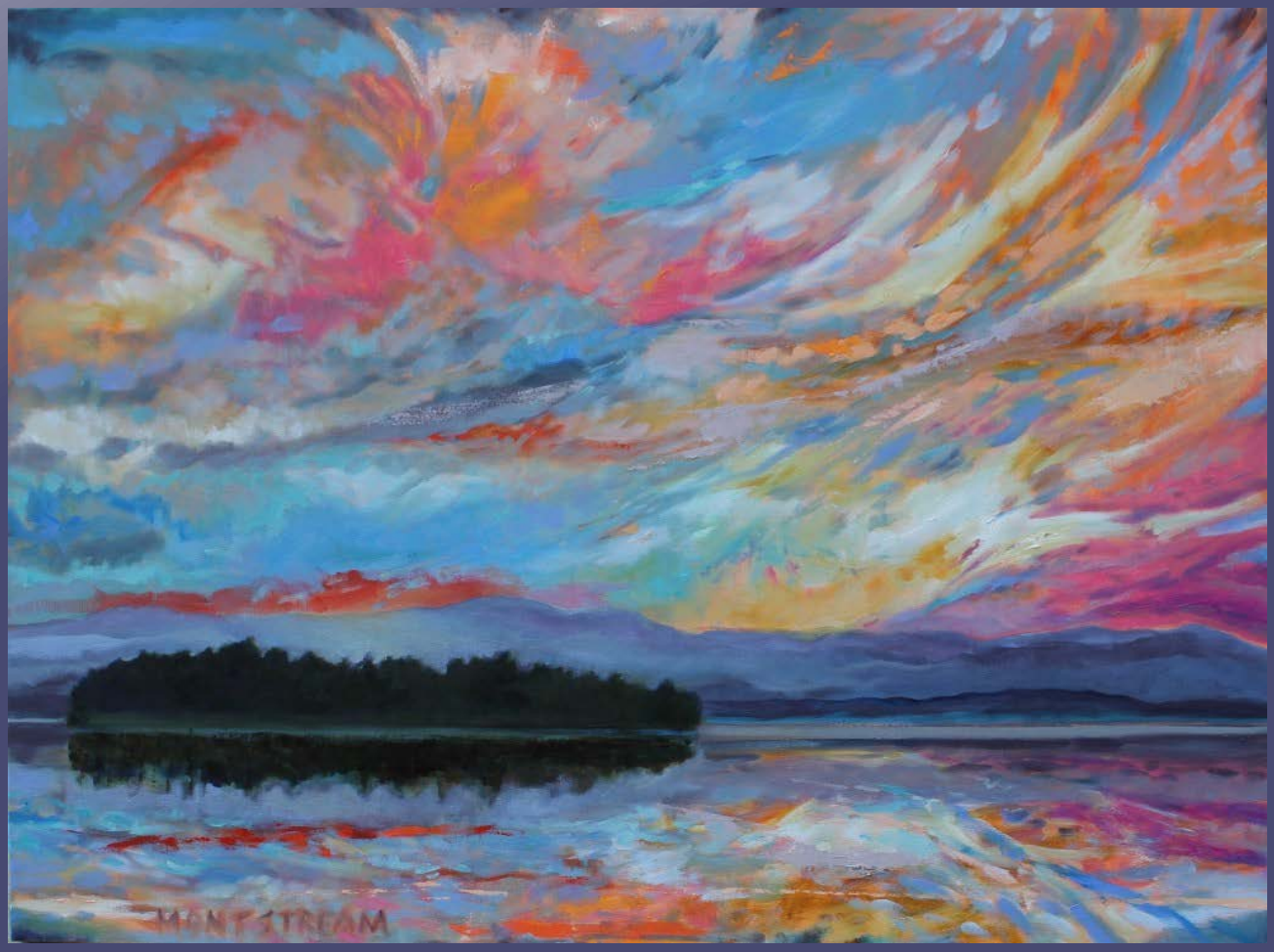
Building Parallel Justice
A Guide from Burlington, Vermont



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Katharine Montstream - in the spirit of Community Justice

Burlington Community Justice Center
Parallel Justice Program for Victims of Crime

Instead of asking victims to seek justice solely through the criminal justice process, we instead ask victims to define the problems they face—and then, we do our best to address them. In this new world, there would be a victim-oriented justice process that would kick in with the occurrence of a crime and attend to the needs of victims of all crime, violent and non-violent.

Susan Herman
Former Executive Director
National Center for Victims of Crime

Keynote Address
National Crime Victims Rights Week
October 25, 2002
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A Note from Susan Herman

I am honored by the invitation to write an introduction to this impressive guide documenting the implementation of Parallel Justice principles in Burlington, Vermont. I have been privileged to be associated with this initiative over the past 15 years, beginning with the kick-off conference in 2002. Reflecting on this remarkable journey, one conclusion is clear: while several communities have implemented Parallel Justice principles, no jurisdiction anywhere in the country has been as successful in developing a deep, sustainable, community-wide commitment to Parallel Justice for victims of crime.

At the core of the Burlington story is an unwavering belief that victims of crime deserve justice, and that society has an obligation to provide a comprehensive communal response to the people who have been harmed by crime. After a couple of years of careful planning, the Center for Crime Victim Services, the Burlington Community Justice Center, and the Burlington Police Department launched their Parallel Justice initiative with public endorsements from both the governor of Vermont and the mayor of Burlington. Soon after, they mounted a sophisticated advertising campaign explaining some of the new ways the community would support victims, boldly announcing a new day for victims of crime, and touting "Justice, Burlington Style." From that moment on, there was no turning back. Every aspect of Parallel Justice in Burlington has grown deep roots. Even as years have passed and Burlington has seen the inevitable turnover of leadership in government agencies and nonprofits, the active involvement of top-level government and community leaders has never wavered.

The Burlington experience, carefully documented here, provides useful lessons for jurisdictions wanting to reimagine justice for victims of crime. Every page has practical Considers and useful examples of creative ways to bring Parallel Justice principles to life. But simply enumerating and adopting these specific suggestions would miss a larger, more important insight. One of the most powerful lessons to be learned from the Burlington story is that full embrace of Parallel Justice requires careful planning, full engagement of all stakeholders in both the private and public sectors, and relentless focus on systemic change. Providing justice to victims and addressing the harms they have suffered as Burlington does requires not only treating victims better within the criminal justice process, it means developing more meaningful responses throughout a wider range of government agencies, nonprofit organizations and community institutions. Simply put, the structure and provision of "victim services" has been revamped in Burlington. And, most importantly, the concept of justice has been entirely redefined.

In my view, this implementation guide provides the national network of victim advocates and justice reformers plenty to ponder, because Burlington has broken new ground in advancing the cause of justice. I applaud Burlington for its pioneering work helping victims of crime rebuild their lives. I encourage the readers of this guide to think about the many ways Parallel Justice principles can be applied in their community, borrowing from Burlington, but also exploring other applications of those principles. Just as Burlington has shown the way, others can now define the next frontier.

Susan Herman

Preface

In summer 2008, I joined the staff of the Burlington Community Justice Center as a Parallel Justice Specialist. In the years since, "paradigm shift" has stubbornly remained at the top of my work plan, despite repeated forays in that direction -- many of them successful ones. Considering that Burlington has arguably gone the furthest in creating a parallel justice system for victims of crime, one that is exclusively focused on meeting their needs and improving access to existing resources. Because this effort was well underway by the time I joined the program, it didn't seem as audacious when I first added it to my "to do" list.

Thanks to a fortuitous meeting with a pair of restorative justice practitioners from Australia, I encountered a conceptual framework for making broad, system-wide changes such as those at the heart of Parallel Justice. At a conference in the summer of 2014[1], I heard Peta Blood and Margaret Thorsborne speak at length about what is needed to make change "stick" and how theory can inform more effective interventions at both interpersonal and organizational levels. Building on the work of organizational change guru John Kotter,[2] they describe a framework that is flexible enough to assess where you are, offer guidance for where to begin making changes, and encourage thoughtful, strategic choices about how to proceed.

It is not necessary to follow this change process to the letter. You will likely have parts of its recommended process already in place before you even open this guide. Furthermore, some parts of the process will be more relevant to your situation and the changes you decide to effect than others. The intention behind including this framework for making lasting change is to help organize your understanding of *where you are*, *where you want to go, and what it will take to get there.* This is based on our firm belief that, just as every individual's experience of crime is different, and creates needs unique to their situation, so too are the needs of every community seeking to address the impacts of crime.

Hopefully the questions posed in this Implementation Guide, combined with the perspective of what we've learned in Burlington along the way, will help you discern what will work best in *your* community and plot a course to get there. With each community that uses this method of combining inquiry and intention to make lasting changes, we move closer to a society that recognizes victims and survivors of crime as the resilient, empowered and unique individuals they are. And that is how we will change the paradigm: one person and one community at a time.

Lorraine Banbury
Burlington, VT

[1] www.uvm.edu/conferences/restorativejustice/restorative-justice-program.pdf
[2] www.kotterinternational.com/

Introduction

"What is Parallel Justice?" is a question we often hear as staff of the Burlington, Vermont Parallel Justice program—the longest-running and best-known program of its kind nationwide. There are many different ways to answer this question, of course, depending on who is asking and how much time they have. In order to actually be useful, however, the answer needs to be relevant to the asker's interests -- and engaging without being overwhelming. In essence, that is the balance we tried to achieve in writing this Guide.

In 2003, Burlington was selected as one of three locations in the United States to pilot a Parallel Justice program. Of the three initial sites, Burlington had the lowest population and was the only project in which a local law enforcement agency and a community-based organization joined together to implement Susan Herman's vision. This joint ownership of the idea and shared responsibility for implementation plays a significant part in the Burlington program's ongoing success. Applying some of the lessons we learned about this partnership may increase the likelihood of success in similar endeavors in other locations.

Crime affects the entire fabric of a community and requires a collaborative, cohesive effort to address. Supporting crime victims is not an issue "owned" by any single agency, and this belief is central to the Burlington program's success. Parallel Justice delivers practical results—including cost savings and crime prevention —that nearly every stakeholder can get behind, from the realms of social services to criminal justice.

We recommend engaging others in collaborative planning by emphasizing inquiry and curiosity. Taking the time to create a shared vision and build relationships before you ever call a victim or solicit a single business donation may seem process-heavy, but it has been crucial to the success of our Parallel Justice program for more than twelve years. Even in these lean economic times communities in Vermont are implementing new Parallel Justice programs; this is largely due to investment in cultivating relevant partnerships at the very start.

Using This Guide

While this guide is designed for those interested in designing a Parallel Justice response of their own, this endeavor does not belong solely to victims' services professionals. People who may benefit from this guide include:

- Community members who want to help neighbors recover after a crime;
- Practitioners in restorative justice interested in additional approaches to address the harm caused by crime;

- Academics interested in how one community has translated the Parallel Justice philosophy into action;
- Social service agencies considering supports and services akin to those offered in Burlington;
- Criminal justice and law enforcement personnel who want to improve services to victims;
- Victim service providers who want to improve efficacy via the Parallel Justice lens;
- Victims and survivors invested in improving the systems they encountered during and after experiencing a crime.

How This Guide is Organized

Over the years, various communities have requested a roadmap to re-create a replica of Burlington's Parallel Justice program, while we wanted to empower communities to assess their own Parallel Justice needs and goals without a "cookie cutter" approach. Interestingly enough, our work with victims helped us realize we could, and should, do both. A victim may imagine what could be helpful in their situation after hearing an example of how we supported other victims in similar situations. In the same way, we hope that sharing details about our program can help you imagine your own.

We have put a lot of thought into writing about our version of Parallel Justice in a way that encourages others to explore how to apply the theory of Parallel Justice to their communities, while providing enough information to make that a meaningful exercise. As a result, we've structured this guide as we would a training or workshop on Parallel Justice.

Section I: An Innovative Idea Meets an Innovative City sets the stage for a common understanding of what Parallel Justice is. It provides a definition of Parallel Justice as well as background for how the project came to be based in Burlington.

Section II: The Essential Components of Parallel Justice is an in-depth look at the services Burlington's Parallel Justice program offers. We focus on the details of three major functions of the program: emotional support; information, referral and advocacy; and financial assistance and outline key considerations for each of these program areas.

Section III: Turning Principles into Practice invites you to imagine how you could apply Parallel Justice principles to meet the needs of your own community. It presents a process for making lasting, system-wide change in designing and advancing a vision of your own.

Section IV: Appendices is a collection of our policies, practices and procedures. It includes tools, resources, forms, and other documents from the Burlington program's library for you to adapt to suit your needs.

A Note on Language

Throughout this guide, we use the word "victim" for consistency, and to maintain the connection to Susan Herman's original vision. However, this label is not one that is universally used by people who have experienced crime. For many, the word "survivor" acknowledges the journey from trauma to reclaiming one's own power. "Co-victim" or "survivor of homicide victim" is a term used sometimes to describe those who have lost a loved one to homicide. There is also "witness" or "affected party"[3] to describe those who don't recognize the word "victim" in their experience at all.

Tip: Sensitivity

Pay close attention to the words used by the individuals and groups you work with, and mirror that language when speaking with them.

Another nuance is added when describing working relationships. In the social services world, the preferred terms can run the gamut from "customer" to "consumer" or "client" to "patient." We use the term "client" in this guide to describe those with whom we work in an ongoing way. However, when working with service providers from another field it helps to be sensitive to possible differences in semantics by simply asking "How do the people you serve like to be addressed?"

Some of Our Mottos

As the Burlington program evolved over the years, we found certain phrases to be helpful shorthand to remind us of the lessons we've learned. They include:

- When bad things happen, it's good that Parallel Justice is here.
- You don't need money to make Parallel Justice happen.
- You don't have to reinvent the wheel.
- Change is hard.
- Clichés are sometimes true.
- Meet others where they are at.
- Do not use a cookie-cutter approach.

[3] The terms, "affected party" or "impacted party," are often used in restorative justice work to describe the people who experience a crime. The corresponding term, "responsible party," is often used instead of "perpetrator" or "offender" to make clear that person's obligation to make amends.

- Listening is often enough.

Section I: An Innovative Idea Meets an Innovative City

Although Burlington is Vermont's largest city, at 40,000 people it is smaller than many mid-sized towns in the United States. Our small size gives us an advantage in terms of our community's spirit and cohesion. The central role that interpersonal and inter-agency relationships play in the success of Parallel Justice in Burlington is one that is applicable everywhere.

Our program is a partnership of the Burlington Police Department, the Burlington Community Justice Center (a division of Burlington's Community and Economic Development Office), and the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services. The program officially began in 2006 to deliver a more comprehensive response to victims of crime, separate from what they might (or might not) receive from the established criminal justice system. Parallel Justice in Burlington aims to fill gaps in existing services and resources, with a strong focus on assisting underserved victims.

The Visionary Behind Parallel Justice

The concept of Parallel Justice was developed by Susan Herman, who served as Executive Director of the National Office for Victims of Crime from 1997 to 2004. From this vantage point, she saw that the criminal justice system's available assistance and resources for victims are inaccessible simply because many crimes are not reported to law enforcement. For the crimes that are, the perpetrator is rarely caught or convicted.[4] Moreover, many key services for crime victims are tied to a criminal justice system that was designed to respond to offenders. For example, you are *only* eligible for financial compensation if you report the crime to law enforcement; you can *only* receive services from a state-based Victim's Advocate if the offender is being prosecuted; and you can request Restitution *only* if there is a criminal conviction.

As with many revolutionary ideas, Herman's was both simple and profound: to properly address the needs of crime victims, a *parallel* system of justice is needed, independent of law enforcement responses and court proceedings—but also relating to the criminal justice system when they overlap. She presents this theory in her book, ***Parallel Justice for Victims of Crime*** (Herman, 2010). In the book, Herman calls for an updated understanding of justice: one where community obligations to support and restore victims of crime are just as important as accountability and consequences are for perpetrators. Parallel Justice also calls for a fair and

[4] See Felson, M. (2002): *Fallacies About Crime in Crime & Justice in America: Present Realities and Future Prospects,* Second Edition. Wilson R. Palacios, Paul F. Cromwell, and Roger G. Dunham, eds., pp. 42-60.

just criminal justice system that treats victims appropriately. As you read more about her ideas and the experiences that inform them, it is easy to see why Herman was the recipient of the prestigious Victim Service Award in 2013 from the Office for Victims of Crime. Her vision and clarity are remarkable.

Herman distills the essence of a system dedicated to justice for victims of crime into ten "Guiding Principles." These are listed below and are downloadable online in a poster format.[5]

Parallel Justice Guiding Principles

1. Justice requires helping victims of crime rebuild their lives.
2. All victims deserve justice.
3. All victims should be presumed credible unless there is reason to believe otherwise.
4. Victims' safety should be a top priority.
5. Victims should experience no further harm.
6. Victims' rights should be implemented and enforced.
7. Victims should have opportunities to talk about their experiences and their needs.
8. Victims should be told what happened to them was wrong, and that every effort will be made to help them rebuild their lives.
9. Victims' needs should be addressed through a comprehensive, coordinated community response.
10. Decisions about how to address victims' needs should be based on sound information and research.

These principles can serve as a compass for setting your course to improve victims' services. The way in which you prioritize the principles can help inform every choice you make. When established as common values, they can unite a diverse group of stakeholders and move them forward. The principles allow a group to focus on implementation and tangible outcomes rather than theorizing about what constitutes justice.

Parallel Justice Comes to Vermont

In 2002, Susan Herman visited Vermont as the keynote speaker during National Crime Victims'

[5] paralleljustice.org/pdf/guiding_principles.pdf

Rights Week. She presented her ideas to provide Parallel Justice for victims of crime,[6] which resonated with questions our victim service providers had been asking themselves:

- Does justice for victims call for more than the arrest and the adjudication of the offender?
- What is a societal response for a victim of crime?
- What can we do to address the individual needs of victims?
- How can we provide a variety of services to all victims, and not base our responses solely on the crime itself?
- How can we ensure that victims are connected to and supported by their community after a crime, rather than becoming isolated?
- How can we respond to victims when an offender is never identified or prosecuted?

Tip: Guiding Principles

As you read the Guiding Principles, notice what aspects of Parallel Justice you might address first. Who is already doing this work or applying these principles, even if they don't call it "Parallel Justice?" After reading the Guiding Principles, consider what appeals to you about the prospect of applying Parallel Justice to your community.

[6] www.pjburlington.org/speech12-2000.pdf

Section II: Turning Principles Into Practice

There are many ways to support victims that are in keeping with the principles of Parallel Justice. As a pilot site we were extremely ambitious in the variety of services we sought to provide: access and comprehensive services for all victims, regardless of crime. Here is how Vermont first put those ideas into action.

A Snapshot of Parallel Justice in Action in Burlington

The Burlington Parallel Justice program consists of three components chosen after a comprehensive assessment of assets and challenges. The first is the presence of two Parallel Justice Specialists, housed intentionally in two different locations, who provide direct service to victims. The second is the **Victims' Fund**, which provides financial assistance to victims on a limited basis, and **Resource Bank** of donated goods and services from the community. The third is the **Parallel Justice Commission**, which hears directly from victims of crime and uses this information to address systemic change.

Since there is no one way to implement Parallel Justice, you might choose to replicate only one of these components, or none of them, or develop completely different initiatives to support the Parallel Justice Principles.

One of the two full-time Parallel Justice Specialists works at the Burlington Police Department, with access to their records management system to review all complaints reported to the police. He focuses his attention on reaching out to victims in incidents where other system advocates have not already responded. Many cases handled by this individual are property crimes such as vandalism and theft, as well as burglaries and some assaults.

A second full-time Parallel Justice Specialist works at the Burlington Community Justice Center. Because of other services offered at the Community Justice Center (CJC), many people hear about our program through word-of-mouth and might walk-in to ask for assistance. The phone number listed on all of our promotional materials is for this location, which was done to make it easier for people to access the program if they have any reluctance about going to the police for assistance. The CJC-based Specialist often hears cases that have additional complexity and/or barriers that have made it difficult for a victim to access services. One of the most important services we offer is the willingness to listen and validate a victim's experience, and help them identify where they want to focus their energy.

Burlington: Project History

We began providing direct services to victims after four years of community organizing and planning. For perspective on how long a well-designed and sustainable effort can take, here is a timeline of our project from gestation to implementation:

2001

- Susan Herman's speech at a National Press Club Luncheon suggests a potential new course for victim services in the United States.

2002

- Susan Herman presents the keynote address for Vermont's commemoration of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), "Parallel Justice: A New Vision of Justice for Crime Victims."
- The Center for Crime Victim Services Special Projects Coordinator meets with leaders from the Burlington Community Justice Center and the Burlington Police Department and forms the Parallel Justice Partnership ("the Partnership").

2003 – 2004

- Burlington applies for, and is selected as, one of three pilot locations for Parallel Justice programs nationwide.
- The Partnership meets with Burlington-based stakeholders to determine gaps in who is receiving services from current programs. Statewide survey and national statistics are reviewed to verify conclusions of the stakeholders.
- The Partnership attends meetings with other pilot sites to study the Guiding Principles of Parallel Justice and connect them to community needs assessment and statistics, define partnership roles and solidify working groups, and strategize for fundraising.

2005

- The Partnership works with a consultant to create a sample grant application and identify potential funding sources.

2006

- Start-up funds are awarded through two grants: one for operating expenses, the other for a victim's fund to reimburse victims' crime-related expenses.
- First Parallel Justice Specialist begins working at the Burlington Community Justice Center. This is the official start-date of Burlington's Parallel Justice Program.
- Recruitment begins for the Parallel Justice Commission.
- A second Parallel Justice Specialist is hired and housed within the Burlington Police Department.

2007

- Initial meeting of the Parallel Justice Commission.

2009

- A three-year review of program efficacy is conducted using a professionally-designed logic model.

2011

- National recognition by International Association of Chiefs of Police for Innovation in Victim Services.
- Clark Sheldon, Parallel Justice Specialist at the Burlington Police Department, is recognized with the Community Advocate of the Year at the Vermont Victim Service Awards for NCVRW

2015

- Sharon Davis, Special Projects Coordinator at the Center for Crime Victim Services is recognized with the Career Achievement Award at the Vermont Victim Service Awards during NCVRW.

2016

- Burlington celebrates ten years of providing innovative, coordinated services to victims of crime through the Parallel Justice Program.

2018

- Lorraine Banbury, Parallel Justice Specialist at the Burlington Community Justice Center, is recognized with the Community Advocate Award at the Vermont Victim Service Awards for NCVRW.

Example of a Parallel Justice Case

A Parallel Justice staff member or trained volunteer calls a victim whose car window was broken and wallet stolen while their car was parked at their apartment building.

> *"Hi, I'm a volunteer from Parallel Justice. I work with the Burlington Police Department and I'm calling to follow up on your car break-in on Monday night. Is this a good time to talk?"*

We let the victim know we are sorry they experienced a crime in Burlington, we ask if they need help with immediate logistics such as having their car repaired or getting to work, and we ask if they have any specific safety concerns. If they don't have car insurance to cover the cost to fix their window and the expense is a financial hardship, we discuss programs that can help cover all or most of the cost or repairs. We might arrange towing with a company that bills the program directly so the victim can focus their time and energy on replacing the contents of their wallet. Depending on what was taken, we might give them information on how to replace a stolen driver's license or passport, and on how to limit the possibility of becoming a victim of identity theft.

Our program supports victims in a range of ways, and this flexible approach starts at the very beginning. We deliberately created multiple "onramps" to access services so that victims do not have to report a crime to the police in order to receive assistance. This is a crucial difference between Parallel Justice and most state- or federally-funded compensation programs. Sometimes the assistance we provide is focused on meeting tangible needs. At other times, we provide emotional support for the individual to process what happened. Everything we do is based on empowering the individual to make their own choices and reclaim control over their experience.

The Three-Pronged Approach to Parallel Justice

We generally describe our program as having three prongs: validation and emotional support; information and referral; and financial assistance (Victim's Fund)/ Resource Bank.

Prong One: Validation and Support

The Healing Power of Being Heard

When people first learn about Burlington's version of Parallel Justice, they often focus on the Victims' Fund as the piece they most want to replicate in their community. However, we have found that the initial phone call itself can be the most powerful intervention. In fact, listening and expressing empathy for what happened is often sufficient, and no further information or referral services are needed. This simple expression of concern often has the power to completely change someone's perspective on what has happened to them.

Tip: Listen First

The single most important thing Parallel Justice does, even surpassing financial assistance, is simply asking "How are you?" to the person who experienced a crime, and then listening to the answer.

Listening to someone tell their story, even briefly, can validate their experience by simply giving them the opportunity to voice what happened. It shows that someone cares, which can be a powerful affirmation for a person who has experienced a random criminal act. It can also counteract the isolation victims sometimes impose upon themselves.

Redirecting Self-Blame

When trying to cope with an unprovoked, random act that has changed their world in a moment, victims sometimes focus on what they could have done differently to have prevented it. *"If only I hadn't done x or y, this would never have happened."* This is a common way to try to reclaim a feeling of control over what happened, but it shifts responsibility away from the perpetrator where it belongs and onto the victim. When we hear this, we gently emphasize that what happened was not the victim's fault. As an example, even if a bike was left unattended, or a door left unlocked, theft requires that someone else making the choice to steal. Victim blaming is most clearly visible in sexual assault defense strategies that focus on what a victim might have been wearing or doing prior to the assault. When speaking with victims, we make it a point to reiterate that the responsibility for what happened belongs to the perpetrator by saying, *"What happened to you was wrong."*

The Power of Empathy

When we reach out to a victim of crime, the first thing we say after identifying ourselves and the program is, "We're sorry this happened to you." We then ask how they are doing, extend an invitation to identify any concerns they have; and try to address their concerns. We often find that when we speak with a victim directly (rather than leaving a voicemail message or sending a letter, email, etc.), they are so surprised and heartened that someone cares that they don't want or need any other assistance. We often hear responses such as:

> *"Are you for real?! Wow. That's amazing."*
> *"I'm fine, but thank you so much for calling. "It makes me feel better just knowing a program like this exists!"*

Feedback from client surveys yield similar statements. One common theme is that hearing from Parallel Justice helped take the negative experience of being a victim of crime and turned it into a positive one that reaffirmed their faith in humanity and in their community.

Emotional Support and Reflective Listening

When reaching out to a victim of crime, we want to let them know that we care, and we ask about any concerns with which we might be able to help. We do this using reflective listening, and train all volunteers in this skill. In our experience, active listening means:

- Responding with acceptance and empathy;
- Restating and clarifying what the victim has said;
- Responding to what is personal rather than to what is impersonal or abstract;
- Trying to understand the feelings contained in what the victim is saying, not just the facts or ideas;
- Not telling the victim what you believe or think they should do;
- Listening more than talking.

We find that the foundation of being a skillful practitioner includes:

- Being warm, curious, and acknowledging;
- Reinforcing the resilience of each person, without ignoring their pain;
- Being transparent about the limits of how this program can and cannot help.

Validation, Not Verification

Our goal when talking to a victim is to validate the individual's experience rather than determine the veracity of what may have been reported to law enforcement. Victims of

violent crimes are often asked to tell their story repeatedly. We are not listening to try verify or fact-check their story and therefore do not direct the kind of information they tell us, or in what order. For many people, simply telling the story of what happened in their own way can be tremendously helpful in moving beyond its impacts. We want to ensure that if they tell us their story, it is because they want to be heard, not because they must relive the experience in order to receive services or resources. When discussing incidents that are clearly upsetting for the victim, we always say:

> *"You are welcome to tell me as much or as little about what happened as you want. My job is just to listen and, if you want, to help you figure out what might be helpful as you deal with what happened."*

We also try to validate a victim's emotional responses. A burglary victim may have trouble sleeping after someone has broken into their home. An assault victim might be uncomfortable walking by the place where they were assaulted. Victims experience complex reactions as they struggle to understand what happened – anger about what was done to them and how it impacted their lives, and perhaps some compassion for the person who made criminal choices. There can be societal pressure to "forgive and forget," sometimes even before a victim has a chance to experience sadness or anger. Normalizing this range of responses is a key part of the emotional triage our program provides. If someone is concerned that their reaction might be out of proportion to what is healthy or normal, we might help them assess that for themselves. If desired, we share a list of local mental health providers who specialize in trauma.

Considerations When Providing Emotional Support

While a real-time conversation is often the best way to connect, sometimes sending email, or "snail mail" can be as effective. For example, we began sending letters to victims whose bikes were stolen. This allowed us to focus our phone time on victims of other crimes, and gave bike theft victims resources and information they are most likely to need. This is a way to convey the message that the community cares, even if they don't receive a phone call.

It is imperative to provide adequate training and regular, ongoing supervision for the individuals who contact victims. Even if you only plan to follow up on "low-level" or non-violent crimes, the impact on people's lives can be dramatic and destabilizing. It is not uncommon to call someone who has experienced a property crime and hear about other crimes they have previously experienced, or learn about the overwhelming challenges they faced before the crime occurred. There is an ethical obligation to both the victims you serve and the people contacting them to provide consistent, effective support. This is essential to avoid causing further harm.

Information is power

Whenever we contact a victim, we naturally hope that this has been their only experience of crime. Unfortunately, we know from statistics and anecdotal experience that many people suffer repeat victimization. By addressing as many of the individual's needs that a crime creates or exacerbates, we hope to lessen their vulnerability to future victimization. Furthermore, having assisted others with similar concerns, we are able to condense that knowledge and experience into best practices and resources suited to help with different types of crime. Providing supportive listening and practical information and referrals goes a long way.

Focus on Empowerment

People who have been victims of crime frequently feel a loss of safety and control over their environment. This is why we use an **empowerment model** when working with our clients and offer choices at every junction. We start with the first phone call when we ask:

> *"Is now an okay time to talk?"*

When working with victims to identify their needs and priorities, we follow the individual's lead and try to create frequent opportunities for them to decide what works best for them as they move forward. This is an empowering antidote to the "out-of-their-control" experience of crime. We also developed specific, open-ended questions to help identify some common impacts a crime can have on a victim, to help them identify where they want to focus their time and energy.

The Ripple Effect: The impact of crime is frequently described as a "ripple effect." One unfortunate experience can result in other difficulties that compound the impact of the crime, setting off a devastating economic chain reaction. Here are a few examples:

CASE 1: A warehouse worker's car tires are slashed and their affordable car insurance does not cover the damage. They need to pay $500 or more to replace all four tires on a four-wheel-drive vehicle, a necessity to drive safely in the winter. Working at a minimum wage job (a job that they need the car to get to) this is an enormous expense. Depending on how long it takes him to raise the money and how understanding his employer is, he could potentially lose his job as a result of the vandalism, and along with it, his ability to pay for housing and other bills.

CASE 2: A chef who works at a local restaurant is assaulted and her hand is broken. She needs both hands to do her job, so she must take time off from work. Her employer doesn't provide paid time off and she does not qualify for medical leave, so she misses out on wages and falls behind in paying bills. The restaurant must hire a replacement and eventually the victim of the

assault loses her job. Without a good reference from her previous employer, finding another job can also be difficult

The processes designed to aid victims can also create additional burdens. A victim of a DUI car crash needs to find out from police dispatch where their car is now, and then needs a ride to the impound lot to pick it up. In addition, they also have an unexpected trip to the emergency room to get checked out. An insensitive or inadequate response from any of these service providers can be the proverbial "insult added to injury." When working with victims, it is important to acknowledge the impact of problems such as barriers to accessing services, inadequate resources, and/or the challenge of navigating unfamiliar systems. Using the empowerment model, we follow the victim's lead on if/how they want try to address those systemic problems

Tip: Leverage relationships with allied professionals

Talk with your local domestic violence service providers about strategies for safety planning with victims/survivors. They are often the experts in this area and may be able to provide training for your staff and/or volunteers.

Safety Planning

Another way we help victims regain a sense of control help is through safety assessment and planning. Partnering with local law enforcement to determine home security, or reconnecting with the investigating officer to create a plan to reduce chances for future victimization, can reduce a victim's anxiety. If victims are concerned they were specifically targeted, we work with them to identify and address those concerns. When it comes to safety planning, the value of the plan depends on identifying realistic options that can be useful to the individual.

Prong Two: Providing Information and Referral to Resources

Creating a Resource Guide

A resource guide can identify useful options for victims. For instance, someone whose wallet is stolen may be concerned about identity theft. You may provide a guide of reputable online resources that explain how to set up credit freezes or fraud alerts, or the web link to the Department of Motor Vehicles that describes how to replace a stolen license. Burglary victims may be directed to Craigslist and eBay, or to a list of local pawnshops to help locate stolen items. For victims of auto vandalism, the directory may also include a list of well-respected auto repair businesses who agree to prioritize faster service to crime victims when possible.

Essential Elements of a Resource Guide

- **Resources specific to the crimes you will respond to;**
- **Contact information for area service agencies;**
- **A list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) that crime victims may ask;**
- **Resource information about non-criminal issues that arise, such as housing code enforcement, parking tickets, and civil court proceedings;**
- **Sources for emotional support;**
- **Safety planning tips.**

Other questions and problems often arise that are not specifically related to the crime, but may have contributed to the context in which the crime was experienced. Rather than becoming experts in these fields, we access local agencies and experts through our state's 211 service directory to find information about housing (e.g. discrimination, code violations, and exploitative landlords), employment discrimination, and other civil rights violations.

Prong Three: Financial Assistance (a.k.a. The Victim's Fund)

The Victims' Fund is an easily-accessed source of money designed to quickly address victims' immediate needs, especially for reestablishing someone's safety. The Fund has four key aspects:

1. It is intended to help with losses not covered by other options like insurance or local help fund;
2. "Safety" is broadly defined by the Parallel Justice Specialist to allow flexible use of funds, rather than restricting spending to specific items;
3. Victims are experts on their experiences and are best qualified to determine if they need financial assistance;
4. A crime victim is not required to report to police in order to receive financial assistance.

Filling the Gaps

When other funds won't be available quickly enough, the Victims' Fund can cover immediate expenses, that might be reimbursed from other sources later. This is often the case when a suspect will likely be prosecuted. Vermont's Restitution Program is one of the best in the country, but it is one of the final steps in an often-lengthy criminal justice process. For that

reason, it makes sense for the Victims' Fund to cover essential, safety-related expenses up front, and then seek reimbursement if/when a restitution hearing holds the person responsible for the harm accountable.

Before using the Victims' Fund, we try to access the following resources:

- The individual's insurance policy (for losses resulting from car theft, house theft, or vandalism)
- The Vermont Victims Compensation Program[7], available to victims who have reported their crime, and for which police have found probable cause.
- The Vermont Sexual Assault Program[8], under the umbrella of the Victims Compensation Program, is a valuable resource for victims of sexual assault. Reporting to police is not a requirement of this program.
- State financial assistance funds, such as housing and economic assistance for domestic violence victims, or community assistance funds.
- Credit card "enhancement services," which provide reimbursement for stolen or damaged items purchased with a credit card within a specific time frame.

When a victim has an insurance policy that would cover crime-related losses, such as comprehensive automobile coverage that would pay to replace a smashed windshield, we cannot pay more than the deductible, even if they choose not to use their insurance. We understand that someone might not want to use their insurance coverage if they are afraid that their rates might go up or their policy might be cancelled. However, to prevent the possibility of "double dipping," we are unable to make up the difference between their deductible and the actual cost of repairs. This decision is consistent with the methods used by the Vermont Restitution Unit and other programs.

Safety Is Our Goal

The Victims' Fund is designed to act as a safety net to prevent the crime from starting a chain reaction of economic instability. For that reason, we define "safety" broadly to address not just physical security, but also financial impacts that might prevent a person from meeting their basic needs, as discussed above in the section on financial ripple effects. Two key areas where local assistance options fall short are in transportation and housing expenses.

We work with victims to help them determine what will make them feel safe again, and then

[7] www.ccvs.vermont.gov/support-for-victims/victims-compensation-program
[8] www.ccvs.vermont.gov/support-for-victims/sexual-assault-program

try to find resources to meet those needs. People's concerns can be very different, even if they have experienced similar crimes. One victim of a burglary might want to install motion detector lighting on their porch; someone else might want to move to a different apartment building or take a self-defense class. This is why we remind ourselves not to use a cookie cutter approach.

Need is Not a Number

We designed the Victims' Fund to be equitable and sustainable, based on need and the impact of the crime. This can result in different people receiving different levels of assistance, although their circumstances may appear to be similar. We do not use a formula to determine who "deserves" help from a financial standpoint. We ask the individuals whether they need the financial help is available, another opportunity to offer victims an empowering choice.

Surprisingly, our Victims' Fund expends a lot less money than one might expect. In our small city of 40,000 residents, we contact around 3,000 individuals a year. Of those, we assist 300 or so with services and support. Only 1/3 of those people -- about 100 individuals -- receive financial help. Given our annual Victims Fund budget of $15,000, that means the average payout is only $150 per person. So far, we have been able to help everyone who needs it for less than $15,000 a year. This includes some rather expensive payouts that have taken a big chunk out of our reserves.

There is sound logic to this victim-led approach in determining financial need. Some people appear to be low-income who have "rainy day" funds they are willing and able to use for unforeseen emergencies. Other people who appear to be financially successful have no savings, maxed-out credit cards, and no family or friends who can provide an emergency loan.

When we discuss the effects of crime with victims, we always look at the financial impacts. How will paying for safety-related costs prevent them from paying for other basic needs, such as rent, utilities, or groceries? When talking with people of modest means, they are often quick to refuse any help and suggest there is someone else who needs the money more. To this, we might respond, *"The Victims' Fund was created specifically to help with costs like the ones you are describing. While it is not a limitless resource, it is available to help you if you need it."*

On the other hand, as public awareness of Parallel Justice grows, people in the community sometimes hear about the program through word-of-mouth and contact us (rather than the other way around) and ask us to cover losses unrelated to safety, or where they can more readily pay the cost themselves. In those situations, we try to put both the program and our

financial assistance into context without alienating the person who experienced the crime. To this, we might respond, *"The Victims' Fund is designed to help people with safety-related expenses so they don't have to take that money away from other basic needs like rent or utilities. It is a small, limited amount of money we fundraise for each year. If you need it, it is available to help, but if you don't need to use it, there is definitely someone else who will."*

Setting Category Limits

To balance the need for both effective financial assistance and long-term fund sustainability, we averaged costs for broadly-defined categories of expenses and created spending caps based on those numbers. For example, we set transportation category limits for purchasing new tires, replacing broken car glass, or replacing a stolen bicycle (there are many bike commuters in Burlington). For basic needs, we determined a reasonable monthly cost for phone, heat, electric, and groceries. For medical needs not covered by other sources, we researched therapists' general fees, costs to replace eyeglasses broken in an assault, etc.

The program supervisor can grant a request to exceed a category limit for exceptional circumstances. In a few cases, we have spent just under $1,000 for a safe, reliable used car to replace someone's vehicle when that person had no other resources.

Tip: Sworn Statements

Both of our Parallel Justice Specialists are notaries, and other city employees can notarize a signature for free. Getting the victim's sworn statement notarized is not intended to be a financial or procedural burden, but rather a way to add a formal step to the veracity of a claim. This is our attempt to strike a balance between treating all victims as credible, and being responsible with our funders' contributions.

Documentation and Substantiation of Monetary Loss

All clients must fill out and sign our financial assistance application form that includes questions about the crime's financial impacts. Some examples of documenting financial loss are:

- A police report that mentions the loss and/or verbal verification from the investigating officer;
- A civil or criminal restraining order;
- A referral from a local organization providing victim services (including, but not limited to, sexual or domestic violence programs) attesting that the organization believes the applicant's statement is being made in good faith;
- A referral from a caseworker at the Vermont Agency of Human Services or Department of Children and Families;

- Supporting documentation from the applicant's medical professional, attorney, legal advisor, member of the clergy, support group or mental health provider;
- A sworn statement by the victim that attests to the loss and independent third-party verification of that loss an employer stating that the victim rode a bike to work every day but has been walking since the theft, or ATM or bank withdrawal receipts to substantiate the loss of stolen rent money).

Sustainability and Fundraising

Most of the expenses for which we provide reimbursements are the result of crimes where no one is arrested or convicted. However, in instances where the crime is being prosecuted, we check with the State's Attorney's (District Attorney's) Office to see if they can include reimbursement to the Victims' Fund in the Restitution Judgement Order.

Depending on which agencies are hosting your program, your access to grants or tax-deductible donations will vary. We raise money through fundraising events and by soliciting support from local donors. When fundraising, you will need to budget staff time carefully. Also, plan events that will bring in a substantial amount of money and/or connections -- hopefully, both!

Financial Record Keeping

Talk with the accounting "powers that be" who provide financial oversight for the program team, and set up a workflow that ensures due diligence when authorizing the spending of funds. Also, discuss your method of tracking expenditures and reimbursements (from donations, restitution, etc.) and the running balance.

Tip: Restitution

On your application for assistance, include a statement from the victim authorizing your program to seek restitution if a perpetrator is caught, but allow for an exception if the victim is afraid of retaliation.

Considerations When Creating a Victims' Fund and/or Resource Bank

Your program staff and advisory group should consider and develop policies to address the some of the following issues:

General questions

- What is the initial date when the fund will become available? Must a request for assistance be made within a certain time after the crime occurred, or will you be able to pay retroactively?

- What resources already exist in your community? Where are there gaps in currently available financial assistance programs?
- Will your assistance be determined by the timeline and speed of other resources becoming available? Should you require that a victim apply to other local agencies before yours?
- Will you cover only expenses that cannot be recouped in other ways? For instance, will you require proof of what insurance will and will not cover?
- Will you seek in-kind donations, discounts, and special considerations from businesses and services to meet the requests/needs of applicants?
- Will you offer financial assistance to witnesses or indirect victims of the crime?
- Will you use federal or state mileage and/or per diem rates?

Security needs

- Home safety and security (e.g. locks, alarms, security lights, etc.);
- Property repairs or replacement, such as windows and doors;
- Self-defense classes (while recognizing that self-defense skills do not guarantee safety from re-victimization);
- Moving expenses;

Basic needs connected to the crime

- Housing: assistance to pay rent or mortgage; emergency housing/motel
- Utilities: electric, water, phone, gas;
- Groceries and other essentials: food, diapers, over-the-counter medicines, prescription co-pays;
- Transportation: gas cards, taxi fares, bus pass, automobile/motorcycle/bike repair, reimbursement for travel clothing;
- Lost wages: compensation for work time lost as the applicant deals with the impact of the crime;

Other considerations

- What will be your guidelines for property repair and replacement?
- How might the program supplement gaps in health services (physical/mental)? Will you include visits to alternative health practitioners?
- How will your program address stolen money (cash, checks, traveler's checks, gift cards)?

Tax Issues

- If your organization is tax-exempt and will be paying businesses directly, plan extra time to set up vendor accounts for direct billing so they can access a copy of your tax-exempt letter or other documentation, as this can cause delays. Make sure the people who need this documentation know how to find it.
- If you are reimbursing a person directly for their expenses, will you also reimburse them for the taxes they paid?

Housing Safety and Landlord Responsibilities

- Does the owner of the building have insurance that could pay for crime-related repairs?
- Where is the line between a landlord's responsibility for providing a safe dwelling and a tenant's interest in added safety features (like an alarm system) that go beyond standard security measures?
- If the Victims' Fund pays for expenses a landlord typically is responsible for, in order to expedite service, what process will you have in place for reimbursement? If you are operating under the auspices of a municipality, how might you work with code enforcement to ensure safety needs are addressed quickly?

The Resource Bank: Building Business Partnerships

One key way to increase financial resources is by developing relationships with local businesses. Our business partners support the Parallel Justice program because they care about their community and want to help make it safer. Attracting new customers may be an extra benefit for their business, but this is not the primary consideration. We recognize these businesses' vital role in supporting victims of crime by including their names in our outreach efforts and marketing campaigns.

Tip: A Perfect Pitch

When requesting donations from a business, stop by in-person to speak directly with the owner or manager. Bring printed materials to leave behind if you don't meet them, and follow up a few days later with a phone call or email.

Discounts, Direct Billing, and Other Ways to Help

Businesses may help by prioritizing repairs for a crime victim ahead of other customers, offering to replace items at cost, or providing services at a reduced rate. Some businesses are willing to bill Parallel Justice directly and have us issue payment from the Victims' Fund, rather than the victim paying out-of-pocket and submitting receipts for reimbursement. This shifts the burden of paperwork and payment from the victim onto the business and our program, which allows the individual to focus on their needs. It also allows us to negotiate standing discounts with vendors we use often, such as bike shops, mechanics, or locksmiths.

The Resource Bank

Offering a local business' donation to a crime victim can turn the negative experience into a positive affirmation of a person's connection to their community. This is a terrific way to show community support and concern for victims when the impact of the crime is more emotional than financial. We often ask our clients what would make them feel better, and then solicit donations from a specific business based on their response. We also have a collection of gift certificates or passes from local restaurants and movie theaters that we try to replenish throughout the year. When we get gift certificates, we've learned to ask the business to waive the expiration dates so we can provide the certificates as needed.

Resource bank items we provided to victims through the years include:

- Material goods, ranging from a new mattress and bedding to artwork;
- Gift baskets with health and beauty items, local food items, or arts and crafts supplies for kids;
- Replacement for stolen items;
- Gently used and refurbished laptop or iPhone;
- Services, such as car repairs and professional cleaning;
- Gift cards for groceries, coffee, lunch;
- Haircuts, manicures, yoga classes;
- Gift certificates for a movie, performance, dinner;

- Vouchers for non-traditional therapies, such as massage or body work.

Section III: Turning Your Ideas Into Action

Those who have worked with social service systems for any length of time have likely seen well-intentioned, well-funded initiatives that failed to get traction, or that sputtered out after a promising start. Organizational change guru Jon Kotter, a former Harvard Business School professor who spent more than 40 years researching change in the business community, has identified eight common reasons why change fails:[9]

1. Complacency;
2. Lack of a guiding coalition;
3. Underestimating the power of a vision;
4. Under-communicating the vision to others;
5. Allowing obstacles to block the change;
6. Failing to create short-term wins;
7. Declaring victory too soon;
8. Neglecting to anchor the change.

Some of the items on this list probably seem obvious to you, and it's affirming that research supports the common sense of experience. More importantly, when this list is reframed as a list of things to *do* rather than to *avoid*,[10] it can be used to plot a course toward lasting, systemic change.

To overcome…	**Be sure to…**
Complacency	Make the case for change
Lack of a guiding coalition	Create teams responsible for phases of program development
Underestimating the power of a vision	Create a vision for the future
Under-communicating the vision to others	Use the vision to "capture hearts and minds"
Allowing obstacles to block the change	Remove obstacles and empower action
Failing to create short-term wins	Pick the low-hanging fruit
Declaring victory too soon	Keep the pressure on
Neglecting to anchor change	Maintain the gains

Australian Restorative Justice practitioners Peta Blood and Margaret Thorsborne presented their adaptation of this framework — which focuses on shifting the paradigm of what justice is and what it looks like in practice — at a conference in Vermont in 2014.[11] With grateful

[9] See *The 8 Step Process for Change,* by Jon Kotter for more information. www.kotterinternational.com/8-steps-process-for-leading-change

[10] This shift in perspective of restating negatives to be avoided as positives to move towards shares a similar perspective shift with the "strengths-based" approach of modern social work, appreciative inquiry organizational development and the reframing language behind cognitive behavioral theory.

[11] www.uvm.edu/conferences/restorativejustice/restorative-justice-program.pdf

acknowledgement of their work and thinking on this subject, below is an outline of how we envision building on Kotter's good work and theirs to leverage your strengths, anticipate pitfalls, and use your limited time and energy resources most wisely. Regardless of how small or grand the scope of what you are hoping to do, taking the time to walk through the steps in this framework will greatly improve your chances for success.

Part 1 - Planning and Community Assessment

In the beginning, it is extremely helpful to have a group of people to move Parallel Justice from a concept in a book through the exploration and inquiry phase. This could be an ad-hoc workgroup of representatives from different organizations, or a single entity that is conducting the initial planning phase and might include paid staff and/or volunteers. Regardless of how it is structured, a group of committed, enthusiastic, visionary people with a clear understanding of their task is critical to creating a durable foundation for the work to follow.

Convene a Planning Group who will organize and lead the initial explorations, including:

- Identifying stakeholders who will be become the program team (representatives from agencies and organizations whose work intersects with victims, or who have a role in providing services to victims of crime);
- Reading Susan Herman's book, *Parallel Justice for Victims of Crime* (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2010) and this Guide;
- Gathering information to map current crime statistics in your jurisdiction;
- Assessing community readiness/political climate (identify challenges and opportunities);
- Building a case about the unrecognized costs of crime in your community and how parallel justice can help to lower those costs;
- Engaging in dialogue with primary stakeholders to conduct a needs assessment for victims' services;
- Following up with stakeholders to share the needs assessment findings.

Making the Case for Change

Innovation begins with asking the right questions and making time to find the answers. Where does your community stand now in terms of providing support for victims of crime? Who will be your most effective partners in moving this idea forward, and who is available to do so? What current trends are calling for action and innovation? What are some underlying forces at work in your community that you can leverage to promote justice? By gaining a more complete picture of the people, place, and political climate you are working with, you can be strategic in how you use your energies. You will help create goodwill and foster buy-in later in the design

process by being thoughtful about your stakeholders and welcoming their input.

Using Data to Support the Case

It is important to identify current crime rates for reported crimes to establish a reference point when talking with community members, agencies, and stakeholders. It can also serve as a baseline for future program assessment.

Tip: Gather statistics from the start

Get these statistics early on, so you can provide an accurate view of (reported) crime rates and trends in your community when you talk with community organizations. If possible, also collect information about demographics of those reporting crimes to see who is missing or under-represented (and thus also underserved).

Some places to get information on local crime and victimization trends are:

- Uniform Crime Reports (UCR);
- Local police department statistics;
- District/State's Attorneys' Offices;
- Local university studies, or local components of larger studies;
- Community victimization survey;
- Statewide annual crime reports (Attorney General or state police);
- Annual report on victims' compensation or restitution programs (state victim services program);
- Annual reports of sexual/domestic/LGBTQ victim service programs;
- U.S. Census data (to provide background on demographics).

It is important to remember that most crimes are never reported to the police. The reasons people choose not to report a crime can range from believing there is nothing law enforcement can do (especially if the victim has no idea about who might be responsible); experiencing only minor damage (as in many vandalism cases or thefts); a sense of shame or stigma; and/or a fear of retribution from the perpetrator or even from the police (common in domestic violence and sexual assault cases). Therefore, we suggest that you refer to other studies from your community to get a sense of what is missing from the official numbers. Nationally, surveys suggest that the level of property crime is about twice that which is reported. In Vermont, a survey by the Vermont Center for Justice Research found that residents experienced three times as many aggravated and simple assaults as were reported to police. In your area, other sources of information about unreported crimes might include domestic and sexual violence agencies, and advocacy groups for underserved populations.

Assessment and Evaluation Tools

As you begin your exploration of Parallel Justice, you are likely to find that there are many ways in which you are already doing this work. Begin to translate the theory and Guiding Principles of Parallel Justice into concrete actions and behaviors. The Assessment Questionnaire in the toolkit at the end of this Guide will help you conceptualize what it means to put Parallel Justice into practice, and gain a deeper understanding of your own (or your agency's) strengths and growth areas. You may complete the Questionnaire from your own perspective as a practitioner, from the perspective of your agency or program, or from the perspective of your community. This can be a useful exercise for members of the Planning Group to find alignment with each other and build trust for the work ahead.

Factors to Consider in a Baseline Community Assessment

It is important to engage stakeholders to get their perspectives about what's working well, what could be improved, and what is missing entirely. An effective and thoughtful needs assessment is driven by what you hope to learn, followed by how to gather input and whom to ask. Being deliberate about the assessment process will help keep the conversation focused on providing useful information, even when constructive criticism is offered. Finally, a well-designed needs assessment will ensure feedback is given to participants about what was discovered.

In Burlington's planning process, we gathered statistics from both the Burlington Police Department and the Chittenden County State's Attorney's Office about the types of crimes to which they were most often responding. Burlington's assessment was built on national research from the Office for Victims of Crime, five-year project, Victim Services 2000 (VS2000), which had just been completed as the Parallel Justice Program was getting underway. This included a comprehensive survey about the level and depth of crime and its impact on Vermont victims and communities, and the survey results were cross-referenced with Burlington's crime statistics. The goal of this inquiry process was to better understand the types of victims who were not being adequately served by existing victims' services programs.

Population and neighborhood characteristics can beget different types of crimes. For instance, Burlington is a college town hosting a state university and several smaller colleges, with a yearly influx of students who bring complaints of stolen laptops, cellphones, and bicycles. College students are rarely on-guard against crimes of opportunity (a snatch-and-grab or a bike-swipe). Other communities with a large retail sector might experience more shoplifting or armed robbery. Thus, the planning group should consider whether there are groups of people who disproportionately experience crime and/or groups who are less likely to access services due to

language or other barriers. These are important considerations to keep in mind when planning a new program and whom it might serve.

Elements of the baseline assessment should include:

- Socio-economic status;
- Ethnicities;
- Races;
- Renters/owner-occupied residences;
- Business/residential properties;
- Students/families/seniors;
- Neighborhood character (urban, suburban, exurban, rural, or some combination).

Other factors may have a tremendous impact on how your initiative will be received. Precipitating events and factors to consider:

- Are there complaints from chronically underserved populations?
- Was there a recent, specific incident?
- Has there been a recent spate of a certain type of crime?
- Do gaps currently exist in victim services?
- Might victims benefit from a recent or needed change in leadership, alliances, or agency relationships?

Political Climate:

- What are the current social and political issues?
- Which local leaders are supportive of victims' issues?
- Is there a funding source that may soon be available?
- What are potential political barriers?

Positive results of a thoughtful and comprehensive needs assessment may include:

- Increasing public awareness of, and sensitivity to, victims' issues;
- Identifying potential "champions" working both inside and outside of victim services;
- Identifying under-utilized resources in the community;
- Encouraging interested organizations to become involved in project development;
- Empowering victims to identify barriers and needed improvements in systems that directly affect them.

Here are some questions to consider when designing your program:

- To which types of crimes will you respond?
- What resources might victims need?
- What resources and/or assistance currently exist for victims?
- How will you offer safety planning and proper training for staff members?
- Who are the allied professionals in your community who are qualified to address crime victims' specific needs?
- How will you direct questions about victims' concerns that are civil, rather than criminal in nature?
- How will you direct complaints about municipality or police response?

As a Planning Group, discuss and compare how these factors support or work against justice for victims to your community. Understanding your community's current situation can guide your strategic thinking about whom to involve and when.

Reaching Out to Potential Community Stakeholders

Make a list of agencies, organizations, people (especially community leaders), and other groups currently active in your area. Include any places or systems that could have a significant impact on a victim's life by becoming involved in a coordinated community response. What programs or providers are already working with victims in a trauma-informed or sensitive way, or are applying the Guiding Principles Susan Herman identified, even if they don't call it "Parallel Justice"? It's important to cast your net widely to identify a broad range of programs and agencies. Identify agencies who are invested and active in providing services to victims, including:

- Law enforcement (local/state);
- Victim service professionals (both community and system-based);
- Criminal justice system professionals (prosecution, victim advocates, corrections);
- Medical providers;
- Mental health providers (including guidance counselors and social workers);
- Legal advocacy programs;
- Municipal government;
- Social services (state and community);
- Faith communities;
- Alternatives-to-court programs;
- Community justice centers;
- Homeless programs;
- Educators (including k-12 and college);
- Youth service programs;

- Programs serving seniors and/or people with disabilities;
- Community action organizations;
- Violence prevention coalitions;
- Affinity/advocacy groups (based on disability, nationality, race, gender or other factors).

Meet individually with heads of agencies to talk about this assessment process. Assure stakeholders that you wish to explore gaps in services, without passing judgment or assigning blame, and to discuss how Parallel Justice might address these gaps. It's also good to tell them that you have some monetary resources to do so, if that is the case!

Identify your potential "champions" early on in the process. Look for those who acknowledge problems, especially within their own organizations, and have demonstrated the will and ability to make internal changes. Also look for innovators with a proven record of implementing new ideas and bringing programs to life. These are good candidates for your Steering Committee and Program Team.

Tip: Victim Forums

During these conversations, try to bring people together based on similar experiences, such as the type of crime they experienced, or significant populations that are most impacted by crime. Try to identify gaps in existing programs.

By modeling honesty about what your agency does well and where you fall short, you can minimize defensiveness and "blame game" behavior in others. In turn, this can help build a foundation for larger-scale shifts in responsiveness to victims in the future, as we see in the workings of the Parallel Justice Commission.

Invite participating community partners to identify ways that their organizations could help move a Parallel Justice initiative forward. Ask them to suggest other agencies that should be included in future coalition building. Remember that it is not essential that groups included in the needs assessments be victim-sensitive, or even knowledgeable about victims' rights. In fact, there is much to be gained by bringing together those versed in victim advocacy and those who are not, so the group can consider issues that victims face in a structured and supportive community-wide conversation. This usually increases public awareness and support for victims, even if no formal program arises from these conversations.

Topics to Discuss with Victim Service Providers

- What are some of your clients' unmet needs? How might your Parallel Justice program fill these gaps?
- What is your agency's response to victims, using the Parallel Justice Guiding Principles, and what one or two might you focus upon?
- How does your agency envision "justice" for victims outside of the current criminal justice system?
- What might be needed to help victims rebuild their lives, and which existing community groups could be helpful?

Survey Victims about their Experiences and Ensure Accessibility

Certainly, the most important group to talk to about victim services is victims themselves. This can be a good opportunity to connect with victim service programs to help you identify effective ways to reach victims and better understand the history and scope of services in your area.

Be sure to use a wide variety of methods to allow people to share their perspectives in ways that work best for them. How can you solicit verbal/written feedback? Will you allow for in-person/remote interactions? As part of a group/one-on-one? Think about how you might ensure respondent anonymity. How will the collected information be shared, and with whom? How will you communicate these considerations to the respondents?

Tip: Cross-Reference Input

Ask victims about what is working well for them and about the challenges they face. Compare their responses with those of service providers you survey. This cross-referencing can verify and refine preliminary findings from other assessments. It can also inform conversations with stakeholders and community members about how they could improve their responses to crime.

Sample Questions for Victims:

- Where have you been able to access services and information? Where else could it be useful to build "on-ramps" for services?
- Who were the first contacts you had with the criminal justice system and/or victim services after the crime? What felt supportive about those interactions? What could have been more supportive?
- What immediate needs did you have after the crime? What longer-term needs?

- Is there anything you need now or needed at the time that you were not able to get?
- Did you access other services, and if so, which ones? If not, why?
- What services have been most helpful? What services have you most often used?
- Were you made aware of your legal rights? If so, how did you get this information?

St. Albans' First Steps

The city of St. Albans was the second Vermont community to begin a Parallel Justice program. St. Albans is in the northwest corner of the state, about 15 miles south of the Canadian border. The advisory board of the local Community Justice Center and other stakeholders held a retreat to discuss ways to improve services and reach a greater number of people. Attendees formed a steering committee and began their assessment of the community's needs with a simple questionnaire. General questions about residents' experiences of crime were distributed at Town Meeting. The results gave the steering committee a sense of the level of support and interest. The survey process also increased community awareness of the issue and impact of victimization on the city.

Next came a series of focus groups with victims (one for those affected by property crime and one for those who had experienced serious and violent crimes) and service providers (one with local agencies and one with staff doing direct service at the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services). These focus groups allowed the Steering Committee to get a better sense of the experiences of local crime victims. Some of the feedback they received was surprising, especially about frustration with the existing response to victims. From this data a written report was drafted with clearly identified themes (and anonymous content). The report was then shared with local law enforcement and the Steering Committee. This approach encouraged honesty while protecting the privacy of the participants. It also allowed for constructive feedback to be given sensitively to those working in the field.

Part 2 - Creating a Steering Committee and a Program Team

At this point you should have a good picture of your community's issues, demographics, and the individuals and agencies who navigate victim services. The next step is to mobilize interested parties identified in the needs assessment phase.

Tip: Find Your Team

Identify team members who are well-respected, both for the quality of their work and for their standing in their organizations.

The Steering Committee will be comprised of a wide range of stakeholders to provide guidance and support for program development and to clarify what functions the program team will perform. It is a team of organizations invested in moving Parallel Justice forward and being accountable for certain parts of the planning process/related logistics.

This is a natural evolution of the original Planning Group, but it can also be a good time to pass the baton to new organizations. Some continuity in membership is desirable. Consider inviting any of the individuals, agencies, or programs who participated in your previous steps. Look for those agencies who are willing and able to engage in advocacy with their peers. Those who are supportive of victims and willing to leverage their community connections might be good candidates to work on policy changes or other system-level work in the future. They can also help identify potential program team members and explore what participation might look like for each agency.

The program team will oversee and implement the day-to-day operations of the project. In the early stages, however, it is extremely important to have at least one person, a Program Coordinator, who is committed to taking the next steps needed — with the time, energy and interpersonal skills this requires. This person will focus primarily on moving program development forward; ideally, you will want at least a one-year commitment. You might have a staff person who is a natural fit and has an interest in the work. On the other hand, some low-cost options to consider might include an intern, a passionate volunteer, or someone doing fieldwork for a professional program.

Tip: No Money Necessary!

If you take nothing else away from this Guide, we want you to know that it *is* possible to bring Parallel Justice to your community without hiring extra staff or providing financial assistance to victims.

The Program Coordinator will:

- Work with the Steering Committee to create a timeline and benchmarks for program development;

- Convene meetings of the Program Team;
- Create working agreements or MOUs (Memorandums of Understanding) between agencies;
- Establish and refine policies and procedures (for example, how case information is obtained from law enforcement; how victims are contacted and assisted; how cases are opened and closed);
- Interview, hire, train and supervise those doing direct service work, including volunteers;
- Develop a strategic plan of implementation with the Planning Group and Steering Committee;
- Succinctly articulate the vision for a Parallel Justice program by referencing your initial needs assessment.

Program Team members require versatile thinking for their day-to-day tasks. They should be able to switch gears from the nuts-and-bolts of program planning to higher-level "systems" thinking. They will also need a point-of-entry into the systems your program will be trying to influence.

Program Team Considerations:

- Have the individuals worked together before?
- What are the team members' professional goals?
- What is their track record of sustaining investment and follow-through on issues and projects?
- What social capital can they leverage in the community?
- Can they balance visionary with practical thinking?

Be sure to encourage leadership at all levels. Identify the skills your staff are most interested in developing and expand their responsibilities in ways that are meaningful, which play to their strengths or desired professional growth. Build an organizational culture that recognizes everyone's valuable insight and information. Encourage frontline staff to share what they see with their supervisors, managers of the program team, and/or your Parallel Justice Commission. Supervisors and agency heads should actively work to solicit feedback about how the program is meeting its mission and what areas can improve, and they should encourage transparency in this feedback.

Publicly recognize the contributions of your team. For program partners, look for annual award opportunities in their professional arenas (for example, the local chapter of the National

Association of Social Workers). Announcements and presentations at professional conferences and workshops are another nice way to honor someone. Nominate founding leaders, stellar volunteers, and advisory committee members for local awards in newspapers or through the local Rotary Club.

Prioritize the institutional knowledge of program founders throughout their entire tenure rather than waiting until they decide to move on. Identify and document program policies and procedures. Create an expectation and mechanism to convey this knowledge to new program coordinators, staff, volunteers, and Commissioners.

You may already anticipate aspects in which you are likely to encounter resistance. If changes are needed to standing policies or practices, identify the reason for the change, which Guiding Principle is at stake, and who is needed to approve the change. As change happens, thank your champions in a way that is meaningful to them. For businesses, this could mean including their name in outreach materials. For community agencies, it might be a framed certificate recognizing their support. Be aware of underlying cultural norms when deciding how to do this. A shout out and round of applause for individuals during a staff meeting may be a good fit for those on the front lines in social services, while an email praising a police officer for a job well done, copied to their direct supervisor, might be a better fit for law enforcement.

Considerations for Collaboration: Organizational Assets and Perspectives

- If you are part of a multi-disciplinary team, has the team considered issues related to victims' rights, needs, and/or concerns?
- Do you help provide a coordinated community response to victims' needs?
- Do you pool resources with other organizations?
- Can victims get all the services they need, regardless of which agency they call first?
- Are you aware of the services provided by other agencies, and do you make referrals?
- What "on-ramps" to victim services are missing or could be enhanced by each agency's participation?
- How can you encourage the agency or program to participate in this collaboration?
- What resources can the agency or program contribute or leverage?
- Does the agency or program have a history of innovation? Of collaboration?
- What is the agency or program's service area and sphere of influence?
- Which professional and political networks does the agency or program belong to?

Burlington's Program Team

Creating the right Program Team was one of the early factors in Burlington's success. The group was small enough to be manageable in terms of both interpersonal and interagency dynamics, but also brought a diversity of experience and influence. We chose representatives from (1) local law enforcement (the Burlington Police Department); (2) a community-based organization (the Burlington Community Justice Center); and (3) the statewide victim services organization (the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services). This structure gave us a variety of viewpoints about the systems we were trying to influence. It also allowed us to improve accessibility to services by creating more "on-ramps" to receiving assistance. In the end, we credit much of the longevity and success of Burlington's program to:

- The personalities and goals of the individual leaders and the relationships among them;
- Each organization's track record of innovation and program implementation;
- Shared responsibility and dedication that provided stability, especially during changes in staffing when the Parallel Justice point-person from any of these three agencies changed.

Roles of Burlington's Program Team Members

Burlington Police Department: Facilitates information-sharing from the police department and access to officers for case follow-up; takes the lead on victim sensitivity training for officers; provides office space for Parallel Justice staff based at the police department; provides on-site supervision for Parallel Justice staff.

The Center for Crime Victim Services: Provides a dedicated staff person for the initial assessment; provided seed money for the Victims' Fund; developed the original public education campaign and outreach materials; takes the lead on designing evaluation methods.

Burlington Community Justice Center: Provides office space for community-based Parallel Justice staff; provides case supervision for staff. Community-based Parallel Justice staff also conduct fundraising and provide administrative support for the program (database development, forms, training materials, and so on).

The Burlington program has staff people based in two different locations (the Police Department and Community Justice Center). This is to accommodate differences in agency policies. For example, in Burlington, our staff member based at the police department is a mandated reporter, but the one based at the Community Justice Center is not. Mandated reporting strongly affects the confidentiality of a victim's relationship with the Parallel Justice staff. If you cannot find a solution that allows the partners' agency policies to coexist, you will have to decide whose policy has the higher authority.

Although there are many organizations you might want to work with to organize a Parallel Justice program, two should be local law enforcement and your state administrator of victim services, restitution, and victims' compensation programs.

Law Enforcement - Consider how victim services align with your law enforcement organization's stated mission/vision or priority areas. In Burlington, for example, the Chief of Police had set four priority areas for his department, one of which was to improve responses to victims of crime. Law enforcement might also be able to bring other professionals to the table, such as prosecutors or Corrections officials, which would be helpful if you are trying to make changes within the court system.

State Victim Services Provider - Implementing Parallel Justice principles might involve changing existing programs, especially those designed to reimburse victims for crime-related expenses. Collaborating with your state's victim services provider may reduce barriers and help modify those programs.

Be sure to clarify team member's roles. Depending on your shared history, level of trust, and ways in which your organizations conduct business, you might start defining roles immediately. This can be accomplished with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or a verbal agreement about how you will work together. Some considerations:

- Who will take the lead in the various program areas?
- How will volunteers/interns/staff be interviewed and screened?
- What will be the roles of each partner in supervising volunteers/interns/staff?
- What financial responsibilities will your program take on?
- What organizational and administrative responsibilities (training, policy writing, grant reporting, etc.) will your program take on?
- How will you handle the logistics of office space, computer access, phones, etc.?
- How will you handle accounting for office supplies, payroll, rent, and other expenses?
- How will information be shared among partners?

Tip: The power of collaboration

Sharing program responsibility among agencies requires more initial work, but dramatically increases the reach and sustainability of your undertaking. Be honest in your relationships with partner agencies. When missteps and mistakes occur, as they inevitably will, be frank about your own shortcomings and respectful of others' when working through them.

You will also need to address the issue of sharing information between program team agencies. In some instances, a one-way flow is appropriate; in others, reciprocity is needed. For example, how will you receive information about the crime from law enforcement and prosecutors, and what will you share with them?

Parallel Justice Staff: The functions of your staff will likely vary, based on their location in the program team. If the staff person works in a community-based program, they will likely have more flexibility in how they meet victims' needs, and some perceived distance or perspective when law enforcement issues arise. On the other hand, a law enforcement-based staff member will naturally give you the greatest point-of-entry and relationship-building potential with law enforcement. If you can only have one, we recommend advocating for a position physically based within the law enforcement agency.

Be sure to hire new staff who can carry the vision forward. People who love the start-up phase of a project naturally move on to other initiatives once a program is well underway. Chances are that the type of people who are interested in creating an entirely new program are not the same people who will want to dig in and iron out the kinks in an already existing program.

When bringing new staff on board, they should be grounded in both the history and the purpose of the work. It is important to communicate the original vision to them and cultivate their ability to help move that vision forward. Identify skills that might be missing or would be most helpful for your program's current phase. Look for complementary personalities and a willingness to engage honestly, with an eye toward improvement.

One potential agency to work with could be your District Attorney's office (or in Vermont, the State's Attorney). Knowing which issues your local prosecutor is most passionate about will help you highlight commonalities when making those connections. Highlight ways that a Parallel Justice initiative could lighten the load of overburdened staff — for example, by being available to listen and validate a victim's feelings without working under the pressure of court deadlines. A local hospital or health center could be an important "on-ramp" for victims to access services and resources. An in-house social worker with a focus on Parallel Justice could help increase wellness by addressing vulnerabilities before they fester and negatively impact a victim's health. Another strong affinity exists with Community Action agencies or local faith communities, whose values of respect, support and assistance naturally overlap with the core concepts of Parallel Justice.

Part 3 - Designing Your Program

At this point in the process, you have a clearer picture of the forces at work in your community and started thinking about ways to leverage those factors to promote a more inclusive version of justice. We encourage you to identify the "low-hanging fruit." Pick easy places to start your work, and keep in mind those that might require care and time to cultivate for future harvest. Early successes will help build momentum for tackling larger challenges later. Identify potentially volatile issues in advance as you plan your next steps, and prepare for anticipated challenges by reframing any concerns or frustrations.

Tip: It takes time

Depending on how ambitious your plan is, it might take quite a while before you begin providing direct services. Leadership, staffing, resources, policy development, practices and procedures, community engagement, and your ability to respond to victims will greatly influence the amount of time it takes you to get your program off the ground.

Be patient, it is worth it.

Once you have identified the Program Team, you are ready to review your assessment findings and begin to shape preliminary goals. Use the gaps you have identified and your program's goals to create your vision for the future. Which Parallel Justice principles do you want to implement first? What did you see as the greatest need in your assessment phase? What resources can you access to implement these changes? Think about your short-term and more ambitious goals. It can be helpful to frame your discussion in terms of the following four questions:

1. Which groups of people are we trying to reach first?

2. How are we going to identify those groups? (Type of crime experienced, barriers to access such as the lack of a police report or lack of interpreters, criteria such as age or disability, etc.)
3. What resources and partnerships will we need to develop?
4. What services do we plan to deliver?

Be transparent about why you are giving priority to certain types of crimes and/or underserved victims in the initial design of your services. The practicality of determining who receives services may be inconsistent with your greatest hopes for the program. Have a clear explanation of why certain cases are ineligible and communicate that to your Steering Committee so that if they hear complaints, they can share the reasoning with others.

Burlington: Stakeholders Imagine the Future

At a day-long meeting convened by the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services, victim and community service professionals gathered to assess what was working and what gaps Parallel Justice could/should fill in the state. When envisioning what "justice" for victims outside the existing criminal justice system might provide, these professionals agreed on the following priorities:

- Respond promptly to victims;
- Create a monetary compensation fund to provide immediate relief before Restitution or Victims' Compensation are accessed. This fund should provide immediate, practical support, including meals, cash, vouchers, or funds for temporary housing (such as a hotel room);
- Build the response on currently existing victim supports;
- Actively engage and appropriately educate the community on how to respond to victims' needs;
- Consider prioritizing responses to victims of crime when there is no arrest or identified offender.

Be humble and acknowledge that you won't be able to do everything you hoped for at the outset; in fact, a strategic plan will focus on first picking the low-hanging fruit. If you initially focus your efforts on "low-level" or "quality of life" crimes, be prepared to explain why addressing these kinds of incidents can have such a big impact. To counter the trend of minimizing the impacts of these types of crime, we offer the following quote from a victim advocate in Vermont: "The worst thing that ever happened to you is still the worst thing that's ever happened to you." In other words, even if the crime seems trivial in your experience, it can still have a significant impact, given the victim's previous experience.

Set your standards for program operation, practitioner competence, and ethical conduct before you begin working with clients. It is crucial to consider how will one program's mandated reporting requirements conflict with your confidentiality requirements, and how you will communicate this to the victims you serve. The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has identified best practices required to provide thoughtful and ethical support to crime victims, called Model Standards for Serving Victims and Survivors of Crime, available online[12]. The three model standards include: ethical requirements for providing service to victims; core competencies for practitioners; and program standards, which focus on policies and procedures for programs. These practices are the result of national collaborations to create a common foundation of trauma-informed practice and victim-centered service.

Model Program Standards

The model program standards for serving victims of crime are available on the Office for Victims of Crime's website.

The program standards emphasize the need for written guidelines that define programmatic goals for whom a program serves and how it provides those services, including accessibility and non-discrimination considerations. Program guidelines should also outline primary considerations in managing and supervising staff and volunteers — perhaps drawn from the human resources manual of the team's host agency — and can be included in volunteer training and orientation materials. It is also important to have written criteria for eligibility and use of resources, such as how Resource Bank items (donations from community members) and the Victims' Fund (financial assistance for crime-related, uninsured losses) are administered. Address practitioners' competence and ethical standards alongside core knowledge and needed skills. These include familiarity with systems, awareness of resources available through other agencies, an understanding of trauma, solid communication skills, and the philosophical approach necessary to support victims, including how to maintain boundaries and appropriate relationships. Ethical standards are examined in the book *Ethics in Victim Services* by Melissa Hook, which also provides a framework for analyzing and resolving ethical dilemmas as they arise.

Self-Care as an Ethical Consideration

There is a lot of talk about self-care, vicarious trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue — and the toll stress can take on a helping professional's physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

[12] https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/program_standards.html

Regardless of whether your program is staffed by volunteers, interns, or paid professionals, it is vitally important to include opportunities for supervision that address self-care as a requirement of the position.

You probably do not need convincing about why it is important to take care of yourself and to encourage your colleagues to do the same. Simply put, the more you take care of your own needs while doing this work, the more you will be able to be present for crime victims to help them identify their needs and next steps.

Developing a Volunteer/Internship Program

When we decided to develop a Parallel Justice volunteer/intern program to increase our capacity, we began by talking with local partners who rely heavily on volunteers to deliver services and asked them to share their best practices and resources.

Promote volunteer opportunities by using a clear job description. Due to the amount of time and energy it takes to bring a new person up to speed in working directly with victims, we ask volunteers and interns to be available to make calls at least one day a week, and make a one-year commitment to our program. In general, it takes one to two months for volunteers or interns to feel comfortable with their new role.

In some cases, you might tailor a task or project to the interests of someone who has contacted you. In other situations, you might seek out people with specific skills to help with a specific aspect of your program.

Here are some of the ways we have found to recruit helping hands:

- United Way volunteer website;
- community distribution lists;
- Craigslist volunteer listings;
- local daily or weekly newspaper;
- interview or appearance on public access television;
- word of mouth;
- faith communities;
- organizations that engage with recent retirees.

You will find meaningful opportunities for people with different skills and personalities by thinking about a few different ways volunteers and interns can help move your mission forward. Outreach efforts (such as distributing brochures to locations where victims are likely

to find them), giving presentations to community and service providers, tabling at events, and implementing crime reduction campaigns for community safety are some ways that volunteers and interns can be helpful without requiring a lot of supervision and training.

Define Volunteer/Intern Qualifications: At the minimum, you will want to screen for:

- Background / criminal history;
- Sensitivity to victims' issues;
- Motivation;
- Ability to follow directions;
- Ability to work under supervision;
- Bilingual or multi-lingual as needed.

Tip: Training Manual

The resources section in the back has the table of contents from Burlington's Training manual to give you a head start toward creating one of your own.

Training Volunteers and Interns

Training can be done one-on-one or in a group. It can be effective to "batch" new volunteers and/or interns together for training to reduce time spent and build a cohort for networking and support. This requires being sensitive to different learning styles and needs.

Training covers two main content areas: logistics and skills. We begin with an orientation to the program and the sites where volunteers will be working. We cover workplace policies on sexual harassment, confidentiality, general information about the working environment (how office equipment works, dress code, and the culture of the police department), and a tour of the building. In the next phase, the volunteer will shadow someone who is providing direct services. When both supervisor and volunteer agree when they are ready, volunteers begin contacting victims and providing assistance.

Scheduling regular check-ins with volunteers and interns will ensure that they can bring questions and concerns to you as they arise. This gives you an opportunity to see whether their job duties are aligned with their interests and skills. For those doing direct service, check-ins provide a chance to debrief about recent cases and consider trends. We use a self-reflective model for interns, and a method known as "Appreciative Inquiry"[13] to build on their strengths and support development in areas they'd like to improve.

[13] https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/learn/appreciative-inquiry-introduction/

Find opportunities to publicly acknowledge the time and effort of your volunteers and interns to raise motivation and morale. We recognize volunteers with nominations for awards at the local and state level, acknowledgement at annual events, a framed certificate or gift of appreciation on anniversaries of service, and celebrating their service in our newsletter.

Part 4 - Working with Law Enforcement

Most victims enter the criminal justice system by making a complaint to law enforcement. Without law enforcement's acceptance and support, your ability to identify and contact victims will be limited. For this reason, try to involve local law enforcement as early in the planning and design process as possible. Burlington's Parallel Justice visionaries recognized how important this was from the outset, and worked to secure a full-time position for one of our Parallel Justice Specialists at the Burlington Police Department. In your community, law enforcement can be an active part of the Program Team, serve an advisory role as part of a steering committee, commission, or be less involved but always kept well-informed.

Understanding Law Enforcement Culture: The Chain of Command

Core values of respect, loyalty, authority, and honesty are the foundation upon which police work is built. If you understand the ways these factors inform the organizational culture of law enforcement, it is less likely that they will impede your ability to build collaborative, supportive relationships.

Tip: Law Enforcement Etiquette

Learn the ranks and titles of law enforcement personnel and use them in correspondence or phone messages unless asked to do otherwise.

Law Enforcement Officers are prepared to respond to life-threatening situations at a moment's notice and must be able to depend on each other without hesitation while securing public safety in the field. They require clarity about who is making decisions, and therefore follow a well-defined chain of command. Following this hierarchical organizational structure is the most efficient way to relay information when every second counts, and it ensures accountability in day-to-day operations.

From the outside, the command structure is most evident in the rank, uniforms, and decision-making procedures that follow the chain of command. It is important to understand and respect the values these symbols represent when working with law enforcement agencies. Learn ranks and titles, and use them in correspondence/phone messages unless asked to do otherwise. Always use formal

titles in public, even if you have regularly have dinner with the Chief and are socially on a first-name basis. Whenever possible, attend promotion ceremonies and acknowledge a law enforcement colleague's promotion to the next rank with an email, phone call, or card.

Law enforcement officers often assist people in desperate situations only after other systems have failed. Consider that in Burlington, 85% of calls to police are not crime-related, but are calls for social services (regarding arguments between family members, concerns about children, welfare checks, etc.) or civil disputes (parking issues, animal issues, complaints about noise or trash, landlord/tenant issues). Many problem behaviors that lead to these calls are caused by underlying issues that other social support systems have failed to resolve, such as untreated addiction, mental health issues, and family violence or dysfunction.

Officers are required to assess situations, identify next steps, and determine probable cause. Every case brings a different set of complexities that requires an integrated response. This is where the Parallel Justice specialist can be invaluable in helping to triage the collateral aspects of police calls by connecting to other community resources like financial assistance, mental health support, or myriad other needs of a crime victim.

When considering how to engage law enforcement and raise the issue of improving access and support for crime victims, keep in mind that officers must protect each other not only in the field of duty, but also in the face of public opinion. In many communities today, police fight an uphill struggle against disrespect and mistrust, wherein the bad behavior of a few individuals reinforces negative stereotypes. In addition, police officers daily witness the worst of people and their devastating effects on our communities. Yet we expect them to remain cool, calm and collected. It is an impossible task, and often a thankless one. Remember not to misconstrue a law enforcement officers' tough exterior as callousness or lack of concern.

Working successfully with law enforcement in a civilian capacity relies on mutual respect. Understand that raising an issue using the correct channels is not just following protocol; it's a matter of respect. Work to build direct relationships with patrol officers and those supervising them. Jumping to the top of the chain of command without trying to resolve an issue directly can imply a distrust of someone's ability and/or integrity. If there is a problem with a specific officer, raise the issue with their direct supervisor first before going up the chain of command.

Whenever possible, identify allies within the law enforcement community who can speak to how your program benefits the entire department. When developing relationships with those champions, set a tone of honesty and pragmatism from the beginning. Use data to help make your case, especially if you are asking law enforcement to do something different from regular

procedures. For example, having civilians provide outreach to victims can decrease the amount of time law enforcement officers spend on follow-up calls.

Explain how Parallel Justice can help increase community trust in law enforcement by being responsive to victims' needs. Frame problems so as to capture the dilemma of limited resources: "How can we fix this right now? In the least amount of time? And in the most cost-effective/proactive way?" For example, if you agree that Parallel Justice will follow up with victims when an investigation is closed for lack of evidence or suspects, how will the Parallel Justice staff get those victims' contact information? What details of the initial report can be shared with the civilians following up? How often will this information be relayed — with each incident? Weekly? Monthly?

Our colleagues at the Burlington Police Department requested that we share a few pet peeves about civilian meeting culture. Some of their suggestions for meeting etiquette are:

- Invite law enforcement to meetings only when you really need them there, and be clear on why you are asking for their time;
- Ensure that meetings are efficient and well-run;
- "Process-heavy" meetings are likely to induce eye-rolling in even the most supportive and sensitive law enforcement officers;
- A productive approach to meeting in-person involves specific, focused problem-solving and action-planning.

To win the support of law enforcement, prove that changing the way victims are supported will make their investigations easier, and communities safer, by allowing them to focus on what they do best: preventing and solving crimes. When it comes to training officers on whatever aspects of Parallel Justice are developed by your team, identify officers who are aware and sensitive to victim issues, and who can influence their colleagues about the benefits of a Parallel Justice program. Some benefits of Parallel Justice that we highlight in regular trainings with our law enforcement partners are:

- Cases are solved faster by cultivating positive relationships with victims and witnesses;
- Parallel Justice enhances a positive public image of police as able and willing to help;
- Police spend less time on follow-ups and complaints;
- Future crimes are prevented by safety-planning, accessing resources (for example, bars on their windows), and reducing vulnerabilities that can lead to re-victimization;
- Victims who were well-served by Parallel Justice provide gratitude and positive feedback for the officers who helped them.

Considerations from a Parallel Justice Specialist

In keeping with our advice to include the voice of experience and be concrete rather than abstract, here are some considerations from Clark Sheldon, the Parallel Justice Specialist who works within the Burlington Police Department. His ability to demonstrate the value of Parallel Justice to individual officers and the department at large, while embedded in the organizational structure of the station, has been critical to the long-term success of the Burlington project.

- Go slowly, listen and be respectful;
- Learn as much as possible on your own to reduce your supervisor's workload;
- Fit your efforts within the confines of how law enforcement operates, rather than asking for changes right away;
- Ask appreciative, open-ended questions;
- Research and learn department policies and procedures relating to victim services;
- Learn about daily operations and other jobs within the police department;
- Be transparent when answering officers' questions about the program, including the limitations of assistance you can offer to officers, and what you offer victims;
- Spend time with different patrol shifts;
- Go on ride-alongs and attend roll-call meetings with each shift;
- Try to understand the police officers' job from the police point-of-view;
- Refrain from asking, "Was this really a crime?"

Building Rapport with Law Enforcement

After asking law enforcement how we could make their lives easier, we learned that many officers were paying out-of-pocket for food for victims/witnesses and their children while waiting to give a statement or file a complaint. We created a petty cash fund ($100 to $200 annually) that the supervising officer could use to pay these expenses. By so doing, we built goodwill between the Parallel Justice program and the police, and between the community and law enforcement.

Tip: Some of the greatest ideas are the simplest ideas

Consider working with your police department to create a small petty cash fund to offset out-of-pocket costs for officers when working with victims or witnesses. This is a great way to build goodwill with officers, and a low-cost approach to supporting victims – even just with a candy bar while making a report, or a bus or taxi ride home after coming into the station.

When implementing Parallel Justice with law enforcement partners, one source of tension can be what we call the "truthiness" factor, a term credited to Stephen Colbert, meaning "the quality of stating concepts one *wishes or believes to be true*, rather than the facts." This becomes especially relevant and tricky with questions about whether a crime occurred, such as someone reporting cash stolen, or being victimized while they were committing a crime (such as being assaulted while buying drugs).

Doubting the veracity of someone's account is at odds with the Parallel Justice principle that all victims should be "presumed credible unless there is a reason to believe otherwise." At the same time, the role of law enforcement is to investigate the facts of a potential crime with realistic awareness that people can and do lie some of the time. These perspectives and roles create a distinction in your approach to victims of crime, but they do not have to be at odds with each other.

To work effectively with your local officers and administration, you need to examine how to respond when people are lying to you. That question may arise in the very first meeting. Here are some suggestions for navigating this territory:

- Acknowledge that police may have already interacted with the same victims you will contact if they have been perpetrators and/or victims of other crimes;
- Recognize and name your difference in perspectives: Parallel Justice principles applied to victims' services require treating victims' stories as credible unless there is reason to believe otherwise. Law enforcement principles require investigating facts and determining the truth from often competing narratives. Victims' services' focus is on resilience and validation, while law enforcement focuses on transgressions and accountability;
- Clarify that much of the assistance you offer – information, referrals, and emotional support – does not depend on the facts of a case. In other words, an empirical "truth" is not needed in order to connect someone with resources that may help their underlying needs;

- Create protocols to verify financial losses if your program offers financial assistance;
- Consider the input and opinion of responding officers in cases where there is ambiguity, but always respond via a Parallel Justice sensibility.

Complaints About Police and Other Inevitable Conversations

While contacting victims to offer support and services after crime, you will inevitably receive feedback about law enforcement and municipal government. Navigating a frustrating, bureaucratic system can cause people to be combative when you connect with them to offer help. Prepare to validate the person's feelings while being respectful and supportive of your law enforcement and community partners. In considering complaints about law enforcement, consider:

- To whom should you refer questions about the status of an investigation?
- Where should you direct people who are unsatisfied with the investigating officer's response or report, or are critical of police or dispatch protocol?
- Where should you direct people for case follow-up and investigation?
- How will you relay feedback to officers and administration – both positive and negative?
- What is your appropriate role in advocating for individual victims within your local law enforcement agency (such as assisting in filing a complaint, asking for a review by a superior officer, requesting special accommodations to be made on a victim's behalf, etc.)?
- Where/to whom will you refer civil complaints about parking issues, code enforcement, or neighbor disputes?

Part 5 - Outreach and Marketing

Talk about your community's vision of Parallel Justice at every opportunity. Broaden your explanation in a way that speaks to many interests and tailor your message to specific audiences. Explain how and why Parallel Justice can help meet organizational goals and unmet needs. Remember to include victims of crime in creating your image. If a more just system should give victims the power to identify and ask for what they need, then victims' voices should be central to everything you do when planning and in providing those services. Give Steering Committee and Planning Team members talking points of your great ideas with instructions (and flexibility) about communications and outreach:

- Use your mission to inform all decisions. Use the Guiding Principles as a compass to inform the direction of your efforts. If there are inconsistencies between your values and actions, be sure to be able to explain why;

- Create formal and informal opportunities to hear concerns and issues from local service providers, clergy, educators, your municipality, and other important community groups;
- Be on the lookout for concerns about your strategy, direction, or stakeholders who feel excluded from the planning process, and promptly follow up with them;
- Model transparency, humility, and explain inconsistencies to give your new program the benefit of the doubt;
- Listen carefully and report back to the Steering Committee.

When creating a paradigm shift, you will pass a critical threshold where the next group of people align and join your mission. Document success stories and other types of data to support your narrative and quantify your progress. In these days of tight funding, the power of the narrative arc cannot be underrated. When first making the case for change, collect stories and keep everyone in the loop on what is, and is not, working. There is great power in an inter-agency team that is invested in making necessary change. Create some formal mechanisms to do this, like a standing item on your team's meeting agenda to identify new referral sources and partnerships.

Questions to Ensure Outreach is Victim-Centered

- Do your outreach and educational materials focus on victims as a potential audience?
- Is reaching victims a factor in deciding where to distribute outreach materials?
- Do you provide an opportunity for victims to share input about your outreach materials before publishing them?
- Do you acknowledge that what happened to the victim is wrong and that you strive to help?
- Is it your practice to provide resources to help victims address as many crime-related needs as possible?
- Does your organization have a philosophy about victimization?
- Do victims provide input on your policies and practices?
- Do you use focus groups, surveys, etc. to get input from victims about your agency and services?
- Do you offer opportunities for victims to serve on committees?

When you clearly articulate your message with your audience's interests and frame of reference in mind, you will see a dramatic difference all aspects of outreach, from preparing a presentation to potential funders to designing a brochure for victims.

Best practices to keep in mind for written materials

- Present information that is most relevant to your intended audience;
- Use simple sentence structure and concrete language.
- “We believe what happened to you is wrong and we are here to help.”
- Talking points include: Who, Why, How, Where? (basic Information about services and contact information);
- Concrete examples of how you can help;
- Emphasize that no police report is needed.

Building your Brand

- Create a logo and tagline as soon as possible, preferably with input from your intended audience and your stakeholders.
- Create a simple website that is phone-friendly to reach individuals who may be isolated or homebound.
- Include your logo, website, and/or phone number on all marketing materials and in other outreach efforts.
- Think of ways to leverage name recognition of your partner agencies. For instance, we say, "A program of the Burlington Police Department" or “a program of Burlington’s Community and Economic Development Office," depending upon who we are addressing, and what we're asking for. Get the support of well-known community members, and tie into upcoming events.

Some outreach opportunities to consider:

- Public service announcements;
- Interview shows on radio and local access cable television;
- Recurring column in the local paper about victimization issues;
- E-newsletter.

Create a list of places that serve the people you want to reach. If you are trying to reach out to victims of vandalism, for example, try asking local hardware stores, car washes, auto body shops, or insurance agency waiting rooms if they will display your brochures or posters. Connect with organizations or affinity groups serving various populations and ask for their suggestions on how to reach their members: would they be receptive to a guest speaker at a meeting? To a piece about your program in their newsletter? To listing you in their resource directory? Create a listing about your program for your local 2-1-1 directory. Connect with other information and referral specialists. Once you establish a connection, consider touching base annually to let their new and seasoned staff know about your services.

Luckily, outreach doesn't have to be expensive to be effective, and much can be done with the materials you have on hand. Here are some of our best penny-pinching outreach tips:

- Local colleges and universities often have students looking for internships. Seek out the Communication or Art Departments to connect with individuals who might want to develop outreach materials as a way of applying their learning and building their student portfolios.
- A #10 business envelope cut in half makes a great brochure holder when taped to the bottom of a poster. You can also tape your business card to the front of it for folks to contact you when the brochures run out.
- MS Word and Publisher have many free templates for flyers, signs, business cards and more.
- Correct outdated contact information on professionally printed (expensive) materials, such as brochures, by applying mailing labels with the new information on them.
- When you don't have money for color printing, using neon paper helps photocopied flyers stand out on busy bulletin boards; or using colorful highlighter markers on white paper.
  Explore free and established venues: online listings, free newspaper listings for ongoing services; Meals on Wheels; and other programs that already reach out to specific groups.

Burlington: An Ounce of Prevention

Over the years, our outreach has included publicizing events, recruiting interns, sharing tips to reduce theft, and fundraising. Here is an example of a crime prevention campaign for public awareness:

We noticed that many vandalism cases involved car windows that were broken to steal contents visible inside. We created an "Ounce of Prevention" awareness campaign with car "report cards," and trained a team of volunteers to distribute these report cards on the windshields of parked cars to warn drivers that their vehicle was at increased risk for theft (unlocked; valuables within view, etc.). This risk-reduction intervention was designed to address community problems and lighten the load on local law enforcement. Criminal justice students from a nearby college analyzed crime rates before and after the report card distribution and found that our "Ounce of Prevention" campaign led to a significant decrease in the number of smash-and-grab crimes!

Part 6 - Data Collection and Program Evaluation

After every step, (outreach efforts, cases, meetings) look at what worked and what needs improving. Once you've successfully addressed the common needs associated with one type of crime, reached one group of underserved victims, or written one winning grant; use what you learned to reach another goal. Consider holding annual retreats to focus on big-picture thinking and strategic planning. Adopt a continuous improvement approach with regular reflection and adjustment as the program grows.

There are moral and ethical imperatives to improving the reach and range of victim services. When talking with the public, note the tremendous costs of crime to victims and to society, some of which are listed below. These factors are sometimes overlooked when talking about the impact of crime. According to The National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC), the emotional, physical, and financial impact of crime can often lead to:

- repeat victimization;
- mental health consequences;
- healthcare costs, including substance abuse;
- absenteeism; poor academic and/or employment performance;
- other quantifiable impacts on communities.

The NCVC website provides fact sheets to help "make the case" for Parallel Justice. Clearly, the cost to society of these unaddressed needs makes a compelling argument for better support to victims of all crimes. In addition, without an investigation or conviction, victims are rarely offered any services or resources.

How are you doing? How do you know how you are doing?

As emphasized in our strategic planning framework, it is crucial to identify the services you provide and the progress you make. Be thoughtful and disciplined in your data collection and ensure that the information is regularly provided to the people who need to see it.

Tip: Make your case

You will need statistics as well as narratives to describe the importance of your program.

There are two categories of data to keep in mind. The first is record-keeping: data about your work with individuals – who you help and what services you provide. This data is largely comprised of information gathered from referral sources or through your application process. The second category is evaluation: an ongoing process of analyzing how the program

meets its original goals, what it could do better, and applying that learning in a loop of continual improvement.

Record-Keeping

If you have ever waded through a year's worth of paper trying to gather unrecorded data for a grant report, you can appreciate the importance of thinking about data collection before it is needed. Similarly, if you have ever found yourself filling in box after box on a spreadsheet or database that you are sure will never be looked at again, you'll appreciate the importance of thoughtful data collection.

Data points to collect might include:

- Client basics: name, contact information;
- Primary language;
- Demographic information: age, gender, racial identity, language spoken, disability if any;
- Case information: date and type of incident, referral source, identified needs;
- Assistance given: date case opened, date case closed, types of services provided, services unable to provide and why, referrals made.

Some other, less obvious information to collect include:

- Quotes from clients (appreciative comments and constructive feedback);
- Names and contact information of people willing to be publicly identified and to speak about how the program helped them;
- Names and contact information of people who are friendly to the program (clients, partners, donors) for program updates, promoting events, and cultivating donors;
- Success stories.

The Power of Program Evaluation and Evidence-Based Assessment

At its heart, evaluation means proving that your program is making a difference. There is a lot of talk about program evaluation, especially as it relates to funding. When seeking funding or political support, data collection can be particularly useful.

Tip: Gathering Program Information

Capture the same information on whatever paperwork you use to collect client information--a referral or intake form, application, or another method--and the vehicle you use to aggregate data. It can be as simple as a spreadsheet with different columns for different data fields, or as complex as a custom-designed database. This could be a great opportunity for a Computer Science intern to help create the collection vehicle you need.

You will require different collection instruments to evaluate different aspects of your program. For example, what information will show funders that you are meeting their goal to help underserved victims? How will your program measure that the assistance you gave to clients made the desired impact? Even in the absence of an external consultant to evaluate your program, you can build methods to gather this information through some thoughtful analysis.

When creating these evaluation tools, ask yourself:

- What outcomes am I trying to achieve? (This is an opportunity to revisit the vision and goals created earlier in the planning process.)
- How can I measure those outcomes?
- What other information is needed to tell the story of my program? (This will come in handy later too, when you start to do actual outreach.)

Victim Survey

In addition to collecting information in a database about whom we have served and how, we also mail an anonymous survey to victims after their case is closed. These are returned to the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services in a pre-paid envelope to ensure anonymity and encourage a response.

A survey can help you:

- Understand what the program is doing well and what can be improved;
- Elicit feedback about information or services provided;
- Elicit feedback about partners (for example, “How has your perception of the police department changed, if at all?”);
- Collect stories and quotes (which can be useful in grant reporting, outreach, and fundraising);
- Identify people willing to be interviewed or give a public statement about the program (especially useful if you are doing media outreach);

- Cultivate connections with individuals who want to be kept informed about program updates, and identify those interested in donating time or money in the future;
- Identify gaps by asking "What else did you need that we were not able to provide?"

Burlington and Evaluation

The Burlington Parallel Justice program uses three main evaluation tools:

- A victim survey to solicit anonymous feedback from clients about their experience;
- A logic model, developed with a consultant, to help us evaluate how well the program is meeting its overall goals;
- An agency self-evaluation to help them examine how well they implement Parallel Justice guiding principles within their organization.

Some issues to consider in using your survey:

- What is the best time interval to send out a victim survey after a case is closed?
- Who will be responsible for sending them?
- To whom will they be returned?
- How can you ensure anonymity?
- How will you compile responses?
- Will questions be narrative, short answer, or check boxes?
- How will you pass along feedback to the Program Team?
- Will you relate feedback to Law Enforcement or other partner agencies?

Logic Model

In a time of increased competition for funding sources and "outcome-based accountability," a well-designed evaluation model is a must. An "outcome-based" evaluation model is also known as a "logic model," "log frame," "theory of change," or "program matrix." Logic models are often developed after a program is underway to help determine what outcomes one should be tracking. By building this examination into the program planning and implementation process, you can be more thoughtful about which data to collect and what actions you are taking to achieve specific results.

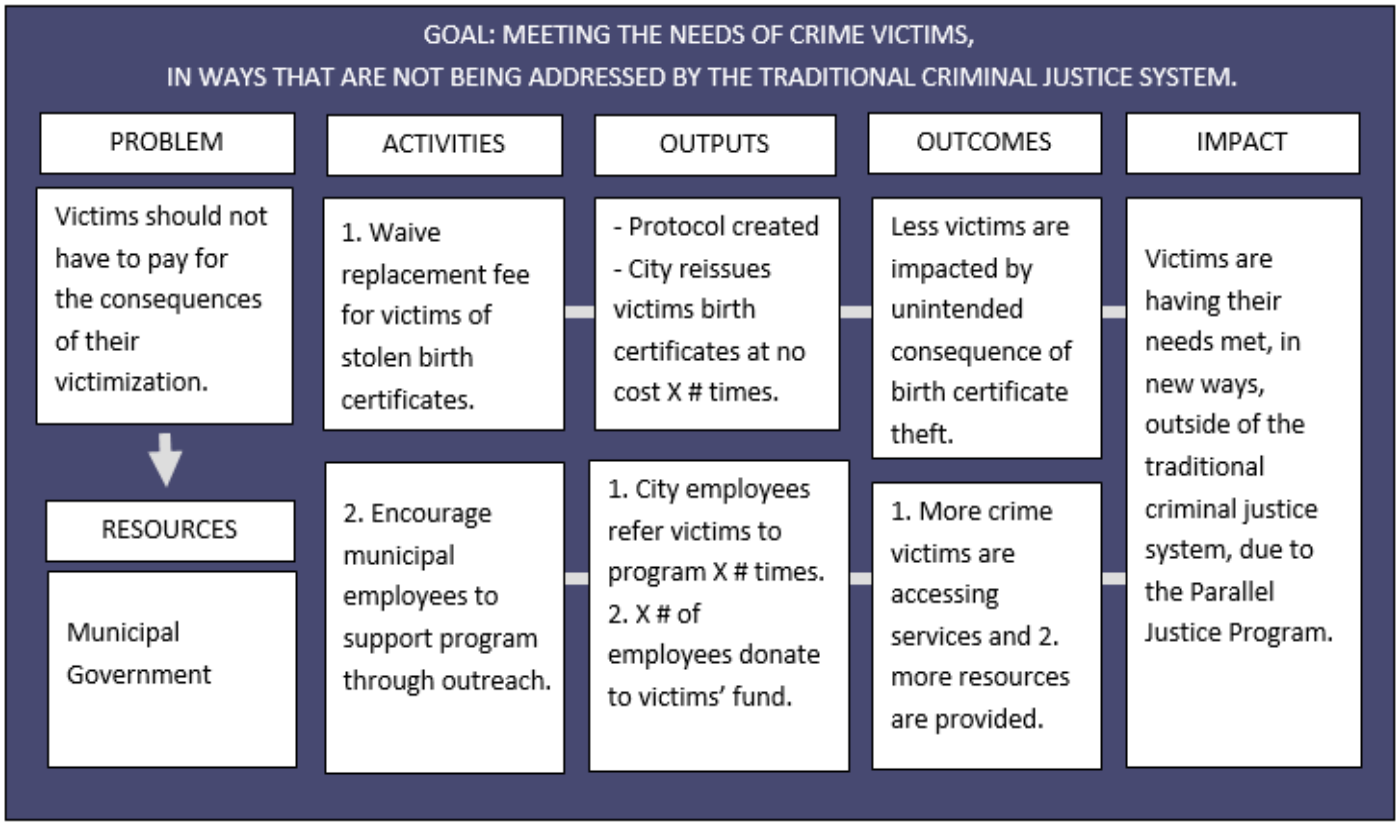
Tip: Logic Model

Creating a logic model early on will help you set up a timeline, track your progress, and establish a structure for implementing activities and outcomes. You will find many internet resources to guide you in developing a logic model that fits your needs.

Here is a simple list of questions to help develop your own Logic Model:

- What are the goals of your project? If you've been following the planning framework above, you should be able to check this off your list immediately.
- What outcomes will demonstrate that you are achieving those goals? This is the crucial question, so decide which outcomes you plan (and realistically expect) to achieve.
- How will you support those outcomes? These are the activities or tasks that you need to track.
- What information is needed to towards outcomes? In other words, what kinds of data are needed to demonstrate that progress is happening?
- What are the sources of information needed to track progress towards outcomes?

Below is an example of how a logic model could illustrate your progress toward increased engagement of municipal government in supporting your program, and how it relates to the overall mission of Parallel Justice.



Perhaps this section has inspired and invigorated you to work on program evaluation. If not, you may be among the many who do not enjoy this stage of the process. If your Program Team does not have someone excited about developing evaluation methods, this can be a great place to invite Planning Group or Steering Committee members to re-engage.

Agency Assessment and Evaluation

The Agency Assessment and Evaluation tool is designed to review agency responsiveness and sensitivity to victims' needs so as to invite reflection on how Parallel Justice principles are being implemented. The purpose of the Agency Assessment and Evaluation tool is to improve the policies, practices, and procedures of programs by recognizing how they are already championing the principles of Parallel Justice, and by identifying strategies to enhance their implementation of these principles.

Tip: Evaluation Resource

The United States Department of Justice, Office on Victims of Crime, Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTAC) has great online resources for program evaluation.

Reporting

Some questions to consider as you think about reporting are:

- Who do you need or want to keep informed?
- To whom should you send the information?
- How will it be delivered? (Is it submitted electronically online, sent in a spreadsheet via email, etc.?)
- Which information will be included for which audiences?
- How often will you generate reports?
- Is the information contained in reports going to become publicly available? Will reports be posted online?
- How can you use the data you generate to leverage more resources or build support for your program?

Reporting in Burlington

In Burlington, reporting is used to build connection to, and investment in, the program. The four reports we regularly generate are:

1. Quarterly grant reports, which go to our funders and address specific data points they have requested;

2. Quarterly and annual status reports, which go to our Parallel Justice Commission and Program Team. We want our Commissioners to be able to understand and describe what our program does, so our quarterly reports tell our story by sharing numbers and types of crimes, supports given, and quotes from surveys.

3. Parallel Justice Commission case review, which provides an annual synopsis of cases that were brought before the Parallel Justice Commission. This includes the type of crime, direct help for the individual, systemic gaps identified, positive and negative outcomes, follow-up actions pending, and systemic changes achieved.

4. A Community Report Card, which is distributed annually to businesses, service agencies, and Victims' Fund donors. It includes a donor honor roll and lists the numbers of victims contacted and served, the types of crimes experienced, and the services provided.

Part 7 - The Parallel Justice Commission: Creating Systemic Change

Does your community have an interagency team that can work together when a victim has complex needs? Can you envision a venue for community leaders to make policy and system-level changes on behalf of victims?

This interagency team can naturally grow out of your earlier stakeholder planning meetings. In fact, many of our Commission members were part of the original Planning Group. Burlington's Commission includes survivors, representatives from law enforcement, the state prosecutor's office (both a prosecutor and a victim advocate), sexual and domestic violence agencies, social services, and health care agencies.

In the planning stages, it is helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- Which agencies/organizations are interacting with victims regularly?
- Which leaders have the power to create change in their organizations?
- Will your Commission members be appointed or elected – and by whom?
- What will be the mission or charge of the Commission?

The Parallel Justice Commission as a Forum

The opportunity to address a Parallel Justice Commission comprised of decision-makers can be validating for a victim of crime. It allows individuals to share their experience in their own words without the constraints imposed by the criminal justice process. Furthermore, because a survivor may have sought assistance from these very agencies after the crime, there is a sense of "speaking truth to power" that can be extremely helpful in their healing process.

Commissioners as Agents of Change

As Commissioners become increasingly aware of the victims' issues and struggles, they are charged with using that knowledge to increase institutional responsiveness and sensitivity. This can be done by:

- Addressing intra-agency issues;
- Changing agency policies that make it difficult for victims to access resources;
- Addressing communication and collaboration problems between agencies;
- Creating new initiatives or resources to address unmet needs.

The Burlington Parallel Justice Commission

The Burlington Parallel Justice Commission is made up of local and state leaders, victim advocates, survivors of crime, social services providers, health care providers, and representatives from other organizations who often work with victims of crime.

Burlington created the Parallel Justice Commission to bring together the leaders of agencies who serve or work with victims and survivors. The charge of the Commission was twofold: to provide a forum for victims to tell their stories, and to use this information to identify systemic gaps in services and create a more coordinated community response to similar situations. This focus has evolved over time as the group takes greater ownership of its direction and seeks to address some of the barriers that victims encounter. The Commission meets quarterly to review cases, hear highlights of the program, and report on action items.

The Commission provides a formal venue for victims of crime to share their stories. This official forum helps to validate the experience of victims, while the commission is tasked with removing barriers to victim participation in the criminal justice process, and addressing systemic changes needed to better meet victims' needs.

In Burlington, Parallel Justice staff work closely with the Commission before and after a victim's case is presented. The process usually looks like this:

- Parallel Justice staff meet with the victim/survivor speaker in advance to orient the person and prepare a written case summary for reference at the meeting;
- Staff connect with specific Commissioners from agencies where the speaker identified a barrier to ensure their presence;
- Speaker shares their story with the Commission;
- Commissioners formally recognize that what happened to the speaker was wrong and offer an apology on behalf of the broader community;
- Commissioners may have questions that the survivor speaker may be willing to answer;
- After the speaker leaves, the group evaluates systemic problems identified by the speaker and/or staff;
- Commissioners assess follow-up tasks; Parallel Justice staff act as liaisons between service providers and the survivor speaker to oversee any action steps developed with the Commission;
- A thank-you letter is sent by the Commission's Chair on behalf of the entire group to each survivor speaker who shares their story with the Commission.

The Agency Self-Evaluation was developed to explore what the guiding principles of Parallel Justice might look like in an agency's practice. It evolved into an interview tool to help Commissioners assess how their organizations might improve their response to victims. As part of this process, the Program Team met with individual Commissioners to assess the ways they serve victims of crime through:

- Their internal policies, practices and procedures;
- Advocacy and collaboration; and
- Community outreach.

While many agencies already incorporate some Parallel Justice principles into practice, this provided an opportunity for them to consciously recognize these principles and think creatively about implementing policies and practices that enhance their sensitivity to victims' needs. This questionnaire has become a valuable way to enrich the Commission's efforts and responses to victims beyond the issues brought to light by specific cases.

Systemic Change Through Burlington's Parallel Justice Commission

Burlington's Parallel Justice Commission made systemic change related to procedural changes with how our local hospital's billing software codes victims. The new approach ensures that victims' accounts are not released to a collection agency without extra review by a billing supervisor, a best practice that has taken hold at other area hospitals. This momentum, in turn, allowed the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services to advance state legislation that codified this billing review into state law, an item which had long been on their legislative agenda, but likely would not have moved forward without the advocacy of the Vermont state representative who sat on the Commission.

Conclusion

We hope this guide has answered most of the questions you might have about our project in Burlington, sparked ideas about how you might bring your own version of Parallel Justice to your community. Whether you decide to go for a large and ambitious initiative or a simpler project, we hope you feel empowered that this important work can be done on a small budget with big results.

If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact the Parallel Justice Specialist at the Burlington Community Justice Center, (802-264-0764), or connect with us through our website at www.pjburlington.org. You can also contact the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services (802-241-1250), or visit their website at www.ccvs.vermont.gov to find out more about support for this important work.

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- **And most especially we wish to recognize all the victims and survivors of crime** we have the privilege of working with, whose ability to create a "new normal" in response to their experience speaks, above all, to their resilience.

Section IV: Appendix

Appendix 1: Overview of Program Planning and Community Needs Assessment

Questions and methods for eliciting information about the needs of your community.
Questions:

- What do you want to know?
- Who should you ask?
- How can you find out what you need to know about your community through other information resources?
- What are the direct experiences of crime victims?
- What are the met and unmet needs of victims?
- What are the concerns about crime in the community?

Methods:

- Host regional focus groups and/or a Town Hall-style meeting
- Distribute a paper survey
- Post an online survey
- Host a phone survey
- Write an article for local newspapers describing the program and asking for community input
- Appear on a local-access TV show describing the program and asking for community input
- Be interviewed by a journalist or be a guest on local radio show describing the program and asking for community input

- Support a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) with community partners
- Collect descriptions of experiences & success stories for serving victims

Collect Information about:

- Barriers to helping victims (by asking local service providers and advocacy groups)
- Crime-related needs currently met or unmet (by asking victim services providers)
- Interagency collaborations that do or do not work well (through a gathering of local service providers)
- Local and state providers of victims' resources/information
- Local agency strengths and challenges in helping victims
- Safety nets currently in place
- Gaps in existing services
- Types of crimes with accessible (language/ability/etc.) supports
- Types of crimes that lack resources for victim support
- Types of victims who are currently well-supported
- Populations who do not access resources (and ask why)
- Local and state victims' services program
- Sexual and domestic violence agencies
- Prosecution and law enforcement-based advocates
- Peer support and advocacy groups
- State agencies; human services, child welfare, corrections, disability, financial support, health care, education…

Appendix 2: Agency and Self-Assessment and Evaluation Tool

This list, while far from complete, illustrates ways that the Guiding Principles of Parallel Justice can be applied in policy, procedure, and practice. The "yes/no" checklist format may be changed into open-ended questions to be used as an interview tool that encourages dialogue and provides more qualitative responses.

Directions – Read through the lists and check YES for any item that is currently in place, NO if this item is not currently in place in your community, or IN PROCESS if your agency is actively working toward this goal.

Section One: Effective and Supportive Assistance	YES	NO	IN PROCESS
Overall, we make victims a priority.	☐	☐	☐
• Are victims given priority in accessing services/resources?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you have policies specific to working with victims?	☐	☐	☐
• Is this reflected in your mission statement or other guiding documents?	☐	☐	☐
• Is there a process for addressing barriers to services at your agency?	☐	☐	☐
• **Comments:** What ideas do you have about how victim are (or could) be given priority to accessing your services?			
Overall, victims are treated with respect.	☐	☐	☐
• Are staff members coached to maintain a professional tone in all interactions with victims? Is this the practice?	☐	☐	☐
• Is there an agency commitment to respond to victims' calls and emails within a given time frame?	☐	☐	☐
• Are staff members trained in how to engage with victims?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you offer choices to victims and support them in the choices they make?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you have a process to address complaints?	☐	☐	☐
Comments: What ideas do you have about how to make your services more respectful for victims of crime?			
Overall, victims are presumed credible unless there is reason to believe otherwise.	☐	☐	☐
• Is this belief reflected in policies/procedure/practices?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you require "proving" that a crime happened for a victim to receive assistance?	☐	☐	☐
• Are there ways to do that without filing a police report?	☐	☐	☐
• Are staff members coached not to blame victims or minimize victims' experiences?	☐	☐	☐

Comments: How do staff members demonstrate that they believe a victim's story?

Section One: Effective and Supportive Assistance - continued	YES	NO	IN PROCESS
Overall, we try to prevent further harm.	☐	☐	☐
• Do you emphasize compassion as a cornerstone of your interactions with clients?	☐	☐	☐
• Are front-line staff members aware of common needs that victims have?	☐	☐	☐
• Are staff members trained in the ways in which your agency can specifically help victims?	☐	☐	☐
• Are staff members trained on the ways in which victims' traumas might affect how victims interact with them?	☐	☐	☐
• Are victims offered choices about which staff members will assist them, and how?	☐	☐	☐
• Is prevention a regular part of your agency's strategic planning?	☐	☐	☐
Comments: What are your ideas about how to help victims avoid feeling re-victimized?			
Overall, we help victims rebuild their lives.	☐	☐	☐
Do you help victims consider strengths in themselves, their families and their community in their recovery process?	☐	☐	☐
Do you have a mechanism to waive fees for crime victims?	☐	☐	☐
Do you have dedicated staff members who work with crime victims?	☐	☐	☐
Can you help with out-of-pocket, crime-related expenses? (For example: lost wages, medical expenses, pain and suffering, alternative healing such as massage or stress management, emergency housing, emergency child and/or pet care, job training/replacement, safety needs, property repair/replacement.)	☐	☐	☐
Do you provide financial assistance for crime-related losses?	☐	☐	☐
If yes, is that assistance ☐ flexible? ☐ somewhat flexible? ☐ inflexible?			
Do staff members know which resources exist in your area to help crime victims?	☐	☐	☐
Do staff members know where to refer a victim with questions that staff cannot answer?	☐	☐	☐
Do staff members initiate referrals for crime victims to other agencies if appropriate?	☐	☐	☐
Comments: What are your ideas about how you can increase support to victims in re-building their lives?			

Section One: Effective and Supportive Assistance - continued	YES	NO	IN PROCESS
Overall, safety is a top priority.	☐	☐	☐
• Have you thought about ways your agency's response might contribute to a victim's continued insecurity after a crime?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you prioritize victims' safety in your policies/procedure/practices?	☐	☐	☐
• Should safety be included in your mission statement or other guiding documents to address the safety of victims?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you have policies specific to working with victims?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you prioritize assisting victims in regaining their safety?	☐	☐	☐
• Do your policies allow flexibility in responding to a victim's safety concerns?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you have emergency access? Do you publicize that information? Are staff members aware of how to implement it?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you offer resources to help with safety concerns?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you know what other resources there are in your community to help with safety concerns?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you know where to find resources to help with safety planning?	☐	☐	☐
• Are you able to provide safety planning?	☐	☐	☐
• Do your outreach materials include safety information?	☐	☐	☐
Comments: What are your ideas about increasing options to support victim safety?			

Section Two: Outreach, Education and Evaluation	YES	NO	IN PROCESS
Overall, we help victims share their stories and needs.	☐	☐	☐
• Do staff members validate victims' experiences and needs?	☐	☐	☐
• Do staff members allow time for dialogue during their interactions with victims?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you offer referrals in a way that reduces the need for victims to repeatedly tell their stories?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you have a process for victims to share their stories and receive support/recognition of the harm caused by crime?	☐	☐	☐
Comments – What other ideas do you have to support victims in sharing their stories and articulating their needs?			
Overall, our outreach efforts keep victims in mind.	☐	☐	☐
• Are your outreach materials accessible to a variety of populations (printed in multiple languages, large print, video in American Sign Language, etc.)?	☐	☐	☐
• Do outreach materials use best practices (reading level, language choice, use of pictures) for accessibility?	☐	☐	☐

Section Two: Outreach, Education and Evaluation continued	YES	NO	IN PROCESS
Overall, our outreach efforts keep victims in mind. (continued)	☐	☐	☐
• Do outreach and educational materials include victims as a priority audience?	☐	☐	☐
• Do outreach efforts educate partners about what they can do/what you do for victims?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you use a variety of media to educate community members?	☐	☐	☐
• Is reaching victims a consideration in choosing locations for outreach materials?	☐	☐	☐
Comments: What are your ideas about improving your outreach efforts while keeping victims in mind?			
Overall, we acknowledge that crime is harmful, and strive to help.	☐	☐	☐
• Is it your practice to acknowledge that what happened to the victim was wrong?	☐	☐	☐
• Is it your practice to provide resources for victims to help them address as many crime-related needs as possible?	☐	☐	☐
• Does your organization have a philosophy about victimization?	☐	☐	☐
Comments – What are your ideas about how to improve how you acknowledge how crime is wrong and support a victim's need for support?			
Overall, victims provide input on our policies and practices.	☐	☐	☐
• Do you have mechanisms to elicit feedback about your agency's services? (focus groups, surveys, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
• Do you ask for feedback from clients while working with them about decisions made or referrals suggested?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you offer ways for victims to serve on study committees?	☐	☐	☐
• Has an independent evaluator assessed your organization and measured the ways in which you include victims and survivors in providing input about policies and practices?	☐	☐	☐
Comments – What are your ideas about how to increase input from victims and survivors on program policies and practices?			
Section Three: Advocacy and Collaboration with Other Systems	YES	NO	IN PROCESS
Overall, we support and help enforce victims' rights.	☐	☐	☐
• If you are part of a multi-disciplinary team, has the team considered issues related to victims' rights and/or concerns?	☐	☐	☐
• Have you advocated for victims' rights within collaborative efforts in the past?	☐	☐	☐

Section Three: Advocacy and Collaboration with Other Systems - continued	YES	NO	IN PROCESS
Overall, we support and help enforce victims' rights. - continued	☐	☐	☐
• Are staff members encouraged to challenge existing policies that are barriers to victims' rights?	☐	☐	☐
Comments - What are your ideas about supporting and enforcing victim's rights?			
Overall, we help provide a coordinated community response to victims' needs.	☐	☐	☐
• Do you pool resources with other organizations to leverage assistance?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you work with other agencies to find creative solutions to recurring or unique problems?	☐	☐	☐
Comments – What are your ideas about how to improve a coordinated community response for victims of crime?	☐	☐	☐

Once you have completed the assessment, review and summarize your results. Where are your strengths? What areas are in-progress? What areas need initial development? Did different people provide different assessments of where your program is positioned each aspect? The summary of your assessment can guide fruitful conversations with your advisory team, your program staff and with your community partners. This information can help you prioritize the direction and amount of time you devote to each phase of program development.

Appendix 3: Application for Financial Assistance

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____ Email: _____

Address _____ City_____ State _____ Zip _____

Because Parallel Justice is funded with federal money, our grantors would like to know how you identify yourself. (Answers will not affect eligibility for services or the services you receive.)
I am:
___ A person with a disability
___ American Indian or Alaskan Native
___ Asian or Pacific Islander
___ Black (not of Hispanic Origin)
___ Hispanic
___ Multi-Racial
___ White (not of Hispanic Origin)
___ I choose not to answer

If you accept financial assistance from Parallel Justice for expenses incurred as result of a crime, we reserve the right to share information with the State's Attorney Victims' Advocate in order to pursue restitution if a case is brought against an offender.

Otherwise, information we collect from you is confidential and will remain confidential unless you authorize us to speak with one of the agencies listed below: [Adapt to list your local organizations.]

__ The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services (Compensation or Restitution Units)
__ The Burlington Police Department
__ The Vermont State's Attorney Office (such as speaking with the victim advocate)
__ The Burlington Community Justice Center (Restorative Panel, Graffiti Removal Team, etc.)
__ Other/Notes on circumstances under which information can be shared:
_____

_____

How did you hear about this program? (please check all that apply)

___ Parallel Justice contacted me
___ Police Officer
___ Parallel Justice brochure
___ Parallel Justice poster
___ Web advertisement
___ TV public service announcement
___ Radio PSA
___ Word of mouth
___ Victim Advocate
___ Other: _____

Kind of incident: _____ Location & date: _____
Police incident report #_____ and/or Investigating officer _____

If there is no police report, we will also need you to complete a sworn statement.

Please answer the following questions about the incident, to the best of your ability.

- How has the crime affected you?
- Were you physically hurt? Yes No
    - If so, are you still affected by these injuries? Yes No
    - Did you receive medical treatment? Yes No
    - Please describe any safety concerns you have because of the crime:

- Describe any other ways that the crime is affecting you or others close to you: (Fear, emotions, sleep difficulty, hypervigilance, anxiety…)
- Describe any property that was damaged or lost because of the crime:
- What are the impacts of not replacing or repairing any losses to property?
- Describe your financial losses because of the crime. (Be as specific as you can.)
- Do friends and/or family (immediate or extended) know about the crime? Yes No

Do you have insurance that could help with any of your losses? (Health, auto, home, renters, etc…)

- What are your deductibles on any insurance policy that may provide assistance?
- How would your budget be affected by covering your crime-related expenses out-of-pocket?
- What other financial resources could you use for these expenses? (Using money in savings, a gift or loan from family or friends, waiting until you get paid again, etc.)
- Without financial assistance, would you have to divert money from other basic needs (food/rent/utilities) to cover your crime-related expenses:

  - For this month? Yes No
  - For next month? Yes No
- May we share your story (without your name or personal identifying information) to promote the Parallel Justice program and help support other victims? Yes No

By signing below, I agree that the information on this document is truthful and accurate and that the needs I identified are a direct result of a crime.

Signature of Applicant_____ Date_____

Signature of parent or guardian (if under 18) _____ Date_____

Appendix 4: Questions for Victims about the Crime's Impact

The questions below are designed to identify and counteract the impacts of a crime. These are concrete and open-ended questions. The repetition among questions is intentional so as to allow staff to find wording/language that works best for them.

General Questions:

- What do you most want us to know about what happened?
- What is the most important part about this situation for you?
- What has been the most significant impact on you: what has changed or affected you the most?
- How might you feel if no one is caught or held responsible for this crime?
- How might you prepare yourself for that possibility?
- What would help you start to become, or feel, better?
- What do you need?
- What can you do to take care of yourself?
- What helps you relax?
- What helps you feel connected to your friends/family/community?
- What would you most like from your friends/family/community?
- Have you asked for something that you have not received yet from them?
- Are you afraid of this crime happening again? What do you think might happen and why?
- What ideas do you have about how to lessen the chance or impact if the crime did happen again?

Safety-Related Questions:

- How do you feel about doing *(X)* again (going to your car, walking to the store, etc.)?
- What could help you feel more comfortable doing *(X)* again?
- What are you no longer comfortable doing?
- What are you most afraid of happening?
- How are you feeling right now?
- How often have you thought about this since it happened?
- When you think about it, how do you feel?
- How have your family/roommates/kids reacted?
- Who do you have that you can talk to?
- What has been the reaction of your friends/roommates/work when you talk to them about this?
- Are you afraid of it happening again?

- How do you think you might feel if no one is caught or held responsible for this crime?
- How might you prepare yourself for that possibility?

Questions After an Assault:

- I'm here to listen if you'd like to tell me your story, but I won't ask you to re-live the assault. We are available to support you either way.
- How are you physically feeling now (physically, emotionally)?
- Did you get any medical care? How were those expenses covered?
- What kinds of support did you have at that time/do you have support now for visiting the doctor, etc.…?
- Have you had other physical side effects since the assault?
- Is there something about your experience that you'd really like me to know?
- How do you feel about what happened?
- How do you feel about doing *(X)* again (going to your car, walking to the store, etc.)?
- How often have you thought about this since it happened?
- What could help you feel more comfortable doing *(X)* again?
- What things do you feel uncomfortable doing since the assault?
- How has this impacted your daily routine?
- Has it affected your sleep? Appetite? Concentration?
- What are you most afraid of happening?
- How have your family/roommates/kids/work reacted?
- Do you have someone that you can talk to/go to for support?
- What has been the reaction of your friends/roommates/work when you talk to them about this?
- Do you know the person who did it? How do you feel knowing/not knowing?
- Have you seen that person since? What happened? What was that experience like?
- What have you heard from the officer about the investigation since it happened?
- Are you afraid of it happening again? What do you think might happen and why?
- What ideas do you have about how to lessen that chance or the impact if it did?
- What do you need?
- What can you do to take care of yourself?
- What helps you relax?
- What helps you feel connected to your friends/family/community?
- What would you most like from your friends/family/community?
- Have you asked for something you have not yet received from them?
- What would feel supportive to you right now? What would have felt supportive then?
- How do you think you might feel if no one is caught or held responsible for this crime?

- How might you prepare yourself for that possibility?

Questions After a Burglary/Robbery/Theft:

- When did you discover what happened?
- How were you able to temporarily secure/protect your house/car?
- What could you do to protect your privacy while you're waiting to have it repaired?
- Was what was taken special to you?
- What investigation have you done to find what was taken (CL, pawnshops, etc.)?
- Do you have any idea who might have done this? How do you feel, knowing/not knowing?
- Have you seen this person/these people since? What happened? What was it like to see them again?
- Have you heard anything from your neighbors about it?
- Did you feel that it was intended as a personal attack?
- Are you afraid of it happening again? What do you think might happen and why?
- What ideas do you have about how to lessen that chance or the impact if it did happen again?
- What have you heard from the officer about the investigation since it happened?
- How do you feel about being at home, at work, wherever it happened?
- How often have you thought about this since it happened?
- What could help you feel more comfortable doing *(X)* again?
- What things do you feel uncomfortable doing since?
- How has this impacted your daily routine?
- Has it affected your sleep? Appetite? Concentration?
- How are you feeling right now?
- When you think about it, how do you feel?
- How have your family/roommates/kids/colleagues reacted?
- Do you have someone you can talk to about this?
- What has been the reaction of your friends/roommates/work when you talk to them about this?
- Is there someone who can stay with you? /Someone you can stay with?
- Do you know how to get things replaced (renter's/homeowner's insurance, etc.)?
- Did you buy any of the stolen things recently with a credit card?
- Have you talked to your landlord? What did he say? Was his response satisfactory to you?
- How do you think you might feel if no one is caught or held responsible for this crime?
- How might you prepare yourself for that possibility?
- What might you want/need from your neighbors or any other supports, if anything?

Questions After Vandalism:

- When did you discover what had happened?
- What was the extent of the damage?
- How could /did you temporarily secure/protect your home/ garage/ car?
- What could you do to protect your privacy while you're waiting to have it repaired?
- How did you feel about what happened?
- Where are you in terms of getting it fixed?
- How much will the repairs be?
- Is it covered by insurance? How much is your deductible? Do you know what you need to do to file a claim?
- How were you going to pay to repair it?
- Do you have any idea who it might have been? How do you feel knowing/not knowing?
- Have you heard anything from your neighbors about it?
- Did you feel like it was intended as a personal attack?
- Was anything that was damaged special to you?
- Are you afraid of it happening again? What do you think might happen and why?
- What ideas do you have about how to lessen that chance or the impact if it did?

Questions After Vehicle Damage**:**

- What was the extent of the damage?
- Where are you in terms of getting it fixed?
- How could you/ did you temporarily secure/protect your car?
- How much will the repairs be?
- Is it covered by insurance? How much is your deductible? Do you know what you need to do to file a claim?
- How were you going to pay to repair it?
- Was anything stolen? Were those things special to you?
- Do you have any idea who it might have been? How do you feel knowing/not knowing?
- Have you heard anything from your neighbors about it?
- What do you use your car for on a weekly or daily basis? What things can't you use it for now?
- How have you been getting around? How has that affected your schedule?
- Can you drive it to a repair place? If not, how will you it there? Do you know anyone with AAA?
- Are you afraid of it happening again? What do you think might happen and why?
- What ideas do you have about how to lessen that chance or the impact if it did?
- What are you thinking about things you might or might not do differently in the future?

Questions Related to Financial Resources:
Make space for victims to identify and prioritize their needs. If you have a victims' fund, these questions can help you discern how to best utilize that resource:

- What do you most need help paying for?
- What is your top priority?
- How can getting (x,y,z) replaced / doing (x,y,z) help you feel safer?
- Do you have family for friends who can help with these expenses?
- What other resources do you know of that can help you cover this expense?

Questions related to Substantiation:
When there is no police report, the following list of alternative ways to verify a theft can help "substantiate" the individual's financial losses:

Theft of money:

- Who was the check from?
- How much was it for?
- What is your hourly wage?
- Where do you usually cash/deposit your check and when?
- Is there a clerk that you usually see who can verify that?
- How much did you have with you when your cash was stolen?
- How much had you spent out of the cashed amount, and on what?

Theft of a bicycle:

- Where did you get your bike?
- Do you have a sales receipt or credit card statement? A cancelled check?
- If a bike was bought second-hand online, for example, can you provide an email chain?
- Describe any dings, noticeable markings, or mechanical problems on the bike.
- What kind of suspension did your bike have? Front and back?
- Who else knows that your bike was stolen? May I talk to them?
- Is there a co-worker who can verify that you usually rode your bike to work?

Questions for a third party corroborating a crime:

- How do you two know each other?
- When did you first hear about what happened to *(name)*?

Appendix 5: Sample Call Script

Put the most relevant information at the beginning of your call. If your program is a collaboration among multiple agencies, listing all their names can be confusing. It is best to keep your message short and sweet. Ask the person if this is a good time to talk; this provides the person a chance to decide their time and interest in utilizing your services, and is a way to help build empowerment from the very first interaction.

Example: "Hi, my name is ___ and I work with a program of the *(police department/ agency/center)* called Parallel Justice. We work with crime victims and I'm calling to follow up on a report you made about ___. First, I want to say that what happened to the your was wrong and we are here to help. I am calling to ask how you are doing and if you need any assistance? Is this a good time to talk?"

If you are leaving a message on voicemail, keep your message general without providing specifics about the incident or implying that the person you are trying to contact is a victim.

Example: "I am calling to follow up on a report we received."

NOTE: If there is even a hint of domestic violence in the incident that led to your call, avoid leaving a message, and make your call from a blocked number.

Appendix 6: Policies and Procedures

Parallel Justice Principles and Related Practices in Burlington

Victims get help rebuilding their lives through:

- Emotional support & validation.
- System navigation assistance.
- Advocacy with agencies and systems.
- Victims' fund – financial assistance available.
- In-kind donations from businesses and community members.

Victims deserve justice.

- Parallel Justice exists, and was tailored to help underserved victims.
- Commissioners evaluate their agency's responses.

Victims are presumed credible unless there is reason to believe otherwise.

- No police report is needed to access services.
- Substantiation by law enforcement is not required to access services.
- Assistance is rarely denied because of credibility concerns.
- Referrals from other professionals are sufficient for substantiation (doctor, clergy, SV/DV providers).

Safety is the top priority.

- Staff provides safety planning.
- We provide advocacy with police department.
- We provide advocacy with other providers.
- Speedy response time is our goal.
- Financial assistance is available quickly, and is flexible.

Victims experience no further harm.

- By securing safety quickly, further harm is less likely.
- We maintain confidentiality with system-based advocates (except in mandated-reporting situations, which we explain to the individual in advance).
- Service methods focuses on self- empowerment and choice.
- We utilize trauma-informed practices.
- Advocacy for case management by other agencies is given when needed.
- Victims' Fund assistance helps prevent downward spiral.

Victims' rights are afforded whenever possible.

- Advocacy is provided within the criminal justice system.
- Parallel Justice Commission works on system-level issues.
- Referrals are made to civil justice venues when appropriate.

Victims can share their stories and needs.

- The Parallel Justice Commission is available as a venue for victim/survivors to share their stories.
- We listen a lot, and then we listen some more.
- Services provided are victim-driven, not "cookie cutter."

Victims should be told that what happened to them was wrong, and that every effort will be made to help them rebuild their lives.

- Every call from Parallel Justice staff/volunteers apologizes and offers assistance.
- Police officers are trained in victim sensitivity and to apologize at outset.
- Referrals are provided to other agencies.
- Advocacy is provided with other agencies for assistance.
- Technical assistance is provided to folks outside our service area with referrals to information, etc.

Response to needs is a coordinated effort.

- Relationships are maintained among agencies (police/community/courts).
- Advocacy for case management by other agencies is provided when needed.
- Commission case studies address system-level issues.

Actions/decisions are data-driven.

- Program efficacy is tracked with evaluation "logic model."
- Database collects statistical information on cases.
- Victim surveys are carefully considered.
- Prevention/harm reduction campaigns address hot topics.
- Efficacy of prevention/harm reduction campaigns is studied.

Appendix 7: Model Standards for Serving Victims and Survivors of Crime

There are no formal regulatory boards that oversee or guide the diverse array of victim assistance programs operating throughout the United States, yet there is a growing trend within some states toward greater standardization of training and practice....Most individual practitioners and program administrators don't have time to explore the literature or websites of related fields when developing their own organizational policies and procedures or identifying the professional development needs of their staff.

To address this problem, the National Victim Assistance Standards Consortium identified standards that were common among a broad array of professions that support the mission and vision of the victim services field. Then, with input from national, state, local, and tribal victim assistance experts throughout the United States, the Consortium developed Ethical Standards as a capacity-building resource applicable within many different victim service settings.

Achieving Excellence: Model Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime (Model Standards) as developed for individual victim service practitioners and program administrators. It is intended to promote the competency and ethical integrity of victim service providers, in order to enhance their capacity to provide high-quality, consistent responses to crime victims and to meet the demands facing the field today. We recommend you spend significant time exploring the section of the OVC website[14] devoted to the Model Standards and accessing the tremendous wisdom of hundreds of practitioners contained therein.

These model standards are broken down into three component parts;

1. Program Standards
2. Competency Standards
3. Ethical Standards

[14] https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/program_standards.html

Appendix 8: Parallel Justice Confidentiality Agreement for Volunteers and Employees

Confidential records and personal information received by, and maintained at, the Burlington Police Department and Community Justice Center are strictly confidential. I understand that in the course of my volunteering with the Burlington Police Department and Community Justice Center, I may become aware of confidential personal information and that I am prohibited from divulging or communicating this information, except as required in the performance of my duties, both while I am employed/volunteering and after my volunteering has ended.

I agree to respect others' rights to confidentiality and privacy, whether they are victims, associates, or offenders. I agree to access and use personal information only as permitted in the performance of my duties or as otherwise directed by my supervisor.

I agree to preserve the confidentiality of all information relating to others and to not divulge this information in any way, except to another person authorized to receive the information or as required by law. Any breach of my promise, whether or not I am at work and during and after my volunteer position by the Burlington Police Department and Community Justice Center, will be taken seriously. Any violation may result in legal or disciplinary action, including termination of my employment/volunteer/intern position.

By signing below, I represent and warrant that:

(a) I have read and understand this Confidentiality Agreement,

(b) I understand and agree that I am responsible for maintaining and protecting the confidentiality of all personal information that I become aware of during the course of my employment/volunteer position at the Burlington Community Justice Center and Burlington Police Department, and

(c) I agree to be bound by the terms of this Confidentiality Agreement

_____ _____

Signature of volunteer/intern Date

_____ _____

Signature of supervisor Date

Reaffirmation of the Confidentiality Agreement: To be signed again at the end of employment or volunteer service.

I understand and agree that I am still bound by the terms of this agreement as I leave my employment/volunteer position with the Burlington Community Justice Center and Burlington Police Department

_____ _____

Signature of volunteer/intern Date

_____ _____

Signature of supervisor Date

Appendix 9: Parallel Justice Volunteer Agreement Form

I, _____, the undersigned Parallel Justice Volunteer, understand and agree to the following principles and practices as basic concepts designed to maintain standards of high quality help for victims of crime and to promote proactive change that will challenge the conditions that allow this violence to occur in our community.

1. FIRST AND FOREMOST:

- I will keep the concerns of victims of crime foremost at all times, abide by the policies of the Burlington Parallel Justice, and embody the PJ's mission statement.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY:

- I will not give out the name, phone number, address, or any other identifying information of any volunteer of the PJ.
- I will not give out the home phone numbers or addresses of any staff person of the PJ.
- I will under no circumstances disclose information about victims/clients, which includes name, where they live, and details about the case, or anything they say.
- I will under no circumstances transport clients in my car, nor will I bring clients onto my own private property, nor will I meet with clients privately, except with permission of staff.
- All PJ meetings are confidential and I will not disclose any names or anything said. Information may be shared as needed with other members of the PJ team.

3. MEDIA

- I will not talk to the media as a PJ representative unless appointed to do so. When involved in any PJ activity, I will not answer questions from the media. I will forward all media inquiries to the PJ office at _____.

4. COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE

- As a Victim Liaison Volunteer, Intern or work-study volunteer, I will attend all meetings for that committee of which I am a member. If it is necessary to miss a meeting, I will call the committee coordinator. If I miss more than three meetings, my actions may result in dismissal.

5. TERMINATION OF VOLUNTEER MEMBERSHIP: I understand I may be terminated as a PJ volunteer if:

- I reveal confidential information.
- I fail to cover shifts that I am scheduled for.
- I miss more than three meetings/shifts per year without reason (i.e. illness, job, family, etc.).
- I do not meet acceptable standards of performance as a PJ volunteer.

AS A VOLUNTEER:

- I agree to volunteer at least two hours per week for a one-year commitment.
- If I am unable to fill a shift I will find a replacement and/or call the PJ Volunteer Coordinator to let them know of the change.
- If I do not show up at the beginning of a shift I have agreed to, I understand that I may be put on probation for one month. During this time, I will be required to check in with the PJ Specialist at the start of each shift. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from my volunteer position.
- I will only meet victims/service users in a public place or at the Burlington Police Department. Any other arrangements must be cleared by a staff person.
- As a volunteer, I will utilize the Parallel Justice Specialist for supervision on a monthly basis to review cases and receive feedback on best practice.

The Parallel Justice Program does not assume responsibility for any damage to property or for personal injury that I may suffer while performing volunteer duties, nor will the Parallel Justice Program indemnify or otherwise assume responsibility or liability for acts of their volunteers.

I have read and I fully understand the terms and conditions of this agreement as a: (Please initial all that apply). If you join another committee at a later date, please initial and date that amendment.

___ Victim Support Volunteer

___ Administrative Support Volunteer

_____ _____

Volunteer Date

_____ _____

Staff Date

Appendix 10: Table of contents from The Burlington Parallel Justice Volunteer Handbook

This may be helpful to you as a starting place for developing your own volunteer handbook.

- Welcome
- Defining Parallel Justice
- Six Core Victims' Rights
- The Parallel Justice Process--a Brief Overview
- Confidentiality Policy
- Policy and Procedures at the Burlington Police Department
- Parallel Justice Volunteer Policy
- Volunteer Agreement Form
- Sexual Harassment/Discrimination Policy
- Phone System
- Support Skills
- Tips for Supporting Victims of Crime
- Glossary of Legal Terms
- Cultural Competence Overview
- Language & Translation Resources
- Working with Juveniles
- Helpful Forms: Call Tracking, Timesheets, Applications, etc.

Appendix 11: Parallel Justice Victim Survey

This survey is mailed/emailed at the closure of a case. Surveys are returned in an addressed, postage-paid envelope or emailed to an identified neutral organization so victims may feel free to express their opinions. You can add a space for name and contact information as an option.

I worked with *(PJ staff)* _____ Date: _____

- How did you find out about Parallel Justice?
- What type of crime impacted you?
- Did you report the incident to the police? Yes No If not, why not?
- After the crime occurred, how long was it before you were contacted by the Parallel Justice Program?
- Was the Parallel Justice staff/volunteer timely in responding to you?
- What services did Parallel Justice provide to you?
- What could have been more helpful?
- How well did the Parallel Justice program help you restore your sense of safety?
- If Parallel Justice staff/volunteers were unable to provide the support you needed, did they explain why? Yes No
- How well did the Parallel Justice staff do to help you feel more knowledgeable about the criminal justice system, your case, police procedure, and your rights as a victim?
- How did working with Parallel Justice affect your view of the Police Department and the City, if at all?
- How helpful were any referrals to other agencies?
- Overall, do you have any suggestions to improve the Parallel Justice program?
- Is there anything else you would like us to know? Is there anything else we can do for you?
- Without sharing your name or identifying information, may we quote from what you have written in a public evaluation of the project or to help promote the project?

Appendix 12: Burlington Parallel Justice Commission

The Parallel Justice Commission is charged with acting as: 1) a forum for victims to speak "truth to power" by sharing their stories without constraints of the criminal justice system, and 2) a collaborative, multi-disciplinary team focused on addressing barriers that victims face by making changes in intra-agency policies, procedures, and processes, and improving inter-agency relationships, connections and collaborations.

The Commission views its mission as works to coordinate community resources and create systemic changes for victims of crime through the partnership of state and local leaders. Likewise, the Commission envisions a community where crime victims are respected, validated, and supported.

Case Presentation Process

- The Commission convenes before a presenter (victim/affected party) arrives and the Commission Liaison reviews basics of the case summary before the presenter joins the meeting. The Liaison then invites staff and presenter to enter.

- The Liaison introduces the presenter and staff, Commissioners introduce themselves and share what agency represent.

- The group reviews expectations around confidentiality process.

- The presenter or staff presents specifics of the case for about 10-20 minutes.

- During the presentation, the Commissioners listen, take notes, and identify potential areas for systems changes.

- After the presenter finishes, the Liaison thanks them for sharing and acknowledges the harm they experienced.

- The Commissioners may write clarifying questions on 3x5 index cards which are passed to staff member to ask the presenter, if presenter is willing. The presenter can choose to answer or not answer any question.
- The Commission Liaison escorts the presenter from the meeting and may debrief with them privately.

- The Commissioners discuss case in Executive Session.

- Additional information may be presented by the staff or other Commissioners.

- Systemic problems raised by the staff or presenter are evaluated.

- The Commissioners look at policies, practices, and procedures needed to help their agencies to better serve crime victims.

- A plan of action is created and next steps are identified by the Commission.

- After the meeting, a staff member follows up with the presenter to review work on issues specific to presenter's case, and if applicable, obtain a signed release for the Commissioners.

- The Commission Chair sends a thank-you note on behalf of the Commission.

- Next steps and expected outcomes are communicated to the presenter as appropriate.

- Six-month follow-up letter is sent to the presenter outlining follow-up work that was undertaken or formally closes the case.

Reminders for Commissioners when hearing cases:

Please show support by:

- Silence your cell phone and putting away any food;
- Listen respectfully and attentively;
- Make eye contact;
- Keep your body language friendly and open;
- When speaking, try to mirror the speaker's words to describe themselves and their experience (ie: victim/ survivor; assault/rape, mugging/theft, gender pronouns…);
- Validate the speaker's experience and acknowledge that what happened to them was wrong;
- Believe what the speaker says as their truth.

Please avoid:

- Offering advice or sharing your own experience;
- Checking your phone or watch, focusing on papers, eating;
- Sharing comments that can minimize the speaker's experience (especially by comparing their experience to other crimes);
- Asking why the presenter did or did not do something in response to the incident or why they may have done or not done something (which can imply blame);
- Becoming defensive about your agency's role;
- Sharing details about the case with others.

Suggestions for debriefing a case presentation:

Commissioners can ask the following questions to lead their discussion after a case presentation.

- What systems were accessed by this victim?

- What other systems might this person have accessed?

- What are the system-level issues (barriers to access, inadequate resources, gaps in services etc…) the victim encountered (or could have encountered?)

- If this situation had happened at your organization, what barriers or issues (in terms of policy, practices, procedures) would the victim potentially face?

- What are the resources needed to address these needs?
- What other organizations could help to meet these needs?
- What action steps are needed to address these issues?
- Who needs to be contacted in order to address these issues?

Appendix 13: Outreach and Media Relations

We have a media kit ready to share with businesses or individuals when we ask for donations and raise awareness about the program. The Kit includes a letter of introduction, our brochure, and recent press/newspaper clippings. Tailor your letter of introduction to the person/business you are addressing with a clear request for action.

Outreach to Other Organizations:
One way we have increased referrals to our program is by talking with staff at other social service agencies. Think of the variety of cases they are most likely to see, and be ready with examples of how your program can help in those situations.

Media Toolkit:
The Parallel Justice Commission worked with local professionals to create a best practices guide for local media outlets reporting on local crime. Because our community is a small one, reporters often begin their careers here, and then move on to larger communities. This means that we have ongoing opportunities to educate reporters about best practices for reporting on crime. Our small size also means an anonymized report about a sexual assault could inadvertently include details that identify the victim or their family.

Many examples of media toolkits are found online that you can adapt for your media market, common types of crimes, and reporting styles. It can be helpful to have letters to the editor ready to address common issues such as victim-blaming or misconceptions about what a victim's "normal" reaction should be after the crime.

A terrific resource for traditional media outreach can be found through the Office for Victims of Crime's 2017 NCVRW Resource Guide[15] and includes information on writing a press release, a letter to the editor and an opinion-editorial column along with examples of each.

[15] https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2017/images/en_artwork/2017NCVRW_SectionPDFs/2017NCVRW_Communicating-TraditionalMedia_508.pdf