



Healing for Crime Victims with Incarceration Histories

Request for Letters of Interest for technical assistance to improve access to victim services for crime victims with incarceration histories

We offer this Request for Letters of Interest in English and Spanish. We can also provide the Request for Letters of Interest in Word, plain text, or large print electronic formats, and in other languages by request. If American Sign Language (ASL) is your preferred language, we can schedule a virtual meeting to discuss this solicitation with an ASL interpreter.

If you need this Request for Letters of Interest in an alternative format or language, if you would like to request a virtual meeting in ASL, or if you have any other questions about this solicitation, please contact Kaitlin Kall. She can be reached at kkall@vera.org or 212-376-3063.

Submission

Letters of interest are due by 8:59 PM EST on November 20, 2018.

Application materials should be submitted online via Submittable at the following link: <https://vera.submittable.com/submit/126428/healing-for-crime-victims-with-incarceration-histories-pilot>.

The Submittable online application is available in both English and Spanish. The Submittable process allows you to upload and attach files in

Word, plain text, and PDF formats. If you prefer to submit your applications materials via mail, please send to:

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Summary of the Project

Through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (NRC) – a collaborative effort to bring healing services and justice to more survivors of crime in the United States – is soliciting letters of interest from local communities to participate in a pilot project to improve access to healing services for crime victims with incarceration histories. The NRC will work with a local collaboration of victim service providers and reentry service providers to identify gaps and barriers to victim services for crime victims with incarceration histories and create better pathways to healing for these victims. For this pilot project, we will select one collaboration, comprised of at least one victim services agency and one organization that provides reentry services. To apply, prospective collaborations must submit a joint letter of interest.

Over an 8-month period, we will provide technical assistance to the selected collaboration to support their efforts to identify needs and close service gaps for crime victims with incarceration histories. We will also work with local partners to devise a funding strategy to sustain the work and vision of their collaboration once the 8-month project period ends.

I. Background

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, people in state/federal prisons, in local jails, and on probation report higher lifetime rates of

physical and sexual abuse than people in the general public.¹ We know less about the victimization experiences of individuals post-incarceration, but research tells us that justice-involved people experience high rates of violence throughout their lifetimes.

Examples include:

- Of women surveyed in jail, 86 percent had experienced sexual violence and 77 percent had experienced intimate partner violence.²
- A study of recently released men and women who returned home to the Boston area found that 25 percent of participants had survived being shot or stabbed in their lifetimes.³
- Thirty-four percent of transgender people in prisons and jails reported experiencing sexual abuse during the most recent year of their incarceration.⁴

Despite these high rates of victimization, people returning to the community after a period of incarceration too often do not receive victim services.⁵ This is true for a number of reasons. For instance, many

¹ Caroline Wolf Harlow, *Prior Abuse Reported by Inmates and Probationers* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, April 1999).

² Shannon Lynch and others, *Women's Pathways to Jail: The Roles & Intersections of Mental Illness & Trauma* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2012).

³ Bruce Western. "Lifetimes of Violence in a Sample of Released Prisoners." *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 1(2), 14–30 (2015).

⁴ Allen J. Beck. *Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates, 2011-2012 – Supplemental Tables: Prevalence of Sexual Victimization Among Transgender Adult Inmates* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, December 2014). Also see Allen J. Beck, Marcus Berzofsky, Rachel Caspar, and Christopher Krebs. *Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates, 2011-2012* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2013).

⁵ By "victim services", the NRC means any service designed to help a person through the trauma of suffering victimization. This may include crisis intervention, therapy or counseling, advocacy (e.g., helping a person navigate through the criminal justice system), or any other type of service that supports a person's healing in the aftermath of a crime. "Victim services" can be provided by many different professionals in many different settings. Some settings/organizations include community mental health offices, multi-service nonprofit organizations like the YMCA or YWCA, rape crisis centers, domestic violence agencies, and hospital-based advocacy programs.

mainstream victim service providers are not equipped to serve formerly incarcerated survivors, and existing victim services are too often not located in the communities to which many people return.⁶ Additionally, because of their histories with the criminal justice system, many survivors with incarceration histories may be reluctant to seek help from victim service providers, fearing that they will be viewed solely as “offenders” and rejected from services.

At the same time, they may be participating in a reentry program that has connections to other community-based social service organizations (e.g., assistance with housing, employment, and transportation), but does not have existing relationships with victim service providers. In many cases, reentry programs do not directly screen for or address needs related to the trauma of surviving violent victimization. Similarly, many victim service organizations have traditionally overlooked or lacked the tools to identify formerly incarcerated people as a population in need of their assistance. Reentry and victim services, in most communities, remain in silos.

This initiative aims to break down silos by engaging a community in a collaborative planning process to explore the unmet needs of formerly incarcerated survivors, to identify strategies for better serving these individuals, and to assist these organizations in leveraging public funds for this population of survivors. Because of recent extraordinary increases to the Crime Victims Fund under the Victims of Crimes Act (VOCA), federal funding to the states through the [VOCA victim assistance formula grant program](#) has *quadrupled* in the last several years, beginning in 2015. In addition to increasing available funds, this has, in part, prompted the field to reflect on who has historically been under-served by victim services and to consider ways to close these gaps. These significant changes have translated to new opportunities for local communities to leverage state-level funding for victim services,

⁶ These statements are drawn from the findings of a comprehensive assessment of the crime victims and related field that the NRC conducted between July 2017 and March 2018.

particularly for victims that too often have less access to healing and avenues to justice.

II. About the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims

Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (NRC), is a one-stop shop for victim service providers, culturally specific organizations, criminal justice professionals, and policymakers to get information and expert guidance to enhance their capacity to identify, reach, and serve all victims, especially those from communities that are underrepresented in healing services and avenues to justice. The NRC is working to increase the number of victims who receive healing supports by understanding who is underrepresented and why some people access services while others don't; designing and implementing best practices for connecting people to the services they need; and empowering and equipping organizations to provide the most useful and effective services to crime victims. The NRC is a collaboration among Caminar Latino, Casa de Esperanza, Common Justice, FORGE, the National Children's Advocacy Center, the National Center for Victims of Crime, the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later in Life, Women of Color Network, Inc., and the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera). Our vision is that victim services are accessible, culturally appropriate and relevant, trauma informed, and that the overwhelming majority of victims access and benefit from these services.

The Vera Institute of Justice is the NRC partner leading the work to promote greater access to healing services for formerly incarcerated crime victims.

III. Eligibility

To be eligible for this project, two or more community-based organizations in a local jurisdiction must submit a joint letter of interest. At least one organization must provide victim services, and at least one

must provide reentry services. Applicants should be able to describe a track record of successfully serving their client population(s) in their local jurisdiction (neighborhood, city, or county). Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to:

- mainstream service organizations, including multi-service agencies,
- culturally-specific organizations (including tribal entities),
- non-traditional service programs or organizations,
- grassroots advocacy organizations, and
- local government entities or governing bodies such as a county criminal justice coordinating council, a mayoral office, a task force, or other intermediary that brings together service providers.

A variety of collaborations is possible, so long as one entity serves crime victims, and one serves people returning to the community after a period of incarceration. For example, a traditional victim services agency and reentry provider could come together to submit a joint letter of interest, or a reentry coalition and a hospital-based violence interruption program may decide to collaborate on a letter of interest. The joint letter of interest should clearly state each entity's agreement and commitment to work with the other(s) to achieve the shared goal of improving access to healing services for crime victims with incarceration histories.

IV. Overview of Technical Assistance & Site Responsibilities

Technical Assistance from the NRC

The site selected for this initiative will receive no-cost technical assistance from NRC staff and consultants, but will not receive any grant funds. The NRC team will work with the site to develop a collaborative learning and planning process with the partner agencies and devise a funding strategy for sustaining the work in the future. Within the overarching goal of increasing access to healing services for crime survivors with incarceration histories, the specific goals of the collaboration will depend

on the community's interests, existing network of service providers, needs, and strengths.

While this process will be tailored to the locality, NRC technical assistance providers anticipate supporting the site in the following ways:

1. Identifying and convening key partners

- Help conduct a resource mapping exercise to identify existing community victim service and reentry resources, as well as gaps in resources for formerly incarcerated survivors
- Assist with identifying community partners to participate in a collaborative interagency working group, which should include participation from directly impacted, formerly incarcerated survivors in the jurisdiction
- Guide efforts to plan working group meetings and help develop agendas for those meetings

2. Assessing local strengths and gaps in service delivery and developing strategies for closing those gaps

- Help develop cross-learning opportunities among the participating organizations (e.g., trainings and visits to each other's programs)
- Facilitate the development of concrete goals of the working group
- Provide access to peer and expert consultants in reentry and victim services

- Help organize listening sessions/community meetings with directly impacted, formerly incarcerated survivors in the community
- Guide the working group in developing strategies to improve formerly incarcerated survivors' access to victim services and improving victim services' capacity to meet the needs of these survivors

3. Developing sustainable action plans, funding strategies, and resources

- Provide guidance on implementation plans
- Explore funding options and help create a strategic plan for funding to sustain collaborative efforts after the formal planning process has ended
- Assist with the development of new resources, such as a directory of local victim service providers to be distributed to reentry nonprofits and/or a screening tool to help reentry providers identify trauma needs and make warm referrals to victim services

Additionally, the NRC may develop publicly available blog posts, fact sheets, webinars, and other resources for the field related to the process, outcomes, and lessons learned from this initiative.

Expectations and Responsibilities of the Collaborating Partners in the Site:

1. Co-develop and sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines responsibilities and benchmarks for the eight-month initiative

2. Identify one or more local coordinators to serve as main points of contact for the NRC and working group members
3. Participate in twice-monthly planning calls with NRC staff
4. Work with NRC staff to establish a local interagency working group and plan agendas and schedules for working group meetings; this will likely include facilitating or identifying an appropriate facilitator for some working group meetings
5. Identify and secure local and accessible meeting spaces
6. Commit to attending local in-person meetings as well as virtual meetings throughout the duration of the project
7. Assist with the development of work group goals, responsive strategies, and implementation of new policies, procedures, trainings, etc.
8. Commit to promoting access, inclusion, and cultural relevance in all project activities

The NRC strives to ensure access to all of our work for people with disabilities, Deaf people, and people with limited English proficiency. We will work with collaborating partners on this initiative to ensure that all activities are accessible and inclusive of these populations.

Example Processes & Outcomes

The eight-month process and outcomes will be dependent upon the selected site's strengths, needs, and capacity. Below are two hypothetical scenarios that could result from this pilot project:

Example A: After learning about each other's respective capacities and strengths, participating organizations agree that it would be beneficial to

apply jointly for state victim services grants in the future to expand local capacity to serve formerly incarcerated survivors. Partners decide to use the remainder of the project period to explore available funding opportunities, foster relationships with potential funders, and locate other providers for future collaboration. By the end of the project, the site has developed a list of upcoming grant opportunities, met with local and state funders, and identified staff across their agencies who can serve as lead grant writers for future proposals.

Example B: After resource mapping and other assessment activities, participants determine that formerly incarcerated male survivors of sexual violence face considerable barriers to accessing victim services. To help close this gap, the rape crisis center and reentry services nonprofit serving as the coordinators for this project decide to engage a local group of formerly incarcerated advocates. Working together, they craft a training plan to help increase the skills and capacity of rape crisis counselors to serve male survivors returning home after incarceration. At the same time, the reentry service provider modifies its intake procedures to better identify trauma-related needs of its clients – in this scenario, pertaining to sexual victimization – and establish rape crisis referral procedures.

V. How to Apply

Letter of Interest

In order to apply for technical assistance, two or more entities must submit a joint letter of interest. The letter of interest should be a maximum of 6 pages in double-spaced, 12-point font, and should provide the following information:

1. Describe the mission and services that each organization offers, including the number and type of clients served. Include a description of how each organization has successfully reached and served its client population.

2. Explain why your organizations are interested in expanding services for formerly incarcerated survivors of crime. Why is this type of effort needed in your community?
3. Describe the community or population you wish to focus on for this initiative. (*This may be a broad group of people, such as survivors of violence who have returned home to your county from prison or jail in the past five years, or more specific to a population or victimization type, such as justice-involved male survivors of sexual assault.*) What do you think are the service needs and gaps that this population currently experiences in your community? What do you hope to have achieved at the end of the eight-month project?
4. Describe what your organizations hope to get from the technical assistance offered through this pilot project. How will this technical assistance support the collaborating entities in advancing their desired goals, initiatives, and/or outcomes?
5. Explain why your organizations are well-suited to collaborate on this project. If possible, include an example of a past collaborative effort and/or successful initiative that enhanced services for underserved victims and/or people with incarceration histories.
6. Express a commitment to provide the necessary resources, including staff time, to meet the expectations and responsibilities outlined in section IV.

Letters of Support

Although not required, applicants are encouraged to include letters of support from any other organizations that are interested in collaborating on this initiative (e.g., local mental health providers, community

supervision agencies, coalitions of formerly incarcerated advocates, and other reentry service and victim service providers).

Letters of support should be on the organization's official letterhead and no longer than two pages double-spaced. Each letter of support should explain why the organization is interested in enhancing services for formerly incarcerated victims, the value and expertise they will bring to the project, and express a commitment to participate in project activities, as outlined in section IV.

VI. Timeline for Application and Site Selection

NRC staff working on this initiative will review letters of interest that address all of the components described in section V. We will evaluate submissions based on the degree to which the letter of interest and any accompanying letters of support address each component.

Letters of interest will be accepted until 8:59 EST on November 20, 2018. After reviewing submissions, NRC staff may conduct phone interviews with candidates prior to selecting the pilot site.