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Victim/Witness Assistance Programs in Southern Illinois

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The major focus of this honors thesis research project is to compare the services, or lack of services, offered to crime victims by police departments, state's attorney's offices, and probation departments in a four county area in Southern Illinois. Unstructured interviews were conducted with a representative in each different office in Jefferson County, Franklin County, Williamson County, and Jackson County. It is important to research these programs to see if these smaller, less urbanized counties of Southern Illinois offer adequate services to victims of violent crimes.

For Part I of my thesis, I have researched background literature to get a basic overview of the definition of a victim, the effects of victimization, past treatment of victims by the criminal justice system, the increasing concern for victims during the 1970s, the development of victim/witness programs, and what victim/witness programs actually do. I have included an example of some of the services provided by a "typical" prosecutor based program, a probation based program, and a police based program according to background literature. This gave me a way to compare the results of my research with the background literature.

Part II of my thesis will consist of a summarization of the interviews I conducted with representatives in police departments, prosecutor's offices, and probation departments in the four county area. Part III will consist of a summarization of some of the referrals used on a regular basis by the agencies in the four county. I will outline just a few of the many different agencies used as referrals in Southern Illinois. I will conclude my paper with a discussion of my findings in Part IV. The discussion will include the strengths and weaknesses of the programs and implications for

PART I

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Definition of a "Victim"

There are many ways to define the term "crime victim". The legal definition states "a victim is the person against whom the criminal offense has been committed (Weed, 1995)." A more expansive definition is "a person who has suffered physical or psychological trauma or has incurred loss as a result of a crime (Weed, 1995)."

Of course everyone's idea of a victim varies with their experience with the criminal justice system. One of the questions in my interview was: "What is the definition of the word 'victim'." I received a vast array of answers for this particular question during my interviews. Many of the answers I received were vague and this becomes important, especially in those circumstances where the existence of criminality is also ambiguous.

Effects of Victimization

Being a victim affects people in many different ways. Financial loss, physical suffering and emotional distress are three common ways victims of violent crimes suffer (National Institute of Justice, 1987). Physical suffering often requires treatment and rehabilitation. It may involve pain, disfigurement, and disability in extreme cases. Someone is physically injured in one-third of all violent crimes (Maguire and Corbett, 1987). Financial losses are also common in violent crimes.

Just a few examples are property destruction, loss of money and valuables, loss of income, medical expenses, and rehabilitation costs. According to the literature, the average financial losses caused by violent crimes are minimal in most circumstances.

Psychological distress is perhaps the most important consequence for victims of violent crimes (Roberts, 1990). A few symptoms of psychological distress are sleeplessness, loss of concentration, and the fear of being alone. Distress can come from the shock of becoming a victim and the social stigma from family, friends, and neighbors when significant others often times shun or blame the victim (Adler, 1995). Feelings of fear, anger, shame, self-blame, helplessness, and depression are immediate stressors with which the victim must learn to cope (Weed, 1995). Some victims change their lives in drastic ways, such as withdrawing from everyday activities. Many victims of violent crimes experience long-term psychological disabilities. Crime has different effects on different victims.

All victims require sympathy and a trained ear to help them. Victims need to vent their fear and anger, rebuild their self-esteem, cope with perception of vulnerability, avoid self-blame and self-victimization, reduce feelings of shame, and relieve uncertainty about future involvement with the criminal justice system. It takes a very dedicated and trained person to help a victim overcome all of the obstacles they are facing. This is where victim advocates come into place. Many victim advocates must complete extensive training in order to work with victims and witnesses of many different crimes.

Treatment by the Criminal Justice System

Victims often endure what is referred to by the professionals as a "second victimization" (Weed, 1995). This refers to the mistreatment at the hands of the criminal justice system. Victims and witnesses often experience distress when working with the criminal justice personnel. One of the most common forms of distress is caused by insensitive questioning by police officers (Weed, 1995). Police or prosecutors suggesting that the victim contributed to her victimization is also another common stresser. Other stressers caused by the criminal justice system are: inability of the victim to learn about the case or the outcome of the case, delays in victim's property being held as evidence, fear of reprisal by defendant, loss of wages for time spent in court proceedings, frustration of having the case continued or dismissed, and the anxiety about testifying in open court (Weed, 1995). The criminal justice professionals can help alleviate the effects of this "second victimization" by offering more services to victims and witnesses.

Increasing Concern for Victims and Witnesses

Prior to the 1970s, many individuals in the criminal justice system were not concerned about the treatment of victims or witnesses by the criminal justice system. During the 1970s, many people became aware of the mistreatment of victims and witnesses by police, prosecutors, and judges (Weed, 1995). The mistreatment became so harsh that many victims and witnesses were becoming so distressed that they failed to testify in court. This led to the failure of many prosecutions (Roberts, 1992).

Several special interest groups were becoming troubled by the psychological and financial burdens crime imposed on its victims. Many Women's Groups began to raise growing concern about these unique burdens imposed by criminal justice professionals upon female crime victims. This heightened attention caused increased strategies designed to identify and address the needs of victims and witnesses.

Some of the most important programs aimed at providing emotional and psychological support to the victims were established during this time. Programs developed by grass-roots organization were established between 1972 to 1976 (Lurigio, 1990). Most of these programs were started by former victims who discovered at their own expense that needed services were lacking or inadequate. During this time, most of these programs focused on rape counseling with the formation of rape-crisis centers. These centers were formed out of these different Women's Groups who helped to start this heightened victim awareness.

In 1975 and 1976, social service providers and criminal justice personnel met in Fresno, California to create a National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA). This organization was designed to promote a victim-oriented perspective in the administration of criminal justice. This began the victim's movement which included a variety of organizations, ideas, events, and people (Weed, 1995).

Development of Victims/Witnesses Assistance Programs

In 1974, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) funded eight victim/witness programs through the National District Attorney's Association. By 1978, more than 90 victim/witness programs were being funded by the LEAA (Lurigio, 1990). The LEAA eventually contributed \$50 million to victim/witness programs during the 1970s (National Institute of Justice, 1987).

During the 1980s, federal funding declined which caused programs to switch from federal funding to local government funding (Lurigio, 1990). With this drop in federal funding, programs had to reduce some services and offer remaining services only to the most needy. At the same time, the concept of victims/ witnesses programs grew in the public consciousness and minds of criminal justice personnel.

This increased awareness led to the formation of the 1982 Presidential Task Force on Victims of Crime to investigate the needs of victims and find the most effective means for addressing them (National Institute of Justice, 1987). The Task Force recommended permanent funding from federal, local, and private organization to improve the plight of victims. In 1984, Congress implemented a major recommendation of the Task Force by passing the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) which re-established strong federal leadership in victim/witness assistance programs (Weed, 1995). The act provides funding for states to support victim/witness programs. States have been funding victim/witness programs on a regular basis from general revenues or by giving a

percentage of funds received from crime offenders to such programs since the 1980s (Roberts, 1991). Between 1981 and 1985, 28 states enacted legislation to fund victim/witness assistance programs (Roberts, 1991).

Also in 1984, VOCA established a Crime Victims Fund to compensate victims of violent crimes (Lurigio, 1990). The fund draws revenues from fines, penalty assessments and forfeitures, and literary profits from federal offenders. Priority compensation is given to victims of sexual assault, spouse abuse, and child abuse (Lurigio, 1990). Thirty years ago there were no victim/witness programs. Now experts estimate that there are more than 5,000 programs available to victims/witnesses (Lurigio, 1990).

What Do Victim/Witness Programs Do?

Victim/Witness programs provide a wide range of services to victims and witnesses. These services range from babysitting to crisis intervention. NOVA divides services that victims/witnesses may need into eight stages of the criminal justice process: 1) emergency response, 2) victim stabilization, 3) resource mobilization, 4) after arrest, 5) pre-court appearance, 6) court appearance, 7) pre-sentence, 8) post-sentence. The following page chart shows the process and the services that may be needed at each stage.

The different agencies that cater to victims/witnesses can be divided into two types. The first type is the criminal justice services offered by offices in the criminal justice system (Weed, 1995). These services are the basic focus of my research thesis. These types of services help as-

Figure 1
The NOVA Victim Rights System¹

← VICTIM RIGHTS →			← VICTIM AND WITNESS RIGHTS →				
Stage 1: Emergency Response	Stage 2: Victim Stabilization	Stage 3: Resource Mobilization	Stage 4: After Arrest	Stage 5: Pre-Court Appearance	Stage 6: Court Appearance	Stage 7: Pre-Sentence	Stage 8: Post-Sentence
When: First contact after crime	When: At scene or within 48 hours	When: Until resolution of victimization experience	When: First contact after arrest	When: Prior to hearing/trial	When: Day of hearing or trial	When: After conviction or entry of guilty plea	When: After sentencing
What: Trauma assessment First aid Other emergency aid Crisis intervention	What: Safety measures Crisis counseling Conflict mediation Shelter and other emergency aid Orientation Referrals	What: Outreach Follow-up counseling and referrals Monitor referrals Assistance with financial claims Assistance with creditors, employers Property return Crime prevention Advocacy	What: Start or continue with Stages II and III	What: Criminal justice orientation Scheduling and hearing notification Case status information Witness preparation Employer intervention Consultation on plea bargaining Counseling Advocacy	What: Transportation Reception Escort Counseling Child care Witness fees Preparation for outcomes Advocacy	What: Victim impact statement Restitution plan Counseling Information on civil entitlements	What: Victim impact statement for parole hearing Victim input to revocation hearings Notice on hearing outcomes

¹Adapted from *Campaign for Victim Rights* (Washington, D.C.: National Organization for Victim Assistance, n.d.), pp. 12-13.

sure cooperation of the victim/witness in prosecution of the defendant (Weed, 1995). Examples of these types of services are programs sponsored by police departments, probation offices, and prosecutor's offices.

The second type of services are offered by social service agencies (Weed, 1995). These agencies focus on providing emotional and psychological support to the victim. These agencies are the most widely implemented (Weed, 1995). Social service agencies are used as referrals from programs under the criminal justice system. Women's centers, domestic abuse centers, and rehabilitation centers are examples of social service agencies.

Prosecutor Based Programs

According to background literature, prosecutor based programs typically meet the needs of the prosecutor by assisting in the investigation and adjudication of the case rather than focusing specifically on the victim (National Institute of Justice, 1987). Some programs do focus substantial resources on the needs of victims and witnesses. Some potential advantages of a prosecutor based program are: swift access to case information for the victims, victims have access to judges, victims concerns are included in sentencing recommendation, escorts that can be provided, and financial assistance for the victim can be filed (Lurigio, 1990). Some potential drawbacks of the prosecutor based program are the program foci on victims as potential witnesses, not as individuals; the restriction of services to victims/witnesses whose cases are brought to trial; opportunities of staff to act as victim advocates may be restricted; delayed acceptance by some grassroots organizations;

conflicts over confidentiality and disclosure often occur (National Institute of Justice, 1987).

Law Enforcement/Police Based Programs

Police based programs are typically aimed to help police officers and deputy sheriffs by counseling family disputants, sexual assault victims, and other troubled people such as traffic accident victims, runaways, and mentally disturbed individuals (Lurigio, 1990). These programs provide swift and easy access to victims and they often have staff that appears on the scene of the actual crime. Many police programs have 24 hour services since the agency operates around the clock. Police based programs improves police handling of the victim, which makes it easier on the victim of the crime. Some potential disadvantages are the victims sometimes fear the association with law enforcement officials, services are typically scarce after the case is closed, and there are also conflicts with grassroots organizations that distrust police.

Probation/Correction Based Programs

Probation based programs focus heavily on restitution issues since they deal directly with the convicted defendant. Restitution is often times the primary service of probation based programs (National Institute of Justice, 1987). These programs provide an opportunity for the victim to express his/her wishes in the sentencing procedure of the offender. Two disadvantages of probation based programs are they gain access to the victim at a later stage in the criminal justice process and this program misses victims if no charges are filed or no conviction occurs (Lurigio, 1990).

According to the literature, the prosecutor based programs are the most common types of

services offered to crime victims. Most of these programs are aimed at assisting the investigation and adjudication of the case, which is often the major drawbacks of the programs. The police based programs offer the easiest access to victims and the most immediate access. Finally, the probation based programs are the most lacking among the three types.

PART II

VICTIM PROGRAMS IN SOUTHERN ILLINOIS: INTERVIEW DATA

Prosecutor Based Programs:

Victim/Witness programs based in the prosecutor's office were the most numerous in the four county area of Southern Illinois. All four counties had a victim/witness program in the prosecutor's office. The Jackson County, Jefferson County, and Williamson County programs were the most comprehensive.

The Jackson County, Williamson County, and Jefferson County programs had one victim advocate working in the program. The Franklin County program does not employ a victim/witness advocate. It is the responsibility of one of the states attorneys to also act as the victim/witness advocate.

The Jackson County, Williamson County, and Jefferson County programs come into contact with an excess of 400 victims/witness per month. Some of these are on-going cases, but this is still an extraordinary amount of work for one victim advocate. This is especially true because the victim advocates are also responsible for completing all the paperwork necessary in running a victim/witness program. Every three months the state's attorney's office must submit summary information to the state on the program. This takes a lot of time away from the victim advocate which could be used towards assisting a victim.

All four programs offer similar services. Some emotional support is provided, but long--

term counseling for psychological trauma is referred out to more qualified agencies. Prosecutor's programs assist with the filing and issuance of restraining orders. All the advocates interviewed felt these orders were very beneficial except when the victim drops the orders. This is also frustrating to the advocate because they have put time and effort into obtaining these orders when they could have been offering it to other victims.

One of the most important roles of the prosecutor-based advocate is they act as a liaison between the victim and the state's attorney. This helps to lessen the fear some victims have with dealing with the criminal justice system, especially attorneys. The advocates also keep the victim/witness informed of case information. They notify the victim/witness of court dates, provide copies of court documents, and inform the victim/witness of the outcome of the court proceedings.

The advocates also arrange for housing, hotel reservations, and travel arrangements when necessary. Sometimes witnesses must be flown in to testify for trial and all arrangement are handled by the prosecutor's office. Accompaniment to court can also be arranged if requested by the victim/witness or when the victim/witness is still in danger.

The prosecutor's program can also help the victim/witness apply for financial assistance if necessary. Witnesses that have to testify in trial are allotted an daily witness fee. All four counties interviewed allotted \$20.00 a day per witness. This is a very small allotment considering many trials last all day long for weeks at a time. The victim advocate will assist victims in filing for financial assistance through the Illinois Crime Victims Compensation Fund.

The Illinois Crime Victims Compensation Fund is limited to victims of violent crimes. It is also considered a "last resort" for victims seeking compensation. The victim advocate at the Jackson County prosecutor's office stated, "Filing for assistance through the Illinois Crime Victims Compensation Fund is a very lengthy process. There is an enormous amount of paperwork and the victim must have exhausted all other sources for help." The process to get funding can be drawn out for up to one year. This makes it extremely difficult for victims to get financial assistance when they need it the most, immediately after the crime has occurred. The advocates also help the victim establish restitution. The victim can receive restitution from lost wages but not for pain and suffering. The offender's probation officer is in charge of making sure the offender is paying the restitution to the victims. If the offender fails to pay then the probation department files a petition to revoke probation through the prosecutor's office. This also can turn into a very lengthy, drawn out process for the victims.

All the interviewees stated they felt the major role of their program was to help the victims/witnesses recover from the trauma of the crime. This was interesting because it conflicted with the background literature I read which stated that the major role of prosecutor based programs is to assist the criminal justice system during the investigation and adjudication of the case.

The amount of involvement by the victim in the investigation of the case varies with the nature of the crime. The Jefferson County advocate states, "It varies in how much the victim is involved with the investigation. For some crimes, the victim's statement is all that is needed.

However, in a rape case, the victim is very involved. Everything from statements to medical records are needed in this type of case." In addition to all the other emotional factors, this in itself can be very disturbing for the victim.

According to the advocates, certain victims do receive higher priority in assistance even though the advocates do not like to admit that this takes place. Rape victims receive the highest priority with domestic violence victims next. The lowest priority are property crime victims. This can be very disturbing to property crime victims because they feel they have been victimized just like everyone else has.

There are two common barrier among the agencies that keep them from providing adequate services to victims and witnesses. The first barrier is the lack of personnel in each department. It is very difficult for one person to be an advocate to 300+ people at the same time. The second barrier was the lack of funding available for the programs. This lessens the number and quality of services offered to the victims/witnesses. Also, none of the programs perform follow-ups on victims or witnesses, or evaluate the program. This makes it difficult to assess how effective the programs actually are.

The advocates stated that they have to treat every victim individually because every reacts differently to crime. The victim advocate for the Jackson County program, stated, "I learned that every victim must be treated based on his/her needs. Also, I must be culturally sensitive when working with the many different cultures represented in Jackson County." Every culture has a dif-

ferent context in which they view their victimization. If the victim advocates are not willing to treat each victim based on his or her needs, this places more stress on the victim.

Police Based Programs:

I interviewed a representative from the Mt. Vernon Police Department, Benton Police Department, Marion Police Department, and Carbondale Police Department. The Carbondale Police Department was the only department with a specific victim/witness assistance program and a victim advocate. In the other departments I interviewed the person in charge of working with the victims. In Mt. Vernon I interviewed a detective, in Benton a secretary, and in Marion I interviewed the police chief. I found it interesting that in these three departments there was such a variety of professions in charge of aiding the victims. Among these three departments, Mt. Vernon seemed to be the next best qualified for working with victims with Marion following and then Benton.

Since the Carbondale Police Department was the only department with a victim/witness assistance program I will begin by discussing the nature of this program. The program has one victim/witness advocate and also some interns occasionally. The program was started in December 1992 and it averages around 75 new cases a month, not counting the on-going cases.

This program offers basically the same services at the Jackson County prosecutor based program. The advocate can arrange for transportation and accompaniment to court when necessary. Most housing that is offered is through the Women's Center in Carbondale. One service offered by this police based program is the advocate does home visits the day following the crime if

this is possible. I feel this would be beneficial because the victim will not feel so threatened on his/her "own turf". It would also allow for a more private, one-on-one contact with the victim. Financially, the only service that is offered is information and paperwork on the Illinois Crime Victim's Compensation Fund. The program does offer crisis intervention, but all long-term counseling is referred out to other local agencies.

The victim advocate at the Carbondale Police Department had a very general definition of the term "victim". "A victim is anyone that uses our services through this program," she stated. Her definition of a "victim" sounds like those people who do not use her program are not actually "victims". She also stated that there are some problems with the program, which are the same problems found in the prosecutor based programs. There are no evaluations completed on the program and the program is very short-staffed. Also, there is a lack of funding which is common in all the programs in Southern Illinois.

The Mt. Vernon and Marion Police Departments were similar in nature as far as the minimal amount of services they do provide. Both programs rely heavily on the prosecutor's programs in their county and referrals to outside sources. The two common services both departments stated they offered were the enforcement of orders of protection and information given on victim's rights and social service agencies.

A detective for the Mt. Vernon Police Department stated that the department drastically needs a victim/witness program. "With the city of Mt. Vernon growing so rapidly, we are finding

that we need a victim program to correlate with the state's attorney's program. I know our department does not have the training or personnel to work with victims on our own." The detective specifically stated that they need a program with female advocates. Sometimes the department comes across a victim that wants to speak with a female officer or advocate and the department does not have any female police officers at this time. The female clerical staff has had to work with victims before, and they are less trained than the officers at assisting victims. This has posed a problem for the department several times in the past.

Another increasing problem faced by the Mt. Vernon Police Department is the overall public's view of the Mt. Vernon police officers is negative. The detective agreed that the public's views of the officers are not very high. This negative response is caused by the public feeling there are racial divisions present in the police departments form of community policing. Some of the officer are known for using a lot of discretion and personal values in the way they deal with the victims. Therefore, the public sees the police department as catering to some "groups" more than others. A victim/witness program would help to lessen this negative image plus it would give the victims the services they are lacking at the present time. The detective believes a victim/witness program will improve the overall general view of the police along with the services offered by the department.

Finally, the Benton Police Department basically offers no services to the victims or witnesses outside of their basic law enforcement duties. They refer all victims to outside sources and

to the prosecutor's office. My first contact with the Benton police was very startling. I asked the person who answered the phone to contact me with the person in charge of assisting victims. The gentleman then stated, "We do not work with victims." This caught me off guard because I could not imagine anyone working in the law enforcement field making this kind of statement. I feel the Benton Police Department would benefit victims just by giving their employees some basic training on victims of crimes. This is a minimal first step that should be undertaken.

Probation Based Programs:

In Southern Illinois, the probation offices were the most lacking in services offered to victims. All four of the probation departments work with victims when they prepare presentence investigation reports. The victim is asked to submit a statement to be included in the reports. However, there are no specific victim/witness programs set up in any of the four counties. Basically, the representatives stated they rely on the programs available through the prosecutor's offices in their county and referrals to social service agencies, much like the police departments.

The Jefferson and Franklin County Probation offices are set up basically the same. They are in the same circuit and both offices have the same probation coordinator. Each office employs seven employees. There are two services provided to victims by these two offices. The first service is they help collect restitution for the victim. If the offender refuses to pay or does not pay on time, the probation officer must notify the state's attorney's office and they bring the offender back to court.

The second service is both offices coordinate a Victim Impact Panel. This is a group discussion involving the victims and the perpetrators of many different crimes. They get to tell their side of the story. The most common use of a Victim Impact Panel is for drunk drivers. Both victims and people who have had loved ones killed by a drunk driver speak out. Many people who have been arrested for a D.U.I. are ordered by the court to attend one of these sessions. The coordinator for both offices stated the panels are an effective short-term deterrent. "The Victim Impact Panel scares a person from drinking and driving for a short time, but that scare eventually wear off in most people," he stated.

The Jackson County and Williamson County Probation offices are larger offices. Jackson County employs 12 people and the Williamson County office has 13 employees. At this time there is no victim/witness program set up in either county. However, Jackson County is currently trying to get funding to set up a Family Violence Task Force. This program will involve a combination of people from many different occupations. For example, it will consist of health department officials, probation officers, law enforcement officials, and trained counselors. The task force will work with victims, witnesses, and offenders in abusive situations. The details of the program are not yet outlined at this time.

In summary, the prosecutor based programs were the most numerous in Southern Illinois. The strongest prosecutor based programs were found in Jackson, Williamson, and Jefferson County. There was only one police based program in the four county area which was in the Car-

bondale Police Department. The other counties relied heavily on the prosecutor programs and referrals to outside agencies. The probation based services were the most lacking in the four county area. All of the probation offices also relied solely on the prosecutor programs and outside agencies.

PART III

COMMON REFERRALS USED BY THE AGENCIES INTERVIEWED

Sexual Assault Service Center: The Sexual Assault Service Center is located in Jefferson County and it is used by both the Jefferson County agencies and the Franklin County agencies. It provides service to all victims of sexual assault and their significant others. This services provides a 24 hour hotline staffed by crisis workers and immediate on site support is provided to victims in hospitals and at police stations. Victims are supported during the interviews and during all stages of the court proceedings. The victim advocates assist the victims in filing to the Illinois Crime Victim Compensation Fund. Individuals, family and group therapy is available for both children and adults, male and female. The center provides services to the public on sexual assault and what to do if you are a victim of a violent crime. Also, the center has training available to law enforcement personnel on the awareness of special needs of sexual assault victims.

PAVE-People Against Violent Environments: PAVE is also located in Jefferson County and is used by both Jefferson County and Franklin County agencies. It provides services to victims and witnesses of domestic violence. The center has an emergency shelter for battered women who need a place to stay. Counseling is available to help the victim deal with the terrible trauma they have suffered. A legal advocate is present to provide information on legal rights and the legal system in general. The program also provides services to children to help victims' children deal with guilt, fear, anger and confusion often felt by young ones who witness (or are

also victims) of adult violence. Also, the center provides support groups for women and children which offer encouragement, information, safety, and a place to share common feelings.

The Women's Center: The Women's Center is located in Jackson County and it is used by both Williamson and Jackson County agencies. This agency has a shelter program, a rape action committee, and a community program. The shelter program offers a safe refuge for women and their children who are fleeing physical and emotional abuse. The shelter provides temporary housing, emergency food, supplies, counseling, group support, advocacy, transportation, and activities for women and children.

The rape action committee assists victims of sexual assault in need of support and legal or medical advocacy. A 24-hour hotline is manned by a volunteer that can be reached by the victims. The committee also provides in-service training to professionals who serve sexual assault victims and it provides speakers to address the many issues related to sexual assault. Counseling services are available to victims, family and friends, and are accessible through the hotline or by appointment with the staff counselor.

The community program's services are provided mainly by volunteers from the community for people of the community. This program provides short-term counseling for women in troubled situations. Confidential pregnancy testing and pregnancy counseling is available. A lawyer meets once a month with individuals with legal problems and gives a preliminary assessment of what legal actions can be taken by the victim. The center also maintains information on other area services

and agencies that can help a victim in a particular situation. The Women's Center is an excellent program designed to help women and children in abusive situations.

These programs are only a few used by the agencies in the four county area. Southern Illinois is in desperate need of more agencies like these to provide services to victims of violent crimes. Many of these organizations are ran by volunteers and they rely heavily on donations from the state and community. It is very important that the citizens of these communities take an interest in these types of organizations in order to keep them running.

PART IV

DISCUSSION

From examining the background literature in the area of victim services, it is apparent that victims have not always had the assistance that is offered today. However, from summarizing the results of my unstructured interviews, I found these services are still lacking in Southern Illinois today. Most of the agencies interviewed stressed the need of obtaining a viable victim/witness program. In every instance, lack of funding was the determining factor constraining the establishment of these programs.

I was encouraged by the quality of services offered to the victims through the prosecutor based programs. These programs offered a broad range of services to victims and witnesses. The advocates were very positive and enjoyed their work and they believe they are making a difference in the criminal justice system.

The services offered by the police based programs are still lacking in this area. Only one out of four departments had a victim/witness program. We need more police based programs in order to give victims immediate services. The services offered by probation were the most lacking. They rely heavily on referrals to outside agencies.

From my research, I believe the prosecutor based programs provide better assistance for crime victims. There are several two main reasons that support my recommendation of prosecutor based over police based programs. The most obvious reason is that most of the programs available

in Southern Illinois are prosecutor based programs. Basically, we don't have a choice. Second, the prosecutor's office has a larger jurisdiction which leads to a larger sector of victims being served. This large jurisdiction creates an enormous caseload for the prosecutor's office to serve. It is difficult for one victim advocate in these programs to adequately serve all the victims. This is a very important factor in an area where services are lacking.

To further implement the services offered by all agencies, we need more funding and more personnel. More personnel will decrease the workload per advocate and allow more time for each victim. This is severely needed in the prosecutor based programs where there is an excess of 300+ victims per month. Also, we need to provide more funding for compensating victims and easier ways of obtaining this funding. The stress of trying to receive funding through the Illinois Crime Victims Compensation Fund just adds to the trauma of the crime.

The best scenario would be to have an active program in all three areas of the criminal justice based programs; prosecutor, probation, and police. The services provided by each of these agencies would complement each other if these agencies worked together. They could incorporate more services and trained counseling for psychological stress. This would keep the victim in the criminal justice system based programs rather than have the victim bounce back and forth between social service agencies and the criminal justice system. This would offer a more cohesive program for the victims/witnesses.

Finally, an increase in the number of victim/witness assistance programs should be

continued as in the past 20 years. Evaluations need to be completed on the programs we currently have to evaluate the benefits of the programs. These evaluations would also indicate where improvements need to be made and where the funding should be spent. With the numbers of the victim/witness assistance programs growing, maybe Southern Illinois will become better qualified to assist its victims in the near future.

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