**VSU Personnel Interview Material**

***Templates***

**January 2025**

**Overview**

Strategic victim services staffing plans rely on establishing fair and competitive recruitment, screening, and selection processes that result in law enforcement agencies hiring personnel that are representative of the jurisdictions they serve.

Agencies are encouraged to widen outreach strategies by providing opportunities to preview realistic position responsibilities (e.g., video clips, job shadowing), collaborating with external organizations and institutions (e.g., non-profit service organizations, colleges/universities), leveraging technology (e.g., paperless applications, social media posts), and advertising outside of local jurisdictions (e.g., statewide listservs, national recruitment postings).[[1]](#footnote-2)

Agencies are also encouraged to establish career pathway structures for victim services personnel to sustain effective responses, encourage personnel skill development, and promote expansion efforts that help meet the rights and needs of those served. Position descriptions should accurately describe the roles, responsibilities, minimum education and experience requirements, and specific skills needed for each of the positions in the career pathway.

Securing and retaining qualified and suitable victim services personnel in line staff and leadership positions is a critical element of effective agency responses and practices. Agencies are encouraged to incorporate strategies that address language, mobility, and logistical access needs (e.g., reasonable accommodations, clear instructions in plain language) and special skills (e.g., compensation for dual language abilities) during screening and selection processes. Agencies are also encouraged to modify screening and selection requirements when possible (e.g., physical ability tests, psychological screenings, polygraph examinations). Interview processes should prompt information from applicants about the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to complete the identified responsibilities of these positions. Interview processes should also provide valuable information about applicant instincts, perspectives, and decision-making abilities.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Assigned responsibilities of victim services personnel often include the following:

* Direct service provision to and advocacy on behalf of those served
* Collaboration with internal agency personnel and external agencies and organizations
* Agency representation for multidisciplinary team and community engagement efforts
* Assistance with victims’ rights constitutional and statutory compliance
* Policy development and execution
* Training development and provision
* Personnel development and management
* Budgetary and funding management
* Operational oversight of victim services

High quality performance of assigned responsibilities often depends on the following:

* Competitive salaries and comprehensive benefits
* Positive work environment
* Opportunities for professional development and growth

Beyond effective agency responses and practices, securing and retaining qualified and suitable victim services personnel can positively contribute to effective engagement of victims and co-victims in justice system processes and enhanced community relationships.

**Intention of VSU Interview Material Templates**

These templates provide sample language and content for law enforcement agency use when interviewing applicants for line staff and leadership victim services personnel positions. Agency personnel should review and revise all material to ensure consistency with appropriate statutes and agency policies, procedures, and practices.

**Victim Services Personnel Interview (Line Staff): Written Exercise – Template**

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| **Applicant:**       **Date:**   1. At the request of [*agency personnel*], you contacted the identified victim of domestic violence following an incident that resulted in physical injuries to the victim’s face and arms. The victim relayed being afraid of the suspect, who fled prior to the arrival of law enforcement. [*Agency personnel*] took statements from the victim and children that were present; and reported the incident to [*state child welfare agency*]. While speaking with you, the victim expressed not wanting the suspect arrested but requested help with locating safe housing and future action steps to take.   Write a sample note summarizing your contact with the victim. |

**Victim Services Personnel Interview (Line Staff): Questions and Scenarios – Template**

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| **Interview Questions:**   1. Briefly tell us what experience you have working with victims and co-victims. 2. What is your perception of the role and responsibilities of victim services personnel within a law enforcement agency? 3. Describe a situation when you had an effective interaction with a challenging victim/co-victim. 4. Initial contact with victims and co-victims often occurs in connection with stressful circumstances and frequently occurs in atypical environments or by phone. How would you establish rapport? 5. This position is subject to scheduled shifts of around the clock on-call availability, including weekends and holidays. It is also probable that you may experience sudden changes in your schedule. Describe how you will be able to meet the demands of this position. 6. Describe a time when you faced an ethical dilemma at work. How did you handle the situation and given the opportunity would you have done anything differently? 7. Describe how you would address concerns or conflicts that arise while maintaining effective working relationships with colleagues of various disciplines. 8. Describe how you would address the needs of a victim who chooses to stay in a violent and abusive relationship. 9. If your most recent supervisor was asked to provide you with additional training or skill-building experience, what would they suggest? 10. What factors contributed to your decision to apply for this position?  Scenarios: While making initial contact with the mother of a 7-year-old victim of sexual abuse, she discloses that the suspect (stepfather) has moved back into the home. The assigned detective has not made any contact on the case yet. What do you do?  It is 8:00 in the morning, and you are first to arrive at the office. While playing back voice mail messages, you hear a message from a victim who believes her life is in immediate danger. You see a note on your desk from a detective requesting help with a distressed co-victim on a homicide case. You also have an email marked as urgent from your supervisor requesting an immediate call. Rank these in order of priority and explain the basis for your rankings. |

**VSU Personnel Interview (Line Staff): Score Sheet – Template**

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| **Applicant:**       **Date:**  **Position Title:**  **Interview Panel Member:**   |  | | --- | | **Written Exercise:** [indicate number that reflects score, document comments] |   0-1-2 Poor vocabulary, inappropriate/poor grammar, subject matter lacking details/not related to the question, confusing/rambling thoughts.  3-4-5 Limited vocabulary, adequate grammar, subject matter satisfactorily related to questions, thought process apparent but lacking detail.  6-7-8 Good vocabulary and grammar, subject matter clearly related to questions, clear explanation of thoughts.  9-10 Robust use of vocabulary, impeccable grammar, subject matter thoroughly documented in responses, impressive/strong presentation.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | **Questions and Scenarios:** [indicate number that reflects score, document comments] | | 1. **Briefly tell us what experience you have working with victims and co-victims.** |   0-1-2 Minimal or no experience related to working with victims and co-victims.  3-4-5 Some experience related to work with victims and co-victims, experience represented as secondary/occasional duties.  6-7-8 Demonstrated work history including direct experience with victim and co-victim populations.  9-10 Extensive experience including direct contact and service provision to victims and co-victims.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **What is your perception of the role and responsibilities of victim services personnel within a law enforcement agency?** |     0-1-2 Unable to provide an answer, only addressed the needs of law enforcement.  3-4-5 Limited articulation of serving victims/co-victims, some discussion of helping law enforcement.  6-7-8 Provided some information on safety and resource needs of victims/co-victims, provided some information on benefits to law enforcement.  9-10 Clearly articulated the prioritization of victim/co-victim needs, thoughtful response to include victims’ rights/safety planning/justice system education/system and community resources, discussed crisis response.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **Describe a situation when you had an effective interaction with a challenging victim/co-victim.** | | 1. **Initial contact with victims and co-victims often occurs in connection with stressful circumstances and frequently occurs in atypical environments or by phone. How would you establish rapport?** |   0-1-2 Unable to describe a situation, provided minimal details involving interaction; Unable to articulate methods of establishing rapport.  3-4-5 Limited articulation of situation, provided some information on factors involving victim/co-victim and interaction; Provided one method of establishing rapport, but offered no additional details.  6-7-8 Articulated a situation, provided adequate details of situation and actions taken; Provided adequate information about rapport-building techniques and expanded on details or techniques.  9-10 Detailed situation description provided, robust and thoughtful plans to address victim/co-victim challenges articulated, clearly accounted for factors contributing to effective interactions, demonstrated prioritization of victim/co-victim needs; Offered several methods to establish rapport, included personal examples, cited factors attributing to success of these methods.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **This position is subject to around the clock on-call availability, including weekends and holidays. It is also probable that you may experience sudden changes in your schedule. Describe how you will be able to meet the demands of this position.** |   0-1-2 Unable to articulate a plan, expressed inability to meet some of the demands.  3-4-5 Acknowledged ability to meet demands, but offered no supporting information.  6-7-8 Provided details of plans to meet schedule demands, offered methods of adjustments for personal obligations.  9-10 Articulated thoughtful response to schedule adjustments, described successful execution of similar duties in previous work environments, discussed plans to accommodate adjustments for personal obligations, discussed professional wellness strategies.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **Describe a time when you faced an ethical dilemma at work. How did you handle the situation and given the opportunity would you have done anything differently?** | | 1. **Describe how you would address concerns or conflicts that arise while maintaining effective working relationships with colleagues of various disciplines.** |   0-1-2 Unable to articulate a situation, did not provide information on different approach; Unable to provide potential actions, stated they have never worked with people of other disciplines.  3-4-5 Provided example with few details, brief description of actions taken; Reported minimal or no experience with conflict, limited details of actions/plans, immediately enlisted a supervisor.  6-7-8 Articulated adequate description of situation and actions taken, provided information on alternative approach; Acknowledged that conflict exists, described appropriate actions/plans to address concerns.  9-10 Provides detailed and thoughtful description of situation and actions taken including impact on victims/co-victims or agency practices, articulated alternative plan or justification for actions that were taken; Clear plan of action, described importance of respecting the role of other disciplines, discusses benefits of multiple points of views, focused on resolving conflict at lowest level.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **Describe how you would address the needs of a victim who chooses to stay in a violent and abusive relationship.** |   0-1-2 Unable to articulate potential actions to take.  3-4-5 Described actions taken against the expressed desire of the victim, discussed responsibility of victim to leave.  6-7-8 Described adequate plan to address victim needs, discussed safety planning with the victim.  9-10 Robust articulation of dynamics of violent relationships, description centered on victim autonomy, discussed safety planning within the relationship, articulated multiple choices for victim referrals and assistance.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **If your most recent supervisor was asked to provide you with additional training or skill-building experience, what would they suggest?** | | 1. **What factors contributed to your decision to apply for this position?** |   0-1-2 Unable to articulate any training/experience suggestions; Unable to identify factors, provided concise responses with no/minimal explanation.  3-4-5 Provided generic description of training/experience suggestions with no personal insight, expressed interest in all training/experience; Verbalized 1-2 contributing factors, offered minimal information to support cited factors.  6-7-8 Recognized personal training/experience needs, articulated feedback from previous supervisor; Adequately articulated thought process for applying, offered some additional information, discussed personal and professional factors.  9-10 Clearly articulated strengths and identified areas of suggested training/experience, able to demonstrate insight into needed areas of improvement; Clearly demonstrated an understanding of position duties, thoroughly articulated personal suitability for position, verbalized benefit to both applicant and agency, demonstrated enthusiasm for position.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | **Scenarios:** [indicate number that reflects score, document comments] |   0-1-2-3 Inadequate assessment of situations, minimal information on actions to resolve situations.  4-5-6-7 Basic assessment of situations, lack of articulation of experience dealing with similar situations, actions taken to resolve situations are concise with minimal supporting information.  8-9-10-11-12 Adequate assessment of situations, articulation of some experience with similar situations, explanations of actions taken address most needs described.  13-14-15-16-17 Thoughtful assessment of situations, articulated familiarity with situations similar to those described, information provided on resolutions accounts for victim/co-victim safety, plans included the needs of victims/co-victims.  18-19-20 Decisive and thorough courses of actions described, well-organized thought processes, able to justify actions, articulated clear understanding of victim/co-victim autonomy and role of victim services.  Comments:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Cumulative Score:** [document scores from Written Exercise, Questions and Scenarios] | | | | | **Written Exercise score** |  | **#6 and #7 score** |  | | **#1 score** |  | **#8 score** |  | | **#2 score** |  | **#9 and #10 score** |  | | **#3 and #4 score** |  | **Scenarios score** |  | | **#5 score** |  | **Total Score** |  |   Overall Comments: |

**Victim Services Personnel Interview (Leadership): Written Exercise – Template**

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| **Applicant:**       **Date:**   1. As the [*position title*], you are responsible for oversight of the Victim Services Unit and the performance management of multiple victim services personnel. The Victim Services Unit is responsible for contact with victims and co-victims of [*victimization categories*]. Victim services personnel are assigned specified caseloads and to encourage continued skill development, personnel rotate caseloads annually. Following the most recent rotation, one staff member has demonstrated an increase in unexpected absences from work and their documentation related to victim/co-victim contact has become inconsistent. You have also received feedback from an external organization about recent communication challenges with the staff member.   Detail how you would address the performance of this personnel. |

**Victim Services Personnel Interview (Leadership): Questions and Scenarios – Template**

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| **Interview Questions:**   1. Briefly tell us what experience you have leading initiatives and supervising personnel related to serving victims and co-victims. 2. What is your perception of the role and responsibilities of victim services personnel within a law enforcement agency? 3. Describe victims’ rights in [*State*] and the connections with law enforcement practices. 4. What experience do you have in developing and ensuring consistent execution of policies? 5. This position is expected to expand victim services within [*agency name*], to include serving multiple victimization categories and increasing availability of victim services personnel. Describe what information and factors you will consider in meeting this expectation. 6. This position will be responsible for developing training for victim services, sworn, and other agency personnel. What experience do you have in this area? 7. Describe how you would increase internal and external collaborative efforts around victim services. 8. Describe how you would approach the incorporation of victim services personnel into agency responses and practices while experiencing resistance from other personnel. 9. In your most recent position, what factors prevented you from reaching your full professional potential? 10. What factors contributed to your decision to apply for this position?  Scenarios: Part of your responsibilities include developing a 3-year financial plan that addresses the needs of the Victim Services Unit. What factors and funding sources would you include in the plan?  Upon arriving at work, you play back voice mail messages that include a staff member calling in sick and advising of a victim interview with a detective at 10:00am and a patrol sergeant requesting a conversation about field response of victim services personnel, you have an email from HR about a position posting that closes in 2 days, you have an urgent calendar invitation for 1:00 pm from [*agency chief/sheriff*], and the monthly Victim Services Unit meeting is scheduled at 1:30 pm. Rank these in order of priority and explain the basis for your rankings. |

**VSU Personnel Interview (Leadership): Score Sheet – Template**

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| **Applicant:**       **Date:**  **Position Title:**  **Interview Panel Member:**   |  | | --- | | **Written Exercise:** [indicate number that reflects score, document comments] |   0-1-2 Unable to describe plan to address performance concerns; plan to rely on supervisor direction.  3-4-5 Verbalized general plan to address performance concerns, articulated few details about impact of performance on internal/external relationships and services for victims/co-victims.  6-7-8 Described adequate plan to address performance concerns, discussed assessment of factors that may affect performance, discussed expectations for enhanced internal/external relationships and consistent services for victims/co-victims.  9-10 Articulated detailed plan to address performance concerns that included clear expectations for measurable performance standards, professional wellness strategies, and supporting factors for consistent services for victims/co-victims and self-accountability of staff member.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | **Questions and Scenarios:** [indicate number that reflects score, document comments] | | 1. **Briefly tell us what experience you have leading initiatives and supervising personnel related to serving victims and co-victims.** |   0-1-2 No/minimal experience leading initiatives and supervising personnel; described interactions with prior supervisor(s) as basis for approach to leadership and supervisor responsibilities.  3-4-5 Some experience related to leading initiatives and supervising personnel; experience represented as secondary/occasional duties.  6-7-8 Demonstrated work history including experience leading initiatives and supervising personnel.  9-10 Extensive experience including execution of multiple initiatives and supervising multiple personnel related to serving victims and co-victims.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **What is your perception of the role and responsibilities of victim services personnel within a law enforcement agency?** |     0-1-2 Unable to provide an answer, only addresses the needs of law enforcement.  3-4-5 Limited articulation of advocacy, some discussion of being helpful to law enforcement.  6-7-8 Provides some information on safety and resource needs of victims and co-victims, provides some information on benefits to law enforcement.  9-10 Clearly articulates prioritization of victim and co-victim needs, thoughtful response to include victims’ rights/community services/justice system education/safety planning, discusses crisis response.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **Describe victims’ rights in [*State*] and the connections with law enforcement practices.** | | 1. **What experience do you have in developing and ensuring consistent execution of policies?** |   0-1-2 Unable to describe victims’ rights, unfamiliar with law enforcement practices related to victims and co-victims; No experience in developing policies, described personal adherence to policies.  3-4-5 Limited description of victims’ rights, minimal understanding of law enforcement practices connected to those rights; Policy development and compliance experience represented as secondary/occasional duties.  6-7-8 Articulated some victims’ rights, provides adequate connection to law enforcement practices and examples of how to enhance access to rights; Provided adequate experience with policy development and compliance and discussed effect of policies on victims/co-victims.  9-10 Detailed description of victims’ rights provided, robust and thoughtful strategies to increase victims’/co-victims’ access to rights during law enforcement practices (e.g., crime reporting, interviews, investigative actions, property returns, media relations, case statuses, prosecution decisions); Extensive experience with victim services policy development, ensuring personnel compliance through education and accountability communication, and connecting policies to consistent response and services.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **This position is expected to expand victim services within [*agency name*], to include serving multiple victimization categories and increasing availability of victim services personnel. Describe what information and factors you will consider in meeting this expectation.** |   0-1-2 Unable to articulate a plan; stated plan to rely solely on sworn supervisor direction.  3-4-5 Minimal description of plans for expanded victimization response and extended work hours for existing victim services personnel that included no supporting information and rationale.  6-7-8 Adequate description that included a few victimization types and minimal rationale for response/services and expanded hours/field responses with minimal supporting information.  9-10 Detailed and thoughtful description that included review of reported victimizations, developing effective response practices, securing additional victim services personnel, and review of schedule options that address equitable compensation and professional wellness.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **This position will be responsible for developing training for victim services, sworn, and other agency personnel. What experience do you have in this area?** | | 1. **Describe how you would increase internal and external collaborative efforts around victim services.** |   0-1-2 No/minimal experience with developing training; Unable to describe plans for collaboration.  3-4-5 Some training experience, expressed hesitancy for training other agency personnel; Brief plan of actions for collaborating with others, minimal supporting rationale.  6-7-8 Adequate experience with adult training, described plans to address training needs of multiple personnel; Describes value of collaboration with other agency personnel, demonstrates an awareness of external agencies and organizations and details an adequate plan to learn about others’ roles/responsibilities.  9-10 Extensive training experience to include development of material in multiple formats and for multiple audiences; Clear plan of action, describes importance of internal relationship-building for shared responses to victims/co-victims, and strategies to enhance external partnerships through role clarification and participation in multidisciplinary collaborative efforts.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **Describe how you would approach the incorporation of victim services personnel into agency responses and practices while experiencing resistance from other personnel.** |   0-1-2 Unable to articulate potential actions to take.  3-4-5 Limited details of actions/plans, immediately enlisted a supervisor to address personnel conduct.  6-7-8 Adequate plan to address role clarification, accountability standards, and benefits of collaborative efforts.  9-10 Robust articulation of dynamics of professional relationships, management of ethical dilemmas, change management, and value of consistent practices and services; description centers on benefits for agency personnel, external agencies and organizations, and those served.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | 1. **In your most position, what barriers prevented you from reaching your full professional potential?** | | 1. **What factors contributed to your decision to apply for this position?** |   0-1-2 Unable to articulate any professional barriers; Unable to identify factors, provided concise responses with no/minimal explanation.  3-4-5 Provides generic description of professional barriers with no personal insight, primarily expresses environmental barriers; Verbalizes 1-2 contributing factors, offers minimal information to support cited factors.  6-7-8 Recognizes professional barriers that are both personal and environmental; Adequately articulates thought process for applying, offers some additional information, discusses personal and professional factors.  9-10 Clearly articulates professional barriers, able to demonstrate insight into needed areas for full professional development; Clearly demonstrates an understanding of position duties, thoroughly articulates personal suitability for position, verbalizes benefit to both applicant and agency, demonstrates enthusiasm for position.  Comments:   |  | | --- | | **Scenarios:** [indicate number that reflects score, document comments] |   0-1-2-3 Inadequate assessment of situations, minimal information on actions to address situations.  4-5-6-7 Basic assessment of situations, lack of articulation of experience dealing with similar situations, actions taken to address situations are concise with minimal supporting information.  8-9-10-11-12 Adequate assessment of situations, articulation of some experience with similar situations, explanations of actions taken address most needs described.  13-14-15-16-17 Thoughtful assessment of situations, articulated familiarity with situations similar to those described, information provided accounts for effective leadership responses, plans include the needs of victims/co-victims.  18-19-20 Decisive and thorough courses of actions described, well-organized thought processes, able to justify actions, articulated clear understanding of leadership responsibilities and victim services role.  Comments:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Cumulative Score:** [document scores from Written Exercise, Questions and Scenarios] | | | | | **Written Exercise score** |  | **#6 and #7 score** |  | | **#1 score** |  | **#8 score** |  | | **#2 score** |  | **#9 and #10 score** |  | | **#3 and #4 score** |  | **Scenarios score** |  | | **#5 score** |  | **Total Score** |  |   Overall Comments: |

1. Wiseman, J. (2021). *Recruiting for Diversity in Law Enforcement: Selected Recent Research Insights*. Institute for Excellence in Government, Inc. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For additional information: [Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV): Advocacy Parameters](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/LEV/Publications/AdvocacyParameters.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)