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

SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAM

Program Standards communicate OJP's expectations of grantees and specify the required direct services and activities of funded programs under this Program Standard. The goal of funding for victim services 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 populations within the funded service area(s).

When funded to serve a particular geographic area, grantees must provide direct services as detailed in the Program Standards, advertise and promote available services, conduct community outreach and education, and coordinate and collaborate on behalf of victims/survivors with system partners and other victim service agencies. 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://ncdvtmh.org/

C. **Confidentiality:** Programs are prohibited from disclosing, revealing, or releasing personally identifying information or information collected 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.

D. **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI tools may help with some tasks, but AI lacks understanding, empathy, and moral judgement. AI must be used cautiously, especially in victim services where trust, confidentiality, safety, and victim/survivor consent are of great importance. When in doubt, choose not to use AI for victim-related matters. For help understanding when the use of AI may be helpful or harmful, see: Artificial Intelligence & Victim Services: A Comprehensive Guide for Advocates.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAM STANDARDS

1. Services

A. General Services. Provide services and/or referrals for victims/survivors of sexual violence which include, but are not limited to:

a. Crisis intervention
b. Emotional support
c. Safety planning
c. Assistance in securing emergency services such as shelter, food, child care, clothing and other necessities
d. Transportation as necessary and appropriate
e. Information and referral
f. Assistance with and accompaniment to:
    1) Forensic exams
    2) medical appointments and procedures, when possible
    3) law enforcement interviews or other activities related to the investigation
    4) civil, criminal and/or family court activities, including but not limited to interviews, trial, and sentencing hearings
g. Assistance:
    1) filing protection orders
    2) submitting OJP's Crime Victims Reimbursement Program claim forms: Reimbursement Program
    3) accessing human, social, and/or family services and other public benefits programs
    4) accessing interpretation, translation, and culturally appropriate materials while receiving advocacy services or other activities related to the crime victimization

B. Supportive Group Interaction. Provide regular, ongoing opportunities for victims/survivors of sexual violence to participate in safe and supportive group interaction, peer support, and/or formal support group activities.

2. Staff Development

Provide a formalized orientation and training for new employees, volunteers and board/advisory members. In accordance with MN § 595.02 (subd. 1(k)), provide for a minimum of 40 hours of training on sexual violence as well as ongoing direct supervision and training for all paid and unpaid staff who work with victims/survivors of sexual violence. Provide for ongoing training opportunities for their employees and volunteers, utilizing both in-house and outside training sources.

3. Community Education and Outreach

Provide presentations to their community about crime victimization, available services, the root causes of crime, and the need for social change. Audiences may include community service groups, civic organizations, special populations, professional organizations, or school groups. Increase public awareness about crime victimization and available services through planned events, distribution of brochures, contact cards and posters, 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/survivors. The goal of these relationships is to ensure the needs of victims/survivors 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.