

CAMPUS VICTIM SERVICES POSITIONS

ENHANCING VICTIM
SERVICES PROJECT



CONSIDERATIONS FOR HIRING VICTIM SERVICES STAFF:

RESPONDING TO
VICTIMS/SURVIVORS*



When hiring for victim services staff positions, it may be helpful to consider what services will look like and how these positions can aid in creating and implementing them. Below are items of consideration for response to campus sexual assault based on best practices for victim services that may serve as a useful tool when reviewing the background of potential candidates. This list is by no means exhaustive, but is meant as a starting point with some key considerations.

CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES

Crisis intervention services provide immediate response to students' needs 24 hours a day. These support services often include an anonymous 24 hour hotline, mental health services, and advocacy. Since incidents like sexual assault often occur at night, having support available after business hours is crucial for survivors.

Things to consider:

Will crisis intervention be handled on campus, or off campus?

- If ON CAMPUS: How will the different components of a crisis response team be managed on campus?
- Will the crisis response team include staff, peer volunteers, or both?
- Volunteers require a commitment to building a structure that details how they will be recruited, ways they will be trained, in what areas they will be used, and how the volunteer program will be sustained (NSVRC, 2013).
- How will the schedule be sorted for 24 hour response?
- What will activation look like when a request for services occurs (e.g. hotline call, accompaniment, etc.)?
- If OFF CAMPUS: How will the relationship be formed between the on-campus crisis response team and off-campus resources?
- It is recommended to create and maintain a relationship between the campus and the local sexual and domestic violence programs. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are intended to outline the roles and responsibilities of each entity as well as clear expectations for utilization and sharing of resources. For a sample MOU provided by the White House Task Force between a college and a rape crisis center, see <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/page/file/910381/downloadaccompaniment, etc.>

*Note: Both the terms "victim" and "survivor" are used in this document, as each individual who experiences sexual violence may identify differently throughout the recovery process.

CLINICAL/MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Things to consider:

- Will the new victim services office staff qualified clinicians for counseling or will counseling be provided by trauma-informed clinicians at the established counseling center on campus?
- The program should provide access to clinicians that are trained in trauma and related interventions (NSVRC, 2013).
- Confidential counselors allows victims to process their trauma in a safe place. Many students choose to report to peers over formal resources. Providing a confidential space within the new victim services office may increase access to help due to a greater perception in safety of disclosure (WHTEF, 2014).
- Will both short-term (i.e. 12 sessions or less that focus on immediate issues) and long-term (i.e. counseling options longer than 12 sessions) counseling options be available to students?
- Though short-term services are crucial to recovery, the impact of interpersonal violence is often long-lasting. Longer-term services can be crucial to serving a victim and it is recommended that these options are provided either on campus or through a local program (WHTEF, 2014).
- Will the staff be equipped to facilitate survivor support groups?
- Campuses should offer support groups to aid in recovery (WHTEF, 2014) and these were included in the current grant. To develop a support group, the victim services program should first develop screening procedures, have flexibility to meet the needs of the students, ensure groups meet regularly in accessible and safe locations, and have clear discussions about boundaries and confidentiality in the group. More guidance for support groups can be found at http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_guides_building-cultures-of-care.pdf



COLLABORATION & CONTINUITY OF CARE

Things to consider:

- How will the victim services program connect with other resources on campus (e.g. health services, law enforcement, Title IX, LGBTQ services, etc.)?
- Can the new program support health services to ensure trauma-informed practice for victims receiving care or screening for trauma during intake assessments?
- Information can be provided to health services that focuses on trauma-sensitive practice issues, reporting requirements, and policy updates (NCSSLE, 2015).
- Will the program provide forensic examinations for victims on campus?
- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) professionals provide forensic evidence collection, emergency medical services, and trauma-informed treatment for victims of sexual assault. It is advised to create a memorandum of understanding with the local sexual violence program or local hospital that has a SANE program at its location. For a sample MOU, see <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/page/file/910376/download>.
- Victims should be educated about the importance of timely evidence collection and the process they may undergo (ACHA, 2016). If referred to off-campus evidence collection, it is recommended that transportation is offered to victims.
- What will be the procedure for a coordinated campus response teams?
- Coordinated campus response teams should include all agencies that have a role in meeting the needs of victims and holding perpetrators accountable. Teams should review policies and procedures and provide regular cross training on their roles to enhance response (OVW, 2008).
- Examples of entities that may be involved in coordinated response include the Title IX Coordinator, law enforcement, the campus counseling center, health services, Student Affairs, and other representatives involved in victim response.
- How will the program ensure services and accommodations are responsive to diverse populations?
- Victim services can work with other campus organizations to ensure resources are responsive to the needs of populations like LGBTQ students, students with disabilities, students of color, undocumented students, and others (WHTF, 2017).

ADVOCACY SERVICES

Advocacy services seek to establish a rapport with students, gather information, and increase understanding of trauma and options available. Advocates often serve as a consultant, helping victims link to resources, providing information on the reporting process for law enforcement or campus adjudication, accompanying victims to appointments as requested, and supporting well-informed decisions.

Things to consider:

- What will advocacy services look like on campus?
- To serve as confidential advocates, staff or volunteers must be trained for emergency response. Confidential Sexual Violence Advocates and Domestic Violence Response Team Advocates each require 40 training hours. Advocates can also receive training as both a sexual violence and domestic violence advocate, with the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault estimating that dual advocate training will require 60 hours.
- It is suggested that advocates receive cross training or co-training with advocates from the local rape crisis center or domestic violence program in order to offer a continuity of care for victims (Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance, 2016). Cross training enhances collaboration between campus and off-campus resources and increases awareness of what services each agency can provide.
- Will the new victim services office provide or coordinate accompaniment for victims by advocates to legal, campus disciplinary, and medical appointments?
- Advocate presence can improve responses within different systems (WHTF, 2014). Basic roles of advocates can include providing information about the process, using coping strategies to manage stress during the process, educating victims about their rights and options, and providing support during the proceedings (NSVRC, 2013).
- How will the program respond to accused students seeking referral or assistance?
- How will the program provide assistance in ensuring reasonable accommodations are received by the survivor if requested, whether or not the incident is reported?
- The program should build relationships with other offices on campus to ensure interim measures are taken for victims when appropriate. This includes academic measures (e.g. class changes, assignment extensions), housing location changes, employment changes, escort services, parking or transportation accommodations, and others (WHTF, 2014).



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