

# Assessing Victims' Needs With Victim-Centred Research Practices: Tools for Understanding and Improving Victim Services

Presentation to Victim Support Europe

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# Victims' Rights and Needs

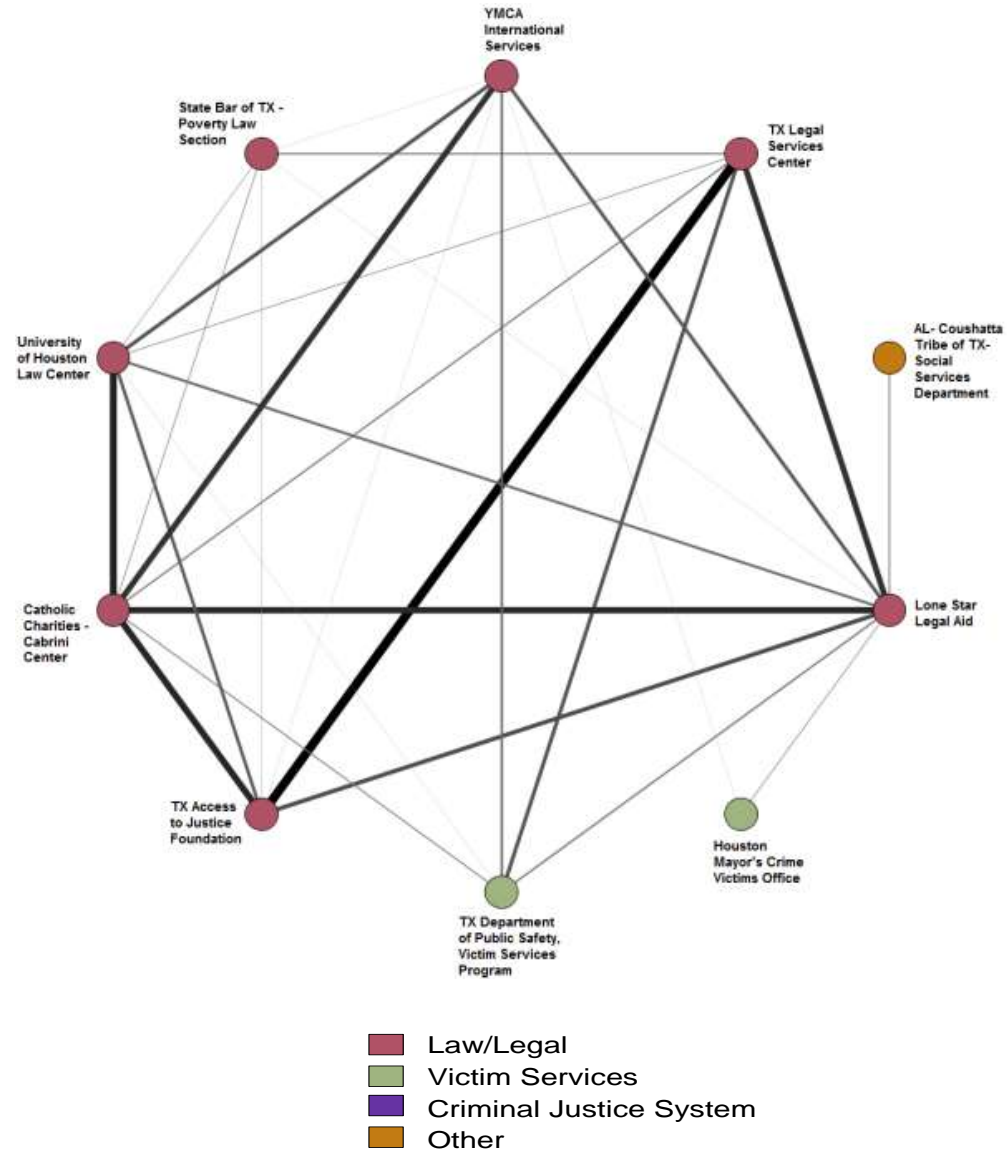
- Crime victims face a multitude of diverse needs following victimisation
  - Rights enforcement (e.g., information, participation)
  - Victim services/assistance, compensation, counselling
  - Safety/security
  - Civil legal needs (e.g., housing, family, immigration)
- Many never receive services to address these needs
- Needs beyond the criminal court case are often neglected
- Victims entitled to assistance to help meet these diverse needs

# Role of Research

- Research can be a useful tool for understanding existing needs and service gaps
- Critical to have data about victims' needs to be able to respond effectively
- Number of challenges and considerations when collecting this type of data
- Data collection can vary in terms of:
  - Respondent
  - Mode
  - Regional area
  - Scope/breadth

## NIJ Evaluation of WVLAN

- Surveys of 72 project stakeholders, 492 service providers, and 147 crime victims (ongoing)
- Identification of strong and weak connections between collaborating partners
- Only half of service providers felt they were adequately trained to address victims' legal needs and only one-quarter had sufficient staff
- 2 in 5 experienced challenges serving victims who spoke different languages
- Only 12% believed victims were aware of their legal rights and 13% believed victims were aware of available services



## Needs Assessments

- OVC TTAC National Needs Assessment- survey of 640 victim service providers and allied professionals
  - Identified top training needs (e.g., program management, technology systems), emerging trends (online trainings, staff retention, victim-offender mediation), & biggest barriers to service delivery (lack of funding/staff)
- State of Massachusetts Needs Assessment- survey of 369 service providers and focus groups/interviews with crime victims (ongoing)
  - Identified number of needs less traditionally funded (e.g., civil legal assistance, privacy issues, emergency housing)
  - Need for training and cultural competency related to particular victim sub-populations (e.g., LGBT, male victims, victims with disabilities)

## NIJ Study of Victims' Experiences of Wrongful Conviction

- Qualitative, intensive case study of 11 cases
- Emotional, psychological, physical, financial, and social impacts
- Notification to victims of the exoneration is not consistent or victim-centred
- Need for support systems, media sensitivity, victim services, training, safety planning
- *"What was interesting to me was they said WE have made a mistake. But what I heard was I made a mistake...I took all of it on myself, every single part of the mistake, I took on personally, because I felt that not only had I made the mistake and cost [the wrongfully convicted] all of that time...I had disgraced...one of the finest police officers ever...I had disgraced the district attorney's office...I had kept a rapist on the streets...I failed everybody. And that was a burden that I put on myself for the next 8 years."*

# Elements of a Victim-Centred Research Approach

- **Victim-informed-** Ensuring the study is informed by the victim perspective
- **Identification of potential subjects** – How to identify and approach potential participants
- **Carefully developed tools and instruments** – How to extract information without burden and re-victimisation

# Elements of a Victim-Centred Research Approach

- **Time and location** – Providing a safe and convenient environment
- **Use of key staff who are well-trained in victimology and clinical interviewing** – equipping data collection team with skills and knowledge
- **Access to resources** – providing available resources to support victims post-participation

# Elements of a Victim-Centred Research Approach

- **Human subjects protections** – Ensuring all relevant ethical and human subjects guidelines are followed
- **Informed consent** – Promoting victims' right to self-determination
- **Maintaining and ensuring privacy** – How the research team will record and store data; how data will be reported



# QUESTIONS?

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