

Innovative Approaches to Enhancing Safety, Justice and Healing for Victims, by Diane Barker Harold

I was a DV victim in the late 70's and at that time, the attitude was DV is to be behind the home's closed doors. No victim advocacy was conducted back then. In the early 80's is when victim services and DV /SA services began. The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) was established by the 1984 Victims of Crime Act to oversee diverse programs that benefit victims of crime.

The National Crime Victims' Rights Week was established in a Presidential Executive Order by President Ronald Reagan in 1981.

In 1982 I was one of the founding mothers of the DV/SA program where I live in Oklahoma which is still in operation. I also served as a coordinator of crisis line volunteers and victim advocate. I have served crime victims for over 30 years in many different ways such as an advocate, program manager, elected district attorney, and providing training and technical assistance for OVC tribal grantees. I have always worked in Indian Country as an attorney, AG, victim program manager, and tribal judge. I am a member of the Cherokee Nation, serve as the Attorney for the Tribal Council and on the tribe's victim task force advisory member, am the chief Judge for the Pawnee Nation and primarily am the Victim Training Specialist for Unified Solutions Tribal Community Development Group who is a T&TA provider for OVC tribal victim grantees (have been with Unified Solutions for over 10 years). Not bragging but telling this to confirm my knowledge about this topic.

Significant Needs of Crime Victims

- -Victims Need Help
- -Victims Need to Feel Safe
- -Victims Need to Express Their Emotions
- -Victims Need to Know What Comes Next
- -Victims Need to Heal

(1st STAGE OF VICTIMIZATION includes an initial reaction may include shock, fear, anger, helplessness, disbelief and guilt

The trauma of victimization is a direct reaction to the aftermath of crime. Crime victims suffer a tremendous amount of physical and psychological trauma. The primary injuries victims suffer can be grouped into three distinct categories: physical, financial and emotional. When victims do not receive the appropriate support and intervention in the aftermath of the crime, they suffer "secondary" injuries.

All this info reflects the needs to Enhance Safety, Justice and Healing for Crime Victims.

***SAFETY:**

Safety planning for crime victims which is conducted by victim advocacy activities.

Notice of status of offenders such as if they are incarcerated or released from jails such as VINE Victim Information & Notification Everyday Programs.

Helping victims find new jobs since domestic violence often impacts finance and incomes for victims. (Wiconi sample)

Another safety item is establishing safety for crime victims in courts during case hearings when the offender is also there.

Safety can also be protective orders and assistance to stop victim stalking and victim shelters (adults are DV shelters and youth are other types of youth shelters)

SAFETY SHOULD BE ENHANCED FOR CRIME VICTI WITH DISABILITIES OF ALL AGES AND FOR OTHER CRIME VICTIMS OF ALL AGES WHETHER ADULTS, YOUTH VICTIMS OR ELDERS.

***JUSTICE:**

Two justice topics are civil and criminal justice.

Civil justice is when there are times that victims can file a civil law suit against an offender. (Read some items from OK Civil Justice Brochure)

Civil Justice can include State Crime Victim Compensation and it is available to tribal victims and tribal victim services should collaborate with state crime victim comp programs so they know the procedures.

Criminal justice is how offenders of victims are held accountable and also creating brochures and documents for crime victims for their knowledge and understanding of how court systems work and establish positive relationships with victims and prosecutors by victim advocates.

***HEALING FOR VICTIMS:**

The trauma of victimization is a direct reaction to the aftermath of crime. Crime victims suffer a tremendous amount of physical and psychological trauma. The primary injuries victims suffer can be grouped into three distinct categories: physical, financial and emotional. When victims do not receive the appropriate support and intervention in the aftermath of the crime, they suffer "secondary" injuries.

Cultural awareness is the understanding that culture impacts an individual's perspective and their experience of victimization. Cultural relevance puts cultural knowledge and skill into action, making an individual victim service program relevant to the victims it serves. Non-tribal service providers who serve tribal victims should also have cultural healing knowledge.

This will include different types of healing, primarily cultural healing such as Healing in the Arts and Talking Circles and will discuss different types that we have seen our grantees conduct in the past. There should be establishment of collaboration between victim advocates and medical professionals so medical professionals understand types of victimizations, etc.

Healing may also be through religious healing if that is the healing option a victim would seek to have. When I was DA I had partnerships with both tribal and religious people to provide personal healing based upon what a victim needed. Had many homicides during my 8 years of service and would have these healers come to homicide crime scenes if families and survivors were there.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first applied to military veterans who experienced psychological trauma while serving in combat. Researchers are now applying this syndrome to crime victim. Being a victim of crime does not necessarily mean that an individual will develop PTSD. If victims receive appropriate crisis intervention, the chances of developing PTSD are reduced. Some recognizable symptoms of PTSD are:

- **Sleeping disorders/continuous nightmares;**
- **Constant flashbacks/intrusion of thoughts;**
- **Extreme tension and anxiety;**
- **Irritability/outbursts of anger;**
- **Non-responsiveness or lack of involvement with the external world;**
- **Prolonged feelings of detachment or estrangement of others; and**
- **Memory trouble.**

All of these show the need for physical and psychological and emotional healing.

It is an honor for all of us to serve crime victims. I have seen so many great tribal programs and how creative many are in serving crime victims such as safety, justice and healing. Thanks to everyone here for your dedication and commitment to serving crime victims and now some of you will be awarded by a Bonnie Heavy Runner award.