tools, Strategies, and Assessments • ASU APRAIS • Geiger Institute Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement • Waypoint Centre ODARA
4.6	<p>Review initiatives to support trauma-informed school-based collaborative responses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handle with Care: IN Handle with Care / TN Handle with Care • The "I Love U Guys" Foundation
4.7	<p>To minimize role confusion and multiple contacts with co-victims, review homicide case response to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify the role, response criteria, and processes for DA CARES (DAO CARES Peer Crisis Responders for Homicide Survivors); and • coordinate contact by VAOs, victim services personnel, and external agencies and organizations.
4.8	<p>Review information related to victim services role and documentation practices to support enhanced contact and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Documentation Standards • NCVLI Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services in PA: Privacy, Privilege, and Confidentiality
4.9	<p>Collaborate with agency personnel to:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a process to route reports according to assigned responsibilities, • establish documentation expectations, and • implement a shared documentation system among VAOs and victim services personnel.
4.10	Implement the iMPROVE Platform to measure the impact of services and service quality outcomes through input from those individuals receiving services: The iMPROVE Platform .
4.11	<p>Develop a Services Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan - Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.
Recommendations: Training	
5.1	<p>Review options to support foundational victim services training for the Victim Services Director, victim services personnel, and VAOs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVC TTAC Victim Assistance Training Online • PCCD PA Victim Services Training
5.2	<p>Review options to support training specific to the role of law enforcement-based victim services for the Victim Services Director, victim services personnel, and VAOs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP IACPlearn: Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV) Webinar Series • Integrity Institute JCH Webinar Series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider purchasing a Justice Clearinghouse Organizational Membership for on-demand access to recorded webinars.
5.3	<p>Review information to support targeted training for the Victim Services Director, victim services personnel, and VAOs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Template Package V: Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource includes trainer manual, training plan, scenario-based activity workbooks, 12 adaptable modules, peer/partner feedback forms, and training evaluation.
5.4	<p>Review information to support future training efforts associated with information sharing and documentation practices for the Victim Services Director, victim services personnel, and VAOs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCVLI What are <i>Brady</i> Disclosure Obligations? • NCVLI Quicktool: An Overview of <i>Brady</i> Obligations • NCVLI Law Enforcement-Associated Victim Service Providers and the <i>Brady</i> Rule • NCVLI Considerations Regarding Obligations of Law Enforcement-Employed Victim Advocates with Social Work Licenses
5.5	<p>Review information to support future training efforts associated with Protection from Abuse Orders, Sexual Violence Protection Orders, and Protection from Intimidation Orders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Office of Victim Services Protection Orders
5.6	<p>Review information to support victim response training for agency personnel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims - Victim Response Training Templates

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These resources include adaptable slides decks for crisis intervention, critical needs of victims, effective communication and documentation, effective victim response, and victim-centered response: patrol, investigation, and post-investigation.
5.7	<p>Review information to support death notification training for Homicide Unit personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FBI Trauma Notification Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource includes a self-guided course and material to support delivery of training to others. • Integrity Institute Death Notifications Training Material <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resources includes trainer guide, scenario-based activity worksheets, adaptable slide deck, and recommended handouts.
5.8	<p>Develop a Training Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan - Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.
Recommendations: Policies	
6.1	<p>Develop and implement policies for victim services personnel and VAOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IACP Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services - Template Package I: Getting Started <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource contains sample Victim Services Code of Ethics, policies, and protocols that set expectations for victim services personnel.
6.2	<p>Review and revise agency directives to include the role of victim services personnel in actions that affect victims and co-victims. This may include PPD Directives and SOPs for specialized units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute Law Enforcement Policy Template Series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These resources provide sample language for use when developing or revising policies to guide victim-centered, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive agency practices.
6.3	<p>Develop a Policies Plan as part of a comprehensive VSU Strategic Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity Institute VSU Strategic Plan - Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides a sample tool to support the development of a 3-5 year written plan.

Appendix C – OVC ELERV Fellowship TTA Request Form

Complete and submit to: Amy.Durall@usdoj.gov

Point of Contact

Agency: _____

Name and Title: _____

Date of Request: _____

Email address: _____

Phone number: _____

Topic Areas of Interest

☐ Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims (ELERV)

☐ Leadership

☐ Partnering

☐ Training

☐ Performance Monitoring

☐ Other (provide details): _____

☐ Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Key Considerations / Key Considerations Checklist

☐ Getting Started

☐ Victim Service Role

☐ Rights, Needs, and Services

☐ Sustainability

☐ Other (provide details): _____

☐ Agencywide Victim Response

☐ Victims' Rights

☐ Victim Compensation

☐ Multidisciplinary Team Participation

☐ Victim Response Policies

☐ Victim-Centered, Trauma-Informed Practices

☐ Specific Victimization Response (provide victimization type): _____

☐ Other (provide details): _____

☐ Consultation call (30 minutes to identify TTA needs) – topic: _____