

TN

Department of
Finance &
Administration

Office of Criminal Justice Programs

Victim-Centered Forums FY 2023



Prepared By:
Office of Criminal Justice Programs
Department of Finance and Administration
312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue, Suite 800
William Snodgrass Tennessee Tower
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-1102

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
METHODOLOGY	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Successful and Promising Programs in Tennessee Opportunities for System Improvement	4
APPENDIX A List of Participants Forum Questions	6

OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS MISSION STATEMENT:

The Office of Criminal Justice Programs (OCJP) under the State Department of Finance and Administration functions as a strategic planning agency that secures, distributes, and manages federal and state grant funds for Tennessee. While collaborating with other public and non-profit agencies, OCJP utilizes these grant monies to support innovative projects statewide in efforts to reduce criminal activity, provide services for victims of crime and promote overall enhancement of the criminal justice system in Tennessee.

INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Tennessee Office of Criminal Justice Programs (OCJP) conducts a series of victim-centered forums to hear from victims and other stakeholders across the state. The insights and feedback from these groups help to inform OCJP's strategic planning process. The forums focus on identifying areas of promise and excellence, as well as gaps in services for Tennessee victims of crime. In October 2021, OCJP contracted with Tennessee Voices for Victims to facilitate three such victim-centered forums in a virtual format. These forums were composed of victims of crime, advocates, law enforcement, prosecution, and other professionals who work closely with victims of crime in the state; and their feedback is summarized in this report. The forums were organized into three groups: Domestic Violence Advocates and Survivors, System Providers and Non-Profit Partners, and Underserved Survivors and Advocates. Verna Wyatt and Valerie Craig, co-founders of Tennessee Voices for Victims, secured the participants, facilitated and moderated each forum, and provided a subsequent summary report to OCJP. Several OCJP staff also attended each forum to listen for themes and topics of particular interest.

METHODOLOGY

Tennessee Voices for Victims coordinated the forums which were held virtually. Each forum had a statewide representation, incorporating both rural and urban areas, public and nonprofit agencies, and diversity in race, gender, and types of victimization. All invitees, both those able to participate and those unable to do so, were encouraged to share their feedback in writing. The conversations were guided, yet proceeded organically, so not every question was addressed in each forum. The group referred to as “domestic violence advocates and survivors” consisted of victim advocates and staff employed by domestic violence shelters and family justice centers, as well as counselors and survivors of domestic violence. The group called “system providers and non-profit partners” consisted of those who work to address victimization through city initiatives, non-profit programming, and the criminal justice system. These individuals represented entities such as Community Safe in Nashville, batterers intervention programming, victim witness services, family justice centers, mental health providers, and specialized courts. The third group, “underserved survivors and advocates” consisted of those working with or representing an underserved victim population such as LGBTQ clients, refugees, immigrants, minority races, or disabilities. Some advocates also represented the domestic violence and sexual assault fields. The details of the forums, including the list of participants and questions that guided the discussion, can be found in Appendix A.



How Tennessee Can Improve

Common themes also emerged that reflect gaps and opportunities for improvement within the system. The most common of these included:

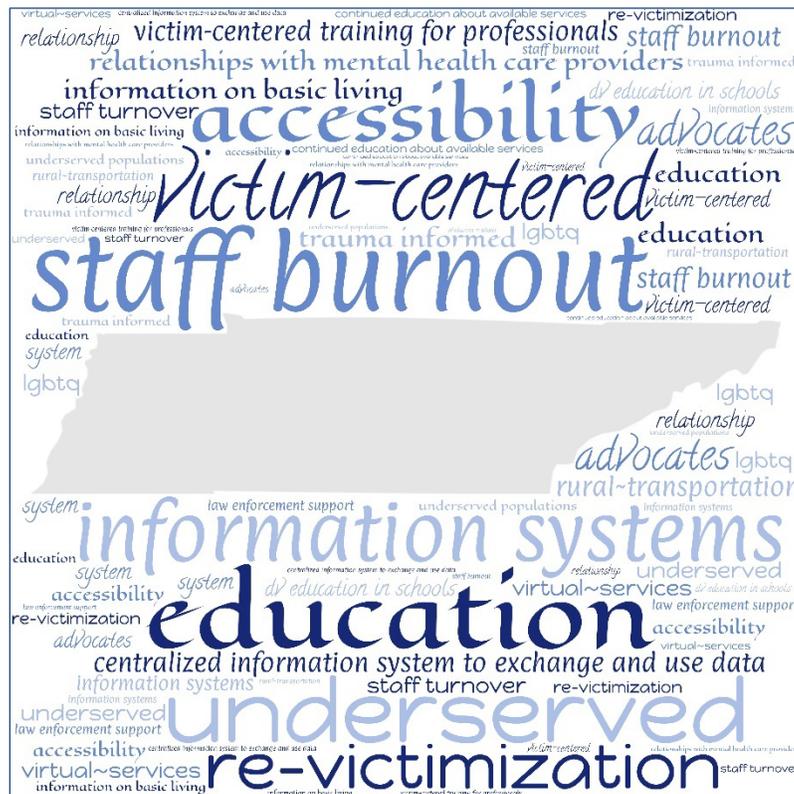


Figure 2 Opportunities for system improvement

- Schools are an opportunity for recognizing, preventing, and addressing domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes. Programs are needed to train and support school staff and administrators in understanding and reporting such crimes.
- Victim service and criminal justice organizations need improved training and programming that is victim-centered, culturally sensitive, and responsive to the unique needs of underserved victim populations (including racial minorities, disabled, and LGBTQ+ victims). Such individuals are often revictimized through their interactions with systems and services that are not created with underserved populations in mind.
- Agencies need improved resources to reduce barriers to service for certain victims, including language services for non-English speaking victims, transportation options for victims in rural communities, and safe emergency housing.

- Gaps in timely, accurate information impede law enforcement, prosecutors, victim service providers and other system professionals that serve victims and hold offenders accountable. Stakeholders consistently request improved policies and technology to enable appropriate sharing of information and enhance collaboration.
- Secondary traumatization occurs frequently in organizations that address violent crime. This includes staff burnout and high employee turnover, resulting in loss of institutional knowledge and expensive re-training needs. Agencies need wellness programs to help mitigate and address these issues.

The themes summarized above will directly inform OCJP’s [FY2023 Strategic Plan Addendum](#) and will help to guide our office’s funding priorities and project designs through the coming fiscal year. OCJP values the unique voices of victims, survivors, service providers and community partners across our state. We appreciate the valuable time and expertise that each forum participant provided; and we look forward to additional opportunities to hear directly from survivors and stakeholders throughout the year.

APPENDIX A

Participants

Domestic Violence Advocates and Survivors:

WRAP (serves 19 counties in West Tennessee)
Nashville Family Safety Center
Shelby County Crime Victims Rape and Crisis Center
Haven of Hope (Bedford, Coffee, Lincoln, Marshall, and Moore Counties)
Scott County Family Justice Center
Branch House (Sullivan County Family Justice Center)
Upper Cumberland Family Justice Center
Three survivors

System Providers and Non-Profit Partners:

Maury County Youth Services
The McNabb Center
WRAP
Choices Batterers Intervention Program
Chattanooga Police Department, Victim Services
Morgan County Residential Recovery Court
Community Safety, Nashville Mayor John Cooper's Office
Nashville Family Safety Center
Nashville District Attorney's Office

Underserved Survivors and Advocates:

Sexual Assault Center, LGBTQ Client Services
Sexual Assault Center, Advocacy Team
Nashville Family Safety Center
Love Doesn't Hurt
Sexual Assault Center, Black Client Services
Nashville Hispanic Radio
Family Intervention Program, Metro Nashville Police Department
Sexual Assault Center, Hispanic Client Services
Survivor

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCATES AND SURVIVORS OCJP VICTIM-CENTERED FORUM QUESTIONS

Date: October 1, 2021
Time: 1:00-3:00pm CST

Introductions:

Please share your name and two or three sentences about yourself and/or the people you serve.

1. What would you duplicate throughout the state in serving domestic violence victims if you had the power to do so?
2. What type of program/service is no longer working well, and in your opinion, should no longer receive priority funding? (This question is directed at programming NOT specific agencies.)
3. In your experience, what domestic violence victims are not being served well?
4. What needs to be improved in terms of services/service delivery to domestic violence victims? Please consider both of the following:

Perspective One: You know services are being provided, but you have learned that the service is not being provided in a way that is the most beneficial to victims.

Perspective Two: A service that is needed is not being provided.

5. What barriers prevent people from reporting domestic violence? Please think about this both specifically (victims don't speak English) and broadly (victims are afraid).
6. Once domestic violence has been reported to the police, victims may choose to access further services such as shelters or counseling. What are your observations of how this is currently working? Is the system in place inviting of all victims regardless of race, religion, ability level, language, gender, sexual orientation, etc.? If not, how do we improve this?
7. What are your thoughts about the criminal justice system?
8. Think about alternatives or supplements to the traditional criminal justice system such as restorative justice (alternative) or victim/offender dialogue (supplement). What are your thoughts about these opportunities? What are other programs that you may be interested in (ideas may include specialized courts such as drug courts, etc.)? To learn more about these options, please see the links below:

Restorative Justice:

http://www.cscsb.org/restorative_justice/what_is_restorative_justice.html

Victim/Offender Dialogue: <https://justalternatives.org/facilitated-victim-centered-victim-offender-dialogue-what-it-is/>

Drug Courts: <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/treatment/drug-courts/index.html>

9. What else would you like to share with us today?

SYSTEM PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT PARTNERS OCJP VICTIM-CENTERED FORUM QUESTIONS

Date: October 8, 2021
Time: 1:00-3:00pm CST

*Please Note: For those who work in the criminal justice system, we recognize that your clients have caused victimization but they also have experienced victimization. Please consider your clients in regards to your responses below.

Introductions:

Please share your name and two or three sentences about yourself and/or the people you serve.

1. What would you duplicate throughout the state in serving victims if you had the power to do so?
2. In your experience, what victims are not being served well?
3. What needs to be improved in terms of services/service delivery to victims? Please consider both of the following:

Perspective One: You know services are being provided, but you have learned that the service is not being provided in a way that is the most beneficial to victims.

Perspective Two: A service that is needed is not being provided.

4. What barriers prevent people from reporting crime?
5. Once crime has been reported to the police, victims may choose to access further services such as shelters or counseling. Please think through the current process starting with the access point (is an application required, do they call an advocate, etc.) to exiting a program. Is the process accessible to all victims? If not, what group is being missed and how? What suggestions do you have to make services more accessible to future victims?
6. What are your thoughts about the criminal justice system?
7. Think about alternatives or supplements to the traditional criminal justice system such as restorative justice (alternative) or victim/offender dialogue (supplement). What are your thoughts about these opportunities? What are other programs that you may be interested in (ideas may include specialized courts such as drug courts, etc.)? To learn more about these options, please see the links below:

Restorative Justice:

http://www.cscsb.org/restorative_justice/what_is_restorative_justice.html

Victim/Offender Dialogue: <https://justalternatives.org/facilitated-victim-centered-victim-offender-dialogue-what-it-is/>

Drug Courts: <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/treatment/drug-courts/index.html>

8. What else would you like to share with us today?

UNDERSERVED SURVIVORS AND ADVOCATES OCJP VICTIM-CENTERED FORUM QUESTIONS

Date: October 29, 2021

Time: 1:00-3:00pm CST

Introductions:

Please share your name and two or three sentences about yourself and/or the people you serve.

1. In regards to the services you provide as a victim advocate or in regards to the services you received as a victim, what is currently working well in our state? What would you duplicate throughout the state if you had the power to do so?

2. What is not working well? This could be from two perspectives:

Perspective One: You received services that you needed, but the service was not provided in a way you needed it.

Perspective Two: You were not provided a needed service. What did you need that you did not receive?

If you are an advocate, what have your survivors shared with you or what have you observed in regards to these two perspectives?

3. We know that there are barriers to reporting crime. As a survivor, thinking back, what barriers did you experience in reporting your victimization? If you are an advocate, what have your clients shared with you in terms of barriers for reporting crime?

4. Once a crime has been reported to the police, victims may choose to access further services such as domestic violence shelters or counseling. Please think about how the actual access point worked for you as a victim or is currently working as an advocate. Is the system in place inviting of all victims regardless of type of victimization, race, religion, ability level, language, gender, sexual orientation, etc.? If not, how do we improve this?

5. What are your thoughts about the criminal justice system?

6. Think about alternatives or supplements to the traditional criminal justice system such as restorative justice (alternative) or victim/offender dialogue (supplement). What are your thoughts about these opportunities? What are other programs that you may be interested in (ideas may include specialized courts such as drug courts, etc.)? To learn more about these options, please see the links below:

Restorative Justice: http://www.cscsb.org/restorative_justice/what_is_restorative_justice.html

Victim/Offender Dialogue: <https://justalternatives.org/facilitated-victim-centered-victim-offender-dialogue-what-it-is/>

Drug Courts: <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/treatment/drug-courts/index.html>

7. What else would you like to share with us today?