



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

VICTIMS SERVICES NEWS

March 2020

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Kristina Vadas, *Victims Services Manager*

Happy 2020! The Victims Services team is excited about the coming year and all that we have planned. I've highlighted just two of our 2020 priorities below.

Grant Programs

As you know, we currently have seven full-time Victims Services Grant Program Specialists who provide assistance and monitoring of your grant projects. In addition, Amia Barrows is our Grant Monitoring Team Supervisor, a role that she's held since last August. Under Amia's amazing leadership, the Grant Monitoring Team continues to enhance monitoring policies and procedures, with a goal to provide you with the best assistance possible. Please let us know if there are additional ways we can support your programs.

We are also already planning for future grant application cycles. On February 6, 2020, project directors received an email from Andi Martin requesting feedback on our previous solicitations and awarding processes. These efforts are exceptionally important to us, and we are committed to having a fair and fiscally responsible grant awarding process and ensuring the needs of victims are met across the Commonwealth. From now through March, we will be gathering this feedback and then using it to inform our future plans. If you would like to provide such feedback, please send us an email to this address: VictimsServicesTA@dcjs.virginia.gov. Please also stay tuned for other opportunities to provide feedback in the coming months.

Training

Our fantastic Training Coordinator, Tricia Everetts, has a plethora of training content planned for this year. We've heard you: you'd like more training on grants

management, grant writing, program implementation, nonprofit management, and other topics to support success of your grant-funded projects.



I hope many of you were able to attend one of the five regional "On the Road to Excellence" trainings. Coming up, registration is now open for:

- *The Seven Steps to Thriving After Abuse: Empowering Victims to Take the Journey Beyond Surviving*
- *When Healing Hurts: Making Systemic Change to Address Vicarious Trauma*
- *Strengthening the Response: Community Collaborations at the Intersections* (in five locations!)

And there are many more to come, including our annual *Intersections of Violence Conference* and our fall special populations conference.

In other news, last December our Professional Standards Coordinator, Courtney Meyer, left DCJS for a fantastic opportunity to be Assistant Director of Old Dominion University's Women's Center. This was a huge loss for our team, but we are so excited for the amazing work Courtney will do at ODU!

Lastly, please save-the-date for our next Victims Services Quarterly Conversation. It will be held on Wednesday, April 8, 2020, from 1:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m.

As always, I welcome your questions, thoughts, and ideas, so please reach out to me at 804-786-7802 or kristina.vadas@dcjs.virginia.gov. Thank you for all you do to serve and support victims.

Kristina

Best Practice

Anya Shaffer, Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Administrator

What do we mean by “Best Practice”? According to the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), a best practice is a technique or methodology that, through experience and research, reliably leads to a desired result. A commitment to using best practices in any field is a commitment to using all the knowledge and technology at one’s disposal to ensure success. Different fields have different standards for what is best practice, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that strategies considered best practices should be:

- Evidence-based,
- Supported by high-quality evidence,
- Demonstrative of a positive impact in terms of effectiveness, reach, feasibility, sustainability, and transferability.

Our understanding of “best practice” is constantly evolving. The designation of a practice as best is dependent on the evidence available at that point. As a result, we often describe practices as being rooted in the best available research or evidence. Being labeled a “best practice” is not an end point and practice should continue to be evaluated. Practices can also be categorized as emerging, promising, leading, or best.

More information can be found at the following resources:

- Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center: www.ovcttac.gov
- Best Practices Guidelines: Crime Victims Services: www.ovc.gov/pubs/InnovativePractices/Practices_Best%20practices%20guidelines-508.pdf
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center: www.nsvrc.org
- Center for Victim Research: <https://victimresearch.org>
- Understanding Evidence: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/understanding_evidence-a.pdf



Take Back the Night Foundation

Dear Friends,

I am on the board for the Take Back The Night Foundation and wanted to share news of the first-ever national hotline for sexual assault and harassment victims seeking justice.

567-SHATTER is a national legal hotline for ALL victims of sexual harassment, assault and rape to learn about their legal options. Take Back The Night Foundation has partnered with a victim advocacy law firm to provide 24-7 staffing of the hotline. The intake call staff has trauma-informed training to best support victims when they call. Many of the attorneys supporting this effort are survivors themselves adding to their personal passion to make this resource nationally available at no cost to survivors.

This is our loud, national call to shatter the SILENCE on SEXUAL VIOLENCE! Survivors can also share their stories on the TBTN Website. Shout, Speak, Call, Post—no survivor should be alone in their healing.

We hope you will add 567-SHATTER to your resource lists, website, social media, and training materials.

Katie Koestner

SAVE THE DATE — UPCOMING EVENTS

Victims Services Quarterly Conversation.....04/08/2020 from 1:00–2:00 p.m.

Strengthening the Response: Community Collaborations at the Intersections

Meadowview, VA03/24–25/2020	Hampton, VA07/14–15/2020
Midlothian, VA05/27–28/2020	Roanoke, VA07/21–22/2020

Healing Harm: Restorative Justice Practices

Richmond, VA03/19/2020
Blacksburg, VA04/09/2020

Crime Victims’ Rights Event04/21/2020

Intersections of Violence Conference (Hampton Convention Center)

Pre-conference06/16/2020	Main conference06/17–19/2020
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COORDINATOR'S CORNER

“I Don't Have Time for Another Meeting!”

Ideas to Enhance Your SART Agenda

Jennifer Kline, Grant Program Coordinator

Anyone who has facilitated Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) meetings has heard this from team partners. We all attend a lot of meetings, but the key to helping team members feel that the SART meeting is not a waste of time, is the agenda. The agenda illustrates how team members' time will be used and why it's important that they attend. A prepared agenda sent to partners a few days in advance can help them think about issues related to agenda items and formulate questions they might have. This is especially helpful to partners who are not big talkers at meetings. It also helps the facilitator keep the meeting on track, especially when there are designated times for each meeting item.

Virginia mandates that each Commonwealth's Attorney, or their designee, convene a SART meeting once a year, but is a once-a-year meeting enough to recognize the gaps in sexual assault response, discuss solutions, and implement improved response? No! I recommend that SARTs at least meet quarterly. Most SART coordinators are preparing agendas, facilitating meetings, updating protocols, coordinating special projects, and writing grants in addition to their regular duties.

For this reason, I thought I would share some creative agenda items to make your SART meetings more meaningful:

- Each member gives agency/organization updates, such as new positions, turnover, and protocol or policy changes.
- Discuss gaps or problems in your team's response to sexual assault – systemic issues your team has encountered during the response, services, investigation, medical, or prosecution that your team needs to address to improve the system for victims.
- Discuss research or a best practice topic that could result in an improved response, such as trauma-informed victim interviews, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) services, expert testimony, or cold case victim notification.
- Group activities – write a mission statement or do a sexual assault response mapping exercise.
- Discuss past or upcoming trainings, webinars, blogs, research articles, or white papers.
- Discuss special projects – prevention efforts, MOU/ protocol writing/updates, assessing your SART (victim surveys, case file review, focus groups, statistics).
- Discuss new legislation that might affect victims of sexual assault.
- Discuss grants – local, state, or federal grants for sexual assault response and services to victims.

Other Ideas:

- Cross training – have a SART member or a community partner organization give a short presentation on a service or an underserved population, such as LGBTQ victims, immigration legal remedies, confidentiality, working with refugees, or working with the media.
- Play a short video clip on the neurobiology of trauma, DNA, strangulation, or trauma-informed victim interviews.
- Plan sexual assault awareness projects, such as community education efforts or Sexual Assault Awareness Month events.
- Share statistics (this is a good year-end activity) – numbers of victims served, forensic medical exams, prosecutions, number of investigations, reasons investigations were not referred for prosecution, etc. This agenda item will help illuminate gaps and problems in your community's response.
- Discuss local media coverage of sexual assault.
- Discuss vicarious trauma. SART meetings are perfect for talking about how working with sexual assault victims takes a toll on our minds and bodies. You can include some great five-minute calming exercises in every SART meeting.
- Go on a field trip to tour and hear about the services of a community partner organization.
- Don't forget to celebrate success! Whenever your team meets a goal, celebrate with food!

If you have questions or want to know more, contact jennifer.kline@dcjs.virginia.gov.

The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative: An Interview with Kelly Carpenter

Jennifer Kline and Andelynn Martin

When victims endure an invasive Physical Evidence Recovery Kit (PERK) after a sexual assault, they are hopeful that the offender will be caught and never rape another victim. Recently; however, sexual assault victims felt an overwhelming injustice when tens of thousands of untested PERKs were found in evidence rooms and warehouses across the country. As a result, \$41 million in grant funding was released to states to get kits tested. Virginia's Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and Department of Forensic Science (DFS) received two grants totaling \$3.4 million in 2017, to test previously unsubmitted rape kits and to transform the system for survivors by offering training and infrastructure that will ensure a more survivor-centered, trauma-informed response to sexual violence by Virginia law enforcement agencies.

We interviewed Kelly Carpenter, Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Project Manager at the Office of the Attorney General, about the initiative.

What is your role at the Office of the Attorney General? I am the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) Project Manager, and I coordinate the efforts to test previously unsubmitted PERKs under the two grants you mentioned.

You have a partner in this process. Can you tell us her name and her duties? Yes, her name is Teri Duesbery and she is our Victim Advocate. Teri provides direct assistance to victims seeking information about PERK testing and serves as a resource to localities by providing assistance, technical support, and training in practices that support and improve victim engagement.

What is the status of project? How many kits have been tested? How many are left to be tested? Kit testing remains ongoing. To date, we have sent a total of 2,716 PERKs for testing, of which 2,590 have been completed. Because testing is outsourced to a private lab, DFS reviews all analysis reports and subsequently uploads resulting DNA profiles to the DNA database, reporting "hits" or "matches" to the law enforcement agency. At this point, 305 hits have been reported to localities.

How many hits have resulted in prosecution? Last November, Attorney General Herring announced the first arrest as a result of the project. Spotsylvania County Sheriff's



Office served warrants for Carnal Knowledge for a 2012 case which is now pending a preliminary hearing.

There has been a lot of recent media attention about law enforcement's mishandling of sexual assault cases that might affect the rape kit backlog, including lack of trauma-informed practices, gender bias, belief in rape myths, and lack of resources. Why were some Virginia law enforcement agencies not sending in kits to the crime lab for testing? When you examine statewide inventories and the reasons kits were not tested, a few trends emerge. It is important to understand that the kit itself is but one part of a comprehensive forensic examination and, generally, the purpose of the kit is to collect swabs and other trace evidence that might help identify a suspect or link a suspect to the crime. With that in mind, nearly one quarter (24%) of kits listed on the two inventories were not tested because it was determined that testing wasn't necessary to establish an identity of a suspect.

One trend that stood out to me when analyzing the inventory data is victim engagement with the criminal justice process, or really, lack of engagement. About 21% of kits were not tested because the victim elected not to participate further in the criminal justice process. Additionally, 10% of the kits not submitted were collected anonymously, meaning the victim did not report the crime to law enforcement at the time the evidence was collected. We know rape and sexual assault are highly underreported, and in these cases, victims had made an attempt to engage the criminal justice process on some level, but then withdrew. Why? There are many factors that may affect a person's ability to engage with an investigation and prosecution and while we can't always mitigate all of those influences, we can evaluate whether evidence-based and trauma-informed policies and procedures are being used to address system-based factors.

A slightly smaller number, roughly 19%, were not tested because the prosecutor's office had declined prosecution. Unfortunately, the data doesn't break this reason down further to fully understand what factors were considered in the determination not to prosecute these cases. Sexual

Continued

The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative: *An Interview with Kelly Carpenter (Continued)*

assault cases can certainly be challenging to prosecute, but it is worth re-evaluating these cases and looking to current, evidence-based research to inform prosecutorial decisions and procedures.

Approximately 18% were classified as “other” and further clarified as not being submitted because the crime was unfounded or that no crime was committed, determined to be a false report, collected for a crime that occurred in another state, etc. The remaining reasons for not submitting kits were that roughly 4% were medical examiner kits collected in routine death investigations and testing wasn’t warranted, about 2% were listed as currently under investigation, and 2% had no reason listed.

We know that approximately 80% of the time, the rapist is someone the victim knows. What are the reasons that law enforcement agencies should send in all kits for testing, even when the offender’s identity is known to the victim? This requires a shift in recognizing that the value of kit testing goes beyond a single case. DNA profiles recovered from cases with a known suspect can provide new leads to other cases, and possibly identify serial sex offenders when cases connect together, especially across jurisdictional lines. DNA profiles are added to the DNA database for one of two reasons: a profile is developed from evidence collected from a crime or an individual was required to provide a sample upon arrest or conviction of certain offenses. Only testing kits in cases involving unknown suspects misses potential opportunities to solve other crimes and possibly prevent future crimes by identifying serial offenders earlier.

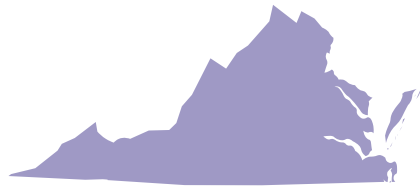
Additionally, it is now required by law to submit all PERKs for testing within 60 days of evidence collection, with very limited exceptions (see Chapter 1.2 Physical Evidence Recovery Kits, specifically § 19.2-11.8).

What are some best practices agencies can adopt concerning victim notification of kit testing? Victim notification is one area that gives people cause for concern, and rightly so. There are many factors that may influence how someone will respond to receiving contact out of the blue about their case, possibly years later. Research is demonstrating that three particular elements help to minimize re-traumatization: multidisciplinary collaboration, using trauma-informed, victim-centered practices, and ensuring access to victim advocates throughout the entire process. Simply put, these elements help to build stronger cases for prosecution and ensure that the needs of victims are met so they stay engaged with the process.

What can victims, advocates, prosecutors, and law enforcement do to help the Commonwealth keep on top of the testing and notification? Assuming that this isn’t already in progress, I would encourage each discipline to determine how many cases are being tested in their locality and what the follow-up has consisted of to date. It may be helpful to designate someone to lead the coordination and follow-up efforts of the multidisciplinary team. The team should determine any training needs for the group and periodically evaluate and refine protocols and procedures. Teri and I can assist with development and implementation of multidisciplinary and trauma-informed protocols. Another great resource for folks wanting to learn more is the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Toolkit.

What changes were made in Virginia as a result of the initiative? On the heels of the inventory that was completed by DFS in 2015, legislation was enacted that finally brought structure and consistency to the handling of PERKs. The comprehensive legislation addressed PERK pickup, submission for testing, retention and storage, and codified the requirement that victims be informed of the status of the PERK collected in their case and the results of testing. Building on the legislation, a portion of grant funds have been used by DFS to create a PERK tracking system that documents the status and location of PERKs from beginning to end. An important feature of the system is that it allows victims to see the location of their PERK and whether or not it has been tested. DFS is currently working with localities to implement the tracking system prior to legislation taking effect July 1, 2020, that requires law enforcement and collection sites to enter PERK information into the system.

Now that the backlog is (mostly) gone, what are your goals for the next few years? While testing should be concluded by the end of this year, the most important part of the project continues: the review of testing results and case files, making decisions about next steps, and notifying survivors of testing results. We know that this is time-consuming for localities, especially with current caseloads needing attention, so Teri and I will continue to provide support, training, and resources. To date, we have accomplished this through trainings and direct outreach with localities. These efforts will continue, as will our support of other statewide initiatives such as DCJS’ work to support and enhance Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) and the DFS rollout of the PERK Tracking System. The PERK testing initiative is part of Attorney General Herring’s larger effort to change the culture around sexual violence in Virginia, and I for one am excited about the progress we are making as a state.



Virginia's Crisis Response Team

Julia Fuller-Wilson

Virginia has a very active and dedicated Crisis Response Team! If you are currently part of the team, then you know this already. For those of you who are not a part of the team, you may or may not know what this is or what we do.

Virginia's Crisis Response Team (CRT) consists of over 200 responders from across the state. Each responder is required to go through at least 24 hours of the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Basic Crisis Response Training to be on the team. This training provides thorough information on the impact of trauma and short and long-term stress reactions, as well as utilizing NOVA's Group Crisis Intervention model with traumatized groups and individuals. In addition, responders can receive advanced training through other skills-based trainings offered by the Department of Criminal Justice Services, the Virginia Victims Fund, and the Virginia Victim Assistance Network.

Being a part of the CRT is a commitment. As a member, you are part of one of seven regional teams that meet quarterly to plan and prepare for responding to an emergency. You may be called to respond to small, regional crises or larger, state crisis responses. Incidents must be a criminal event and can range from bank robberies to mass casualty events. Our role in a crisis response consists of providing crisis intervention, support, information and referrals, and any other services that help to lessen the impact of trauma on victims. These services are crucial to building resiliency and decreasing the long-term traumatic effects on the victim(s) and the community.

We will offer our next Basic Crisis Response Team training in the spring of 2020. If you haven't already, you can sign up for DCJS updates at our website (www.dcjs.virginia.gov/subscribe) to receive training announcements. If you are interested in being a member of the CRT, please contact Julia Fuller-Wilson at julia.fuller-wilson@dcjs.virginia.gov.



April 19-25, 2020 is
National Crime Victims Rights Week

April is
National Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Victims Services Quarterly Conversation

The next Victims Services Quarterly Conversation (VSQC) will be held on Wednesday, April 8, 2020, from 1:00pm–2:00pm. Webinar log-in information will be emailed to all grant recipients at least one week prior to the VSQC. Please mark your calendars—we hope you can join us!

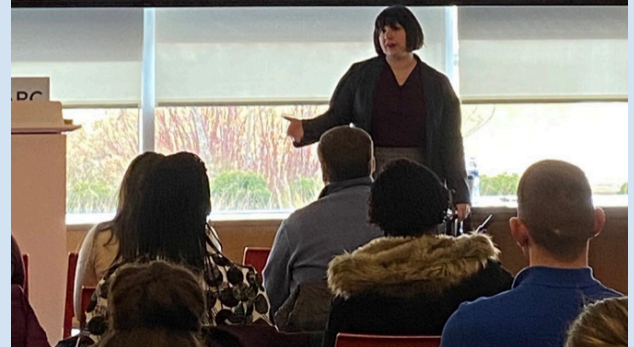
The PowerPoint™ slides from past VSQC may be found on our website at: www.dcjs.virginia.gov/publications



On January 23, 2020, DCJS presented “Beyond Basics: Stalking Identification and Response” training. The training was presented by Dana Fleitman, Associate Advisor, Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC) of Aquinas.

OVW Funding

This project was supported by Grant No. 2017-TA-AX-K074 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this program are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.



DCJS Victims Services presented “On the Road to Excellence: Grant Management Training for SAS, VSGP, VWGP, VSTOP, and VSDVVF Grantees”. This full-day training covered topics such as the grant life cycle, allowable and unallowable costs, programmatic reporting, preparing for a monitor visit, and more. Training sessions took place in Abingdon, Roanoke, Richmond, Fairfax, and Hampton.

In the picture to the left, Victims Services Program Specialist, Christine Wengloski presents on grant special conditions.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY (non-DCJS)

Title: Racial Justice as Trauma-Informed Advocacy

Date: March 18, 2020

Location: Action Alliance, 1118 W. Main St., Richmond, Virginia , 23220

Description:

Recognizing that all forms of oppression are interconnected, we know that in order to end sexual and domestic violence, we must also work to end racism. This training will examine how institutional and systemic racism create disparities in experiences between survivors of color and survivors who are white (including disparities in access to resources and support following trauma exposure) and why a racial justice lens is integral to trauma-informed advocacy and prevention. Participants will be given specific examples of how the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance has integrated a racial justice lens into aspects of its work to take back to their agencies.

Cost: Lunch is provided. Costs vary based on membership.

Link to register: <https://actionalliance.salsalabs.org/racialjusticemarch2020/index.html>

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Patricia Foster, Victim Witness Program Coordinator



Share a little about your educational and professional background.

In the past 27 years, I have been involved in advocacy services for victims in various positions. It all started with a professor suggesting the YWCA Women's Advocacy Program as a work study placement while pursuing

a degree from VCU in Administration of Justice and a specialty in Community Statistics. I have continued in the victims' services field ever since then, with the exception of a couple of years as a Home Economist.

What is your role at DCJS?

I currently serve as the Victim Witness Grant Program Coordinator. In this role, I provide oversight and management of the Victim Witness Assistance Grant Program, which includes planning and monitoring state and federal funding to local and statewide organizations to ensure and expand crime victim services across Virginia in a manner consistent with federal and state guidelines.

Why were you interested in working for Victims Services at DCJS?

I wanted to share my experiences in serving victims of crime. I wanted to bring my knowledge of working in rural and metropolitan Victim Witness Programs to a statewide platform. The experiences I had as a sub grantee has

complimented enhancing the services required of Victim Witness Programs and other similar type projects.

What do you enjoy most about your work at DCJS?

There is something new to discover, rediscover, or learn every day. Every aspect of the positions I have held at DCJS build on one another. You always have something to look forward to each day.

What has been your proudest accomplishment at DCJS?

Being involved with energetic Divisions that have made accomplishments together as a team to further enhance services to crime victims.

Prior to working at DCJS, what is the most unusual or interesting job you have had?

In high school, I counted people as they entered the movie theater. I learned about movie reviews, audience preferences, and marketing trends and reports, while enjoying free popcorn and soda.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A teacher and *Quincy, M.E. (Medical Examiner)*.

If you could only vacation one place for the rest of your life, where would it be and why?

Virginia of course! I like to enjoy all four seasons. Well, here recently I have had to settle for three of the four.

What would you title the autobiography of your life?

I Strongly Suggest...

Helpful DCJS Victims Services Links:

[Victims Services Grants](#)

[Grants Management Resources](#)

[Forms](#)

[Publications](#)

[Professional Standards](#)

[Victims Services Staff](#)

SAVE THE DATE — UPCOMING EVENTS

April 8

Violations: Complex Sexual Assault Cases
Fredericksburg, Virginia

April 10

Enhancing the Criminal Justice Response to Domestic Violence
Hampton, Virginia

May 8

The Seven Steps to Thriving After Abuse: Empowering Victims to Take the Journey from Survivor to Thriver
Norfolk, Virginia

May 19-20

Psychological and Spiritual First Aid for Crisis Responders
Virginia Beach, Virginia