

# Texas Victim Assistance Coordinators Survey

Sponsored by:

**The Crime Victims' Institute  
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**Sam Houston**  
STATE UNIVERSITY  
*A Member of The Texas State University System*

## **Purpose and Instruction**

**Please Note: This survey is to be completed by the lead victim assistance coordinator in case the responding office has more than one victim assistance coordinator.**

The Crime Victims' Institute at Sam Houston State University is requesting your assistance in examining:

- Services available to victims of crime
- Communication and cooperation among service agencies
- Perceptions of victim service providers in the state of Texas.

Your candid responses will help insure that our findings accurately portray what is occurring in the state of Texas with respect to victim issues and the assistance available to them. This survey should take about 20 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to stop participating in this research study at any time. However, your views and experiences are very important to the success of this effort. Based on the responses we receive, we will report our findings and make suggestions for improving victim services in our state to policymakers.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Protection of Human Subjects Committee at Sam Houston State University. Questions about your rights as a research participant may be directed to:

**Glen Kercher, Ph.D., Chair**  
**Protection of Human Subjects Committee**  
**Sam Houston State University**  
**(936) 294-1642**

This survey is being distributed both through a mailed survey and via e-mail. If you have already completed this survey through e-mail, please ignore this mailing. If you have not received the e-mail survey but still prefer the electronic format, please visit our website: [www.crimevictimsinstitute.org](http://www.crimevictimsinstitute.org) and click "Texas Victim Assistance Coordinators Survey." Alternatively, you may complete the enclosed survey and return it in the self-addressed envelope.

Your answers to the survey will not be traceable to you or your agency. All responses will be kept confidential. The results of this study will only be published in the aggregate.

Please take a few minutes to complete the following questions. Completing this survey will signify your consent to participate.

***Thank you for your assistance.***

## AGENCY INFORMATION

1. Which of the following best describes the type of office in which you work?

- District Attorney's Office
- Criminal District Attorney's Office
- County Attorney's Office
- County and District Attorney's Office

2. What is the service area population of your jurisdiction?

- Less than 15,000
- 15,000 – 49,999
- 50,000 – 99,999
- 100,000 – 199,999
- 200,000 – 999,999
- 1,000,000 or more

3. Does the mission statement of your prosecutor's office explicitly address victim services?

- Yes                       No                       There is no mission statement

4. How long has your office had a designated Victim Assistance Coordinator(s)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Year(s)    \_\_\_\_\_ Month(s)

5. What priority is given to assisting crime victims in your job description?

- It is my highest priority
- It is my primary priority but I have other duties in the office
- It is a low priority due to my other duties.

6. How many people, including yourself, occupy positions within the following categories in your office?

	Female	Male
Victim Assistance Coordinator	_____	_____
Staff	_____	_____
Intern	_____	_____
Volunteer	_____	_____

7. How many people, including yourself, occupy positions within the following categories in your office?

	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic or Latino	Asian or Pacific Islander	Other
Victim Asst. Coordinator	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Staff	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Intern	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Volunteer	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

8. In your opinion does your office have enough staff to adequately serve the number of victims who require your assistance?

- Staffing is more than adequate for demands
- Staffing is adequate for demands
- Staffing is slightly inadequate for demands
- Staffing is very inadequate for demands

9. In your opinion does your office have enough bilingual staff to adequately serve the number of victims who require such assistance?

- Bilingual staffing is more than adequate for demands
- Bilingual staffing is adequate for demands
- Bilingual staffing is slightly inadequate for demands
- Bilingual staffing is very inadequate for demands

10. How many hours of **pre-service** training are required for the following categories of personnel?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Victim Assistance Coordinator
- \_\_\_\_\_ Staff
- \_\_\_\_\_ Intern
- \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer

11. How many hours of **in-service** training per year are required for the following categories of personnel?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Victim Assistance Coordinator
- \_\_\_\_\_ Staff
- \_\_\_\_\_ Intern
- \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer

12. What are the top 3 funding sources for your office?  
(Please put 1, 2, or 3 next to the first, second, and third largest funding sources)

\_\_\_\_\_ Federal                      \_\_\_\_\_ Private Donations/Foundations  
\_\_\_\_\_ State                              \_\_\_\_\_ Fund Raising Activities  
\_\_\_\_\_ County/City                      \_\_\_\_\_ No Funding  
Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

13. The following questions pertain to changes in your office's services to victims over the past 3 years (**September 2002—August 2005**).

Has your victim services staff changed in the last 3 years?

Increased       Decreased       Same

Has the number of victims served changed in the last 3 years?

Increased       Decreased       Same

Has the amount of training or education available to you and your staff changed?

Increased       Decreased       Same

14. How often do you speak directly to the prosecutor(s) in your office about victim services?

Never     Rarely     Occasionally     Frequently     Very Frequently

15. On a scale of 1 (low priority) to 5 (high priority), what priority is given to victim services in the prosecutor's office where you work? Please circle your selection.

**Low Priority**    1            2            3            4            5            **High Priority**

**SERVICE INFORMATION**

16. Under the **Services Provided** column please check the kind of services your office directly provides to crime victims. If there are any kinds of services that are sometimes requested by victims but which are ***not available in your community***, please check those under the **Services Not Provided** column.

(question continued on next page)

**Services Provided      Services Not Provided**  
**(Directly by your office)    (In your community)**

**EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Medical Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shelter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Security Repair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Direct Financial Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On-scene Comfort	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**COUNSELING**

24 hour hot-line	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crisis Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow-up Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mediation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

Personal Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employer Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Property Return	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intimidation Protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paralegal/Legal Counsel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referral	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information on VINE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation of Criminal Justice Process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistance with Medical Appointments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**COURT-RELATED SERVICES**

Witness Reception Area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Court Orientation-Adult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Court Orientation-Child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Witness Alert	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Escort to Court	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Victim Impact Statement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**CLAIMS ASSISTANCE**

Insurance Claims Aid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restitution Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compensation Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SYSTEM-WIDE SERVICES**

Public Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legislative Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. If there are services that your office provides that are not listed above, please list them below.

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18. If there are other services that victims have requested but are not available through your office, please list them.

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19. How frequently do you use the following methods when communicating with victims?

**Written Correspondence**

Very Frequently  Frequently  Rarely  Very Rarely  Never

**In-Person Conversation**

Very Frequently  Frequently  Rarely  Very Rarely  Never

**Telephone Conversation**

Very Frequently  Frequently  Rarely  Very Rarely  Never

**E-mail**

Very Frequently  Frequently  Rarely  Very Rarely  Never

20. It is said that a sizable number of victims do not use the victim services that are available to them. Based on your experience, what do you think are the **two** primary reasons that these services are not utilized?

- They get assistance from families or friends
- They have other resources to cope with victimization (e.g. insurance, savings)
- They were not told or made aware of available services
- They think it is not worth the trouble to seek out services
- They do not need assistance
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**CLIENT INFORMATION**

21. Estimate the average number of victims served per month by your office.

\_\_\_\_\_ / Month

22. Estimate the percentage of the male and female victims your office has served during the last year.

Male \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Female \_\_\_\_\_ %

23. Estimate the percentage of victims served by your office who come from the following economic groups.

Low income (less than \$15,000) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Moderate income (\$15,000 -\$60,000) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
High income (more than \$60,000) \_\_\_\_\_ %

24. Estimate the percentage of victims your office has served in each of the following racial/ethnic categories.

Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_ %  
African American \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Hispanic or Latino \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Asian or Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_ %  
Other \_\_\_\_\_ %

### INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

25. Is there any committee or taskforce in your community made up of representatives from the programs and agencies that provide services to crime victims in your community?

Yes       No

25-1. If yes, on a scale of 1 (not active) to 5 (very active), how active is the committee/taskforce in facilitating communication among the victim service agencies in your community?

**Not Active**    1    2    3    4    5    **Very Active**

26. How often have you personally received interagency/multi-disciplinary training with regard to victim services?

Never     Once     Twice     Three Times     More than Three Times

27. Evaluate the level of communication and cooperation between your office and the following agencies in assisting victims in your community.

#### Court

Poor       Acceptable       Excellent       Not Applicable



**Police/Liaison**

- Poor      Acceptable      Excellent      Not Applicable

**Community Supervision and Corrections Department**

- Poor      Acceptable      Excellent      Not Applicable

**Community Victim Service Providers**

- Poor      Acceptable      Excellent      Not Applicable

28. How often do you think law enforcement officers in your jurisdiction provide victims services information to crime victims?

- Always    Often    Occasionally    Rarely    Never

29. In your experience, to what extent do you think community victim service providers (e.g. family violence shelters) give crime victims realistic expectations about what will be accomplished through the criminal justice process?

- Realistic    Somewhat Unrealistic    Somewhat Realistic    Unrealistic

**Please indicate on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) whether you agree/disagree with the following statements (30 - 41).**

30. A crime should be considered first as an offense committed against the state, and second as an offense against individual victims.

- Strongly Disagree**    1    2    3    4    5    **Strongly Agree**

31. The criminal justice system is overburdened. Therefore, efficient processing should be considered more important than victims' participation in criminal justice decision making processes.

- Strongly Disagree**    1    2    3    4    5    **Strongly Agree**

32. The primary purpose of victim services is to facilitate the victim's role as a witness.

- Strongly Disagree**    1    2    3    4    5    **Strongly Agree**

33. When conflict arises between victims' rights and defendants' rights, victims' rights should come first.

- Strongly Disagree**    1    2    3    4    5    **Strongly Agree**

34. Sentencing should be proportional to the seriousness of the criminal act, rather than to the degree of victim harm.

**Strongly Disagree** 1 2 3 4 5 **Strongly Agree**

35. A victim should be allowed to participate in plea bargaining decisions.

**Strongly Disagree** 1 2 3 4 5 **Strongly Agree**

36. Victims should be allowed to give testimony during the sentencing phase of a case.

**Strongly Disagree** 1 2 3 4 5 **Strongly Agree**

37. A victim impact statement should be allowed for both property and violent crime victims.

**Strongly Disagree** 1 2 3 4 5 **Strongly Agree**

38. The judge(s) in our community almost always consider Victim Impact Statements in making sentencing decisions.

**Strongly Disagree** 1 2 3 4 5 **Strongly Agree**

39. The prosecutor(s) in our community almost always consider Victim Impact Statements in making decisions about a case.

**Strongly Disagree** 1 2 3 4 5 **Strongly Agree**

40. There are many victims who do not take advantage of services available to them even though our office makes a concerted effort to “get the word out”.

**Strongly Disagree** 1 2 3 4 5 **Strongly Agree**

41. Texas law allows victims and survivors to make an oral statement to the court after the sentence has been pronounced. I think the law should allow victims to make an oral statement before the sentence.

**Strongly Disagree** 1 2 3 4 5 **Strongly Agree**

42. How would you **personally** rank order the following goals of the criminal justice system in terms of their importance? Write 1 next to the most important, 4 the least important.

- \_\_\_ Retribution/Punishment
- \_\_\_ Victim Restoration
- \_\_\_ Offender Rehabilitation
- \_\_\_ Protection of the Community (including Deterrence and Incapacitation)

43. In your professional opinion, what are the barriers, if any, to providing sufficient services to victims?

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44. On a scale of 1 (Very Dissatisfied) to 10 (Very Satisfied), how satisfied are you with your job?

(Very Dissatisfied) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Very Satisfied)

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

45. How long have you been the Victim Assistance Coordinator in your office?

\_\_\_\_\_ Years    \_\_\_\_\_ Months

46. How long have you worked with crime victims in any capacity and for any agency?

\_\_\_\_\_ Years    \_\_\_\_\_ Months

47. Did you work for your office in another capacity (including as a volunteer) prior to becoming the Victim Assistance Coordinator?

Yes             No

47-1. If yes, what was your former job title?

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48. Are you?

Male             Female

49. Are you?

- White (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- African-American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- American Indian
- Other

50. Which of the following best describes your education?

- High school graduate/GED
- Some college but no degree
- Associate of Arts degree (2yr.)
- Bachelor of Art or Sciences (4yr.)
- Some graduate school
- Advanced degree

*Thank you for your time and assistance with this very important survey.*

*Your confidential responses are beneficial to the improvement and evaluation of current victim services.*

Please return this survey in the self addressed postage paid envelope provided.

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