

Minnesota Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Program Standards for Victim Service Providers

PROSECUTOR-BASED CRIME VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM STANDARDS

Programs awarded crime victim services funding from the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) must show continual progress toward meeting the expectations detailed in the Program Standards.

The goal of victim services funding is to increase victims/survivors' safety, ensure access to services that meet their self-defined needs, and create consistent levels of quality services. Program services must be tailored to the needs of the populations within the funded service area(s).

When funded to serve a particular county, grantees must have a physical office location in the primary county of business that can accommodate walk-in service requests. This requirement is waived for smaller agencies (defined as "less than 3 FTEs") working remotely, as well as for adjacent counties being served remotely by larger programs. Staff working remotely must be physically available to:

- meet privately in person when requested, at a safe, confidential location; and
- accompany victims to court and for other appropriate appointments.

OJP Expectations of Funded Programs

- A. **Commitment to Accessibility:** Provide an accessible, welcoming, and respectful service environment. Provide services in a culturally sensitive and respectful way that honors and values diverse life experiences for those seeking services, and for program staff, leadership and advisory boards.
- B. **Commitment to Using a Trauma-informed Approach:** Provide services in a way that recognizes, understands, and responds to the effects of trauma experienced by crime victims/survivors. A trauma-informed approach emphasizes physical, mental and emotional health and safety, and helps victims/survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. Services need to be flexible to respond to the impact of different types of trauma, and on meeting victims' self-defined needs toward recovery and healing. For more information: <https://www.ovcttac.gov/taskforceguide/eguide/4-supporting-victims/41-using-a-trauma-informed-approach/>
- C. **Confidentiality:** Programs are prohibited from disclosing, revealing, or releasing personally identifying information or information collection in connection with services utilized, requested, or denied unless: (1) the service participant has signed a release of information, (2) a law mandates disclosure, or (3) a court has ordered disclosure. Releases must be unique to the individual victim/survivor and circumstances, be voluntary, and cannot be presented as routine practice.

PROSECUTOR-BASED CRIME VICTIM SERVICES

PROGRAM STANDARDS

Definitions:

Crime victim: A crime victim is defined under Minnesota Statutes section 611A.01, subd. 1(b), as a person who suffers loss or harm as a result of a crime. The term “victim” includes the family members, guardian, conservator, or custodian of a minor, incompetent, incapacitated, or deceased person.

Prosecutor based crime victim services are victim services within a county or city attorney’s office that receives grant funds to provide services to victims of crime from the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs.

1. Services

Provide assistance to victims and their families and ensure crime victims’ rights are upheld while involved in the criminal justice system process. Provide information, support, and advocacy services to victims of all crime types in adult and juvenile proceedings.

Services and activities include, but are not limited to:

a. Providing information:

- 1) Provide victims with timely information of their rights under the Crime Victims Bill of Rights, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 611A, and other relevant victims’ rights laws
- 2) Provide information to help better understand the criminal justice system, and explain the process and agencies involved in investigation, case review, prosecution, and post-conviction stages
- 3) Provide information and referral to resources to meet victims’ needs
- 4) Provide information about civil protective orders and referrals to local resources available to assist with their preparation

b. Providing assistance:

- 1) Assist the prosecutor in complying with its statutory responsibilities to crime victims. (See [Minnesota Crime Victim Rights: Reference Guide for Criminal Justice Professionals](#))
- 2) Ensure that victims receive notifications and services in an accessible and meaningful manner throughout the criminal prosecution and juvenile adjudication process
- 3) Assist victims throughout the entire criminal prosecution process, including hearing preparation and court accompaniment

- 4) Assist victims with:
 - a. restitution requests and completing reparations claims
 - b. the preparation and submission of victim impact statements
 - c. expenses resulting from the crime (i.e., repair to essential property damaged, rent, relocation, basic needs, etc.)
- 5) Assist victims who are not witnesses with expenses needed to participate in the criminal justice system and proceedings arising from the crime, (i.e., transportation, meals, lodging, childcare, etc.)

c. Providing advocacy:

- 1) Advocate on the behalf of victims with law enforcement, prosecutors, and the court to ensure the victim's rights are upheld, their voices are heard, and their interests are represented
- 2) Act as a liaison with other criminal justice system personnel to ensure crime victims have the information they need at various stages in the process and are treated with dignity and respect
- 3) Ensure that victims' input and concerns are regularly communicated to the prosecutor

2. Staff Development and Workload

Provide training for new employees that includes crime victim rights; information about the network of resources available to crime victims; respectful communication with victims; and the office's practices and policies regarding crime victims. Provide for ongoing training and professional development opportunities for victim service staff.

Victim service staff workload will be designed to ensure their work is for assisting victims, being responsive and available to victims and their families, supporting victims' knowledge of their rights; and helping victims exercise their rights. Victim service staff should assist with the development, review, and updating of internal policies and procedures to ensure they are responsive to the statutory obligations, rights, and needs of crime victims.

3. Community Education and Outreach

Provide information about crime victim rights and the services available from the prosecutor's office on the office's website. Work to increase public awareness about crime victimization, crime victim rights and available services through planned events, distribution of brochures, contact cards, media use, inclusion in community provider directories, and other online search engines and resources.

4. Systems Coordination and Partnering

Develop working relationships with other programs, services, and systems who may respond to the needs of crime victims. The goal of these relationships is to ensure the needs of victims are being met, and their rights are being upheld. Partners may include law enforcement, court services, legal representation, corrections and probation, other victim service providers, medical, education, social services, spiritual/religious representatives, etc. Activities may include training, collaborative work groups, information sharing, community provider networks, referral agreements, co-advocacy coordination, etc.

5. Limits to Privacy in Communication

The victim service provider must clearly inform victims as early as possible in their service provision about their role and the confidentiality limitations on any information the victim provides to them. As an employee of the prosecutor's office, staff will inform crime victims that what they share may be shared with the prosecutor and disclosed to the defense.