Outreach to Underserved Teen Victims of Crime:
Chart a Course for Expanding Victim Services to Youth

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR Victims of Crime

The primary mission of the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) is to be the nation's leader in helping people keep themselves, their families, and their communities safe from crime. NCPC's strategic plan is centered on four goals: protect children and youth; partner with government and law enforcement to prevent crime; promote crime prevention and personal safety basics; and respond to emerging crime trends. NCPC offers training, technical assistance, and a national focus for crime prevention, and acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America—more than 400 national, federal, state, and local organizations representing thousands of constituents who are committed to preventing crime. NCPC also sponsors the National Crime Prevention Association, an individual membership association to promote resources and career development to crime prevention practitioners. NCPC also operates demonstration programs and takes a leadership role in comprehensive community crime prevention strategies and youth crime prevention. NCPC manages the nationally recognized McGruff® "Take A Bite Out Of Crime®" public service advertising campaign.

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The National Center for Victims of Crime is a nonprofit organization that advocates for victims' rights, trains professionals who work with victims, and serves as a trusted source of information on victims' issues. After more than 25 years, we remain the most comprehensive national resource committed to advancing victims' rights and helping victims of crime rebuild their lives. The National Center is, at its core, an advocacy organization committed to -- and working on behalf of -- crime victims and their families. Rather than focus the entire organization's work on one type of crime or victim, the National Center addresses all types of crime. Our mission is to forge a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives. We are dedicated to serving individuals, families, and communities harmed by crime. Our Youth Initiative builds the nation's capacity to support youth victims while advancing their rights and ensuring youth leadership on issues that affect youth.

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INTRODUCTION

Young people in the United States are victimized at alarmingly high rates. In 2009, youth ages 12 to 24 had the highest rate of victimization.[1] According to the 2008 National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, more than 60 percent of children from birth to 17 years of age in the United States were either directly or indirectly victimized within a one-year period. More than one in four children (25.3 percent) witnessed an act of violence within the same one-year period, and 38 percent witnessed an act of violence sometime during their childhood.[2] Over the course of their childhood, 71 percent of youth ages 14 to 17 in the United States had been assaulted, 28 percent had been sexually victimized, 32 percent had been abused or neglected, and 53 percent had experienced a property victimization (including robbery).[3] While teens often have limited access to qualified, age-appropriate victim services, teens from underserved populations, such as racial and ethnic minorities in the United States and teens with disabilities, have even fewer options.

The Underserved Teens Victims Initiative was created to accomplish these two main goals:

1. **To raise awareness of teen victimization and identify promising strategies for reaching and supporting underserved populations of teen victims.**
2. **To build the capacity of victim service professionals to reach and support these underserved teen victims.**

Funding and support from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice (OVC), enabled the National Crime Prevention Council and the National Center for Victims of Crime, (the National Partners), to build on prior national projects and implement the Underserved Teen Victims Initiative from 2009 - 2011. The Underserved Teen Victims Initiative is part of a nati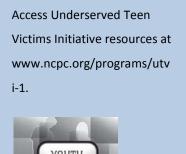onal project of the Office for Victims of Crime aimed at increasing underserved teens' access to crime victim services. In this project, the National Partners collaborated with 24 local communities to identify promising strategies for reaching and supporting underserved populations of teen victims while building the capacity of victim assistance professionals to help these youth. Youth-adult project teams from around the nation received training, resources, and ongoing support from the National Partners to develop culturally sensitive outreach campaigns to promote awareness of victimization among youth and to encourage youth help-seeking after victimization. The youth, extremely effective at communicating with their peers, utilized adult support to design and carry out awareness events,
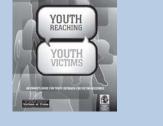
outreach publications, and resources that encouraged underserved youth to seek help from victim service assistance and allied professionals.

Concurrently, the National Partners provided Web-based training and resources to victim assistance and allied professionals nationwide so that when the outreach was conducted, providers would be prepared to serve the new youth who might be calling upon them. In addition to continuing to build local teams' understanding of teen victim issues, ongoing support to the local teams included facilitating stronger community partnerships among youth development and education professionals, law enforcement agencies, victim advocates, and culturally specific organizations and individuals working with their population(s) of focus.

The Underserved Teen Victims Initiative had its roots in the National Partners' Youth Outreach for Victim Assistance (YOVA) project model, also supported by OVC funding. Beginning in 2003, the National Partners joined forces to address the lack of outreach and services for teen victims. Through YOVA, we provided training, resources, and ongoing support to more than 60 community project teams of youth, victim assistance professionals, police, schools, and community-based providers working together. These groups implemented youth-led outreach campaigns that raised awareness about dating violence, hate crimes, bullying, sexual abuse, and other types of teen victimization. The public education they conducted reached more than

> Access Underserved Teen Victims Initiative resources at www.ncpc.org/programs/utvi-1.
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90,000 teens and adults in communities across the United States, and we estimate that hundreds of thousands saw or heard the outreach messages in their local media. Also, guidebooks and training developed by the National Partners built the capacity of victim service providers and allied professionals nationwide to reach and serve teen victims of crime.

Among the groups that participated in YOVA were agencies that were engaging underserved populations of teens, and many of the youth peer educators that participated in YOVA identified as African American/Black; Alaska Native; American Indian; American Pacific Islander; Asian American; Latino/Hispanic; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning

In 2010, the National Partners selected 24 community partner teams across the nation. These were youth and adults committed to creating and conducting culturally specific outreach to underserved groups of teen victims, specifically, youth who identify as

- American Indian
- American Pacific Islander
- Arab American
- Asian American
- Latino/Hispanic Americans
- LGBTQ?, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning
- Muslim American
- Runaway, thrownaway, homeless
- Immigrant and/or Refugee

(LGBTQ?) teens;[1] teens living with disabilities; and teens who were homeless, runaway, or thrownaway, among other identities.

The National Partners continued to learn from these relationships that these populations of teens face additional vulnerabilities to victimization and more challenges and barriers to accessing quality victim services in their communities. Some of the violence committed against them is directly related to the offender's bias against the victim's actual or perceived religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity,[2] or disability status, as well as other characteristics that may appear to increase the victim's vulnerability and perhaps increase the chances of impunity for the offender, such as runaway or homeless status and immigration status. A history of institutionalized oppression for many minority groups in the United States, including discrimination in housing and employment, segregation in real estate, police profiling, and unequal school discipline and police treatment, ensure that marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by lower socioeconomic factors, are exposed to high levels of violence and victimization, and must overcome more obstacles in order to trust the institutions and agencies that might help.[4]

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[1] The initialisms used, LGBTQ?, LGBT, or LGB, vary based on the specific persons being discussed, or the specific reference in the research cited. **Lesbian and gay** people are individuals that develop intimate and/or sexual connections with members of the same sex. **Bisexual** people experience sexual, emotional, and affectional attraction to their own sex and the opposite sex. **Transgender** individuals are broadly defined as people whose biosocial assigned sex is not congruent with the sex or the gender with which they identify. **Queer** has historically been used as a derogatory term against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people or those suspected of being L, G, B, and/or T. Currently, some people have reclaimed the term and self-identify as "queer." The "**?**" indicates the "**questioning**" category and is especially important for the inclusion of youth in the process of developing sexual identity and orientation who may be unsure of their feelings or orientation, or may feel it is not wholly safe to identify as L, G, B, T, or Q. The authors recognize that there are additional sexual and/or gender identities that are not addressed here.

[2] **Sexual orientation** is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectional attraction toward others. **Gender identity** is the psychological sense of one's gender or lack thereof. Readers are encouraged to **learn more** about LGBTQ? youth at the Web sites of GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students, at glsen.org; and the American Psychological Association (APA) at apa.org.

As data on youth victimization make clear,[5] marginalized youth are often exposed to violence and victimization at higher rates than the general youth population. When it comes to committing violent acts, rates of violence were similar for white and Black youth, while white (non-Hispanic) youth had somewhat higher rates of violence than Hispanics of similar ages.[6] American Indian and Alaska Native teens are more likely to be victims of crime than their white or African American peers.[7] From 1993 to 2003, Black youth ages 17 or younger were five times as likely as white youth to be victims of homicide.[8] In 2005, only 41 percent of special education students said that they *strongly agree* or *agree* with the statement "I feel safe at school."[9] In 2009, 85 percent of LGBT youth respondents had been verbally harassed at school because of bias related to their perceived sexual orientation; 40 percent had been physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved); and 19 percent had been physically assaulted.[10] Youth with disabilities are more likely to be victims of child abuse than other youth.[11] While approximately 12 percent of children are estimated to experience sexual victimization,[12] between 21 to 42 percent of runaway teens are sexually victimized.[13]

The lack of culturally appropriate and specific outreach to teens represented in these

The **Underserved Teen Victims Initiative** project was designed for local communities to develop and implement youth-led outreach campaigns specific to the unique needs of the youth in their communities.

The 24 community teams were selected through a competitive application process to receive pass-through funding up to $2,500, training, and ongoing support from the National Partners over a period ranging from five to ten months (depending on the team).

Each team identified a specific type of local teen victimization and an underserved population to be the focus of its outreach.

Before launching teen victim outreach campaigns, all local youth-adult project teams attended a two-and-a-half day training event hosted by the National Partners. This skill-building event prepared teams to manage a successful project by providing training in leadership, outreach, engagement, cultural sensitivity, and hands-on practice developing mock public service announcements, press releases, Web sites, and other outreach tools.

Each local team was then supported to

- Build a team of youth and adults that included representation of the focus population to design and implement a new outreach campaign directed at one or more of the specified underserved populations of teens.
- Plan and implement a public outreach campaign to inform youth about types of teen victimization and victims' rights and services after a crime. These campaigns included a variety of approaches, including audio and video public service announcements, documentaries, public awareness events and classroom presentations, and outreach materials such as t-shirts, brochures, and posters. View campaigns at www.ncpc.org/programs/utvi-1/utvi-members.

underserved populations contributes to their lack of awareness about victimization and their rights and resources after a crime. Without awareness-raising and outreach, youth may not recognize that what happened to them is victimization, or they may believe that abusive behaviors are just a normal (e.g., acceptable) part of social relationships. They may also assume that teens would not be welcomed or understood by victim assistance professionals unless outreach specifically addresses them.

To support these underserved populations of teen victims, victim service providers and allied professionals need strategies for conducting outreach to these teens that reflects their identities, cultural values, and life experiences. Providers also need training and resources to better provide culturally sensitive services.

This guidebook and accompanying Web-based resources provide an overview of the challenges faced in conducting outreach to underserved teen victims of crime and highlights examples of the various projects and resources developed and implemented in local communities in the Underserved Teen Victims Initiative.

42 U.S.C. §13925(a)(33) "The term "underserved populations" includes populations underserved because of geographic location, underserved racial and ethnic populations, populations underserved because of special needs (such as language barriers, disabilities, alienage status, or age), and any other population determined to be underserved by the Attorney General or by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, as appropriate."

TEEN VICTIMIZATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

Adolescence is a period of great changes. In general, adolescents benefit from support and guidance to help them navigate new, but necessary, challenges. Nearly all world cultures recognize that adolescence is a phase in life when society acknowledges the emerging capacities of youth, though it varies considerably by culture how long a youth is considered to be in the transitional phase.[14] The transition from childhood to adulthood involves tremendous physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. Teens need adult support to gain decision-making experience and learn from mistakes while a safety net is in place. Studies from various cultures have found that caring and meaningful relationships with individuals and social institutions are universally seen as important for reducing risks and promoting positive developmental outcomes for youth.[15]

Youth who are victimized during the complicated transitional period of adolescence may experience serious disruption of their developmental processes. In addition to the transformations normally associated with puberty, during adolescence, the architecture of the teen brain is in flux as the foundational structures for adult behavior and thought processes are being built. Victimization during this crucial time can act as a wrecking ball, threatening the stability of these emerging structures. These effects are worsened when youth perceive institutions as unwilling or unable to help or protect them, and adults' failure to intercede confirms youth victims' sense that they must cope with an unsafe environment by themselves. This leads to delayed reporting and recovery for youth. Research shows that traumatic stress may occur when children and youth are exposed to traumatic events or situations, such as directly experiencing or witnessing victimization and violence, and this exposure overwhelms their ability to cope with what they have experienced.

Intervening with young victims is critical to improving outcomes after victimization. Adult support and intervention are especially important when youth victimization experiences are ongoing or when youth are experiencing repeat victimization. After victimization, child and teen victims—just as with victims of any age group—often need counseling, advocacy, shelter, safety planning, emotional support, criminal and civil remedies, and other interventions that may

mitigate the harm caused by violence. Experts agree that early identification of children exposed to victimization is key to successful intervention and resiliency. Even if youth who experience violence do not display obvious signs of trauma or distress, they need to know that the adults in their lives understand the importance and impact of what they experienced; they need reassurances about safety and adult efforts to protect them, and a return to normalcy.

Losing their sense of safety at this critical developmental stage affects victimized teens' struggle to integrate into and become pro-social members of the community. Youth exposed to violence and victimization who do not receive support to cope with their experiences may face—and cause—additional problems, increasing the load on law enforcement and social service agencies and affecting the safety of communities. Youth may respond by displaying aggression, withdrawal, school problems, and various high-risk behaviors, including offending.[16] In a study of urban middle school students, the greater their exposure to violence, the greater their likelihood of engaging in high-risk behaviors. Youth who had been exposed to seven to nine acts of violence were at least three times as likely as youth with no exposures to engage in risk behaviors. For certain risk behaviors, such as binge drinking and carrying a handgun, youth with high violence exposure were more than *ten times* as likely to engage in these behaviors as youth with no exposure.[17]

Youth victimization is directly linked to increased substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, and homelessness.[18] It increases the odds of becoming a perpetrator of violent crimes, including felony assault and intimate partner violence,[19] doubles the likelihood of problematic drug use, and increases the odds of committing property crimes.[20] Teens who have been victimized are more likely to be truant and have more negative contacts with teachers, and there is some evidence that this disruption to their education translates into lower earnings later in life. Adolescent victims also have higher rates of teen pregnancy, depression, eating disorders, and of being victimized again.[21]

Adults, particularly victim assistance professionals, are essential to ensuring that youth are protected from further harm, supporting youth safety planning, and increasing youth safety, in addition to providing ongoing advocacy and counseling support.

Expanding teen victim outreach to underserved communities is vital so that more youth know that they have rights, choices, and resources after victimization, and that there are advocates to guide them through the aftermath. Outreach can raise awareness about types of victimization, common victim reactions, and places where teens can get help. Such information can help teens self-identify as victims, and it can alert those teens who are not yet ready to disclose their victimization to the resources they may later choose to use. One of the most important functions of teen victim outreach and education is to let them know that they are not alone and that help is available. As marginalized youth often feel even more isolated than other teens, culturally specific outreach images and messages can let them know that victim-serving organizations care about them and are prepared to welcome and help them.

Youth victims may not always be aware that a crime has occurred or that anyone could help. For example, when abuse occurs in a dating relationship, a young girl's inexperience may lead her to believe that a boyfriend's aggression is a sign of love. Youth need age-appropriate information about types of crimes against youth, normal reactions to trauma, how to heal, and victims' rights and choices after victimization is disclosed.

Outreach goals may range from wanting to increase awareness of and support for your organization and mission to empowering community members with information about victimization and resilience strategies, or you may want to promote your hotline telephone number. The Underserved Teen Victims Initiative local project partners' goals have encompassed many of these, but the primary goal of teen victim outreach was to create environments that would increase the numbers of victimized teens seeking help from victim assistance professionals.

Desire for privacy

As youth move from childhood to adolescence, the need for personal privacy becomes increasingly important, and victims especially may feel ashamed to have people know the details of their victimization. Youth need adults to respect their privacy concerns but also to provide honest information about mandated reporting of certain crimes against youth, such as child abuse and neglect and what to expect when a report to authorities is made.

Outreach materials such as brochures and Web sites, and communications with outreach advocates, can let youth know the limits of confidentiality. Inform teens exactly what adult helpers may keep private and what information you may be required to disclose to other authorities.

Despite the far-reaching impact of crime and violence exposure, youth frequently do not receive the support and guidance needed to cope with these traumatic experiences. When youth are facing adverse or traumatic experiences, getting help and support from peers, family, and professional helpers may improve outcomes, yet youth often hesitate to tell adults when they need help. Research indicates that the utilization of formal support services by victims of crime is relatively low; only between two to 15 percent of all crime victims (of any ages) receive some type of victim assistance.[22] Health care utilization among victims of crime is also low, despite the likelihood of injury and health problems stemming from interpersonal assault.[23] Victims of crime are somewhat more likely to seek help from informal sources, such as family and friends,[24] so youth victim outreach might also be directed at them. Many studies have also noted the need for more attention to and research on where, why, and how teens seek help and the sources and types of help available and accessible to them.[25]

Reporting to the police or other law enforcement officials may be an even more difficult step for teen victims. The most common reasons offered by younger teens (ages 12 to 14) for not reporting violent crimes to police were that it was reported to another official and that it was a minor crime. Teens also explained that they considered the event to be a personal or private matter, were afraid of reprisal, or, it appears, another household member was responsible for reporting.[26]

Reporting Youth Victimization to Police*

- About one-quarter of violent victimizations of younger teens and about one-third against older teens were reported to the police from 1993 to 2003.

- Younger teens were more likely than older teens to report crime to an official other than the police (31 percent versus 17 percent).

- About one in six younger teens and one in five older teens did not report because they considered it a private or personal matter.

- Less than five percent did not report because they were afraid of reprisal, but younger teens (two percent) were less likely to be afraid than older teens (four percent).

- A household member (42 percent) was most likely to report on behalf of a teen.

- Among older teens, one-third reported their own victimization to the police.

* Katrina Baum, "Juvenile Victimization and Offending, 1993-2003," (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005), 6-7, http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/jvo03.pdf; and David Finkelhor, "Childhood Victimization: Violence, Crime, and Abuse in the Lives of Young People," (New York, NY: Oxford, 2008).

Youth may believe that disclosing victimization will only make things worse. For example, sexual abuse or dating violence victims may fear that the abuser will retaliate against them or their families, and victims of theft may fear punishment from their parents if a valuable item was stolen. Youth need to know they are not alone after victimization and that there are people in their support network, as well as professional helpers, who will listen, understand, encourage, and care. Outreach messages might reinforce this and let them know how victim assistance professionals will advocate for their safety, ensure their rights to be protected from further victimization, and help them be safe.

Other common barriers to youth victim help-seeking include mistrust of professionals and experts, lack of availability of services and care, revictimization by service providers, and lack of community knowledge and trust regarding marginalized communities' access to victims' rights and services.

Whether youth trust or perceive others (e.g., parents, other adults, peers, and social institutions) as helpful is an important factor in help-seeking behavior. Research suggests that youth may ignore help-related information because they do not trust the source or see it as unreliable. Indeed, when asked why they do not make use of existing social supports, youth in many western settings frequently report lack of trust and past disappointment or perceived betrayal on the part of providers.[27] For example, of LGBT students who had been harassed or assaulted at school, 62 percent did not report the incident to school officials, most commonly because they doubted anything would be done.[28] Taking action to seek help for oneself and connections with others are nearly always positive steps for adolescent development outcomes, as are the youth's perception of the ability and accessibility of help, whether from individuals or institutions.[29] The most important facet of social support for teens seems to be having the belief that a range of options are available for them to access help, even if teens don't take advantage of that support.[30]

> Adolescents place a premium on privacy. Some outreach materials should be in places where a teen can take a flier or jot down a telephone number without being seen (e.g., restrooms, fitting rooms). The Internet is another essential place to post information for teens because teens spend large amounts of time online, and it is a medium that affords a good deal of privacy.

Providers can make sure that teens know about the basic assistance and support available for youth victims in local communities. We can also work to conduct in-person and media outreach to overcome barriers to help-seeking faced by teen victims, and in particular, underserved youth exposed to violence or victimization.

Therefore, while youth crime victims have many of the same concerns as adults after a crime (e.g., support, safety, justice, and options), the criminal justice and victim response systems often are not fully prepared to meet the needs of young marginalized victims. The many reasons for these gaps include the lack of culturally, linguistically, and developmentally inclusive outreach and interventions.

Youth who have been hurt by crime may tell trusted friends about victimization, but they often avoid or delay telling adults about such traumatic experiences. Many must overcome significant hurdles before becoming comfortable enough to disclose what might be the worst experience of their young lives. They may be coping with feelings of isolation, powerlessness, shame, and mistrust, which may inhibit or delay reaching out for help. Within marginalized groups, these concerns may be amplified because being a minority in their schools and communities may intensify feelings of isolation, and they may have also experienced discrimination and exclusion in these settings.

Minority groups in the United States are targets of crime and abuse based on the offenders' bias against some aspect of their identity (or perceived identity), such as culture, ethnicity, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other status. Communities, families, and individual youth who have experienced hate and bias crime may have generalized fears and mistrust that extend to others outside their cultural group.

Agency policies and practices to counteract bias and promote inclusion:

Discrimination against LGBTQ people, for example, is still quite prevalent in the workplace and, in many states, protections for LGBTQ employees are not guaranteed. According to the American Psychological Association, LGB individuals are less likely to suffer discrimination in organizations that have policies against LGB discrimination. Such protections are imperative in victim assistance, as they allow and even encourage staff to advocate for inclusive and effective services for LGBTQ victims.

In a survey conducted by the National Center for Victims of Crime about LGBT-specific policies and practices in victim assistance settings, overall, 71.3 percent had written and adopted a non-discrimination policy covering sexual orientation, while 28.7 percent had not.

Mitru Ciarlante and Kim Fountain, "Why It Matters: Rethinking Victim Assistance for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Victims of Hate Violence and Intimate Partner Violence, "(Washington, DC: National Center for Victims of Crime, 2010).

For example, program coordinator Shehnaz Khan is one of the Underserved Teen Victims Initiative adult facilitators for the campaign, ARISE! NY, organized by Turning Point for Women and Families. Shehnaz Khan reflects on the need for victim outreach to American Muslim youth:

> *As a result of today's political post-9/11 climate, American Muslim youth are more in need of resources addressing their social struggles than ever. With hate crimes, bullying, and Islamiphobic incidents increasing every day, Muslim youth are at risk of being emotionally and socially neglected. The National Partners' assistance in Turning Point's ARISE! NY campaign not only helped to address these issues in this underserved population but also succeeded in reaching out to over 300 New York city youth, both Muslim and non-Muslim to educate all New Yorkers of the trials their Muslim counterparts face and how they can help end the hatred.*
>
> *Although there were youth that seemed to be consumed by anger and hatred at having been discriminated against, there were many others that agreed with being proactive in addressing these issues and finding solutions for them.*
>
> ***The goal was to "awaken" the minds of youth and get them to critically evaluate the issues occurring around them that affect both them and others; I would say that we were successful in getting them to do so.***

If an agency has not instituted policies and practices to mitigate the impact of discrimination and biases against marginalized groups in the United States—such as engaging diverse staff and volunteers—or provided staff training to improve their cultural competence, then many underserved groups may perceive providers as perpetuating institutionalized biases and segregation.[31]

Even if youth want to talk to professional helpers about victimization, often it is parents and caregivers who make important decisions for their children, such as about seeking advocacy,

Turning Point is a nationally acclaimed community-based, nonprofit organization addressing the needs of Muslim women and children through crisis intervention, individual and group counseling, advocacy, outreach, education, and training.

Responding to the wide gap between needs and services available to the Muslim community, Turning Point offers culturally competent services, especially in the area of domestic violence. In a safe and nurturing environment, turning Point helps women empower themselves and transform their own lives as well as those of their families and children.

In partnership with public, private, and religious institutions, Turning Point also aims at mentoring a new generation of social workers trained to address the unique needs of the Muslim community.

police protection, counseling, therapy, and other professional care services, based on their understanding of the youth's needs. Some families and cultures discourage reaching out to others to manage personal problems, or disapprove of sharing personal issues with individuals or institutions outside the cultural group.

Help-seeking is largely an individual-centered behavioral concept in which the motivation for seeking help is seen to reside within the individual. Providers should not presume that the western idea of the importance of individual action is valued or accepted in all cultural groups. In fact, this concept in which the motivation for seeking help is seen to reside within the individual may be highly questionable or may be extremely limited in families and cultures where the social group, family power dynamics in intimate relationships, or local culture may take precedence over individual decision-making.[32]

Parents may hesitate to ask youth directly about suspected victimization, and many have qualms about making referrals to victim service agencies or reporting youth victimization, particularly if the agencies are perceived as not ethnically and/or culturally representative of their family.[33] Cultural isolation leads many parents to be even less likely to ask for professional help and more likely to rely on family and community members for help related to their children.[34]

Outreach to youth from immigrant families, whether or not they speak English, requires collaborating with ethnic community leaders and organizations.

These leaders can help you understand cultural norms that affect the youth's (and the family's) perceptions of victimization, service providers, and other relevant issues.

When creating outreach materials in a language other than English, be sure to have a native speaker (ideally, several native speakers) of that language read them for accuracy and clarity.

Most important, be open to doing things differently, and keep the whole family in mind—not just the teen you are trying to reach.

It's also important to be aware that gender norms about teen help-seeking behavior vary across cultures and must be considered in teen victim outreach. In many western settings, teens say they rely on or trust their mothers more with their problems than their fathers. In addition, research from North America, parts of Latin America, Australia, and Western Europe finds that boys are more likely to deny and repress problems and tend

to react in a more externally aggressive way than girls in moments of stress. Older teen girls are the group more likely to use social support systems – i.e. to seek help – than boys, whereas boys more frequently try to manage on their own.[35]

With youth from other cultural backgrounds, however, gender norms about freedom and mobility may mean that boys are more likely to have access to social supports outside the home. For example, in many Asian, Middle Eastern, and African cultures and in some religious cultures, taboos and restrictions on the mobility of unaccompanied young women limit their use of and

Crime Victim Care of Allen County (CVC) is a unique faith-based organization that provides spiritual, emotional, and socio-cultural oriented care and counseling to immigrants, refugees, and non-English speaking crime victims in Allen County, Indiana.

Since opening its doors in 2005, CVC has striven to keep up with the growing needs of its diverse community in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Being home to the largest Burmese refugee population in the United States, CVC founder, Dr. Saneta Maiko, ordained clergy from Kenya, established CVC to help bridge the gap in services for these resettled refuges.

access to health and other social services. Indeed, in many Asian cultures, young women are likely to face family and community censure, are shyer or more embarrassed about accessing services, and are more likely to face negative attitudes from providers.[36]

Consequently, many victimized youth do not come to the attention of victim assistance providers and others who might help them, and youth who cross these cultural isolation barriers to reach out for help from providers may risk disapproval and even be perceived as bringing shame to their family or community.

As the communities around Fort Wayne, Indiana, experience changing demographics, there has also been a rise in racial and ethnic tension and a sharp increase in bias-related bullying, hate crimes, and bullying-related youth suicide at local schools and neighborhoods. Dr. Saneta Maiko, founder and director of the local nonprofit organization, Crime Victim Care of Allen County (CVC), applied to be an Underserved Teen Victims Initiative project partner to address these issues.

Committed to conducting outreach to underserved populations, CVC focused its youth victim outreach campaign efforts on educating Burmese, Asian, and Pacific Islander teens on the issue of bullying. Under the leadership of high school student Thae Ohu, CVC launched a community-wide, outreach campaign about youth bullying to get youth, educators, victim service providers, and law enforcement officers thinking and working together about how they can take an active role to address bullying in their community and improve their response to youth victims. One key campaign event that brought together young people with adult community leaders proved to be a critical step in raising awareness on bullying and the steps individuals, schools, and organizations can take to address it.

Language Access

Underserved youth also face additional practical issues in accessing victim assistance (e.g., language). Immigrant youth, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Arab teens, for example, may have to overcome language barriers to find and use resources. Not being able to speak in their first/primary language when talking with a victim advocate may be inhibiting and can limit youths' ability to accurately communicate their thoughts, emotions, and attitudes.

Victim service providers may also need to resolve language barriers to communicate with parents of victimized teens in order to help them understand their child's needs and options.

RUNAWAY, THROWAWAY, AND HOMELESS YOUTH

An estimated 1,682,900 youth from 15 to 17 years old in the United States were listed as runaway or thrownaway youth in 1999, according to the most recent statistics reported by the National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children (NISMART), conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the U.S. Department of Justice.[37]

Who are runaway, thrownaway, and homeless youth? The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5701 note) defines the term "homeless youth" as referring to an individual, not more than 21 years of age and not less than 16 years of age, for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement. "Runaway" is defined as any youth who, without permission, leaves home and stays away overnight, or, if away from home, chooses not to come home when expected. The Runaway and

Homeless Youth Act uses the term "street youth" to refer to both homeless youth and runaway youth collectively.

The terms "throwaway" or "thrownaway" children or youth has evolved to describe those who are denied housing by their families or prevented from returning home by a parent or other household adult.[38]

The home environments of these youth are often high-risk or deleterious and characterized by physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect; fighting or arguing between parents or between parents and the youth; drug or alcohol abuse; and frequent changes in family structure, including divorce, death, or the addition of new members to the household.[39]

After becoming homeless and/or living on the streets, runaway, thrownaway, and homeless youth often experience multiple additional high-risk or deleterious conditions, including poor nutrition, crime victimization, lack of supervision by caring and responsible adults, and exposure to sexually transmitted infections.[40]

Transience creates a barrier to youth accessing victim services. For example, youth who have been kicked out of their homes (neglected and thrownaway youth) or who have run away from home are often homeless and find it necessary to move from place to place. Transience can prevent young people from staying in one place long enough to build rapport with helpful adults or to learn of victim services available, and it can interrupt criminal cases, counseling, and support once they are initiated.

(Note that migrant worker families and those that have recently immigrated to the United States may also experience frequent moves as they search for housing and employment.)

Because running away was indicative of high-risk outcomes, the point in time at which a youth ran away was concluded to be a "critical point for intervention."[41] Youth who are already repeat or chronic victims of violence and abuse most need service but are least likely to trust service providers or any other adults. Many have run away from their homes (or have been kicked out) and live in environments where they are subject to continuous victimization. School-based outreach or even community-wide information campaigns are unlikely to reach such youth.

Outreach workers must find these teens where they are (generally on the street) and talk with them many times before the youth trust enough to seek or accept help. Runaway and homeless

youth are not the only teens in this category: foster youth, teens from neighborhoods with high levels of violence, and youth growing up in communities with "codes of silence" about crime and victimization can also be hard to reach. For all of these teens, you will have to build trust before you can expect them to disclose victimization or seek or accept any help.

Prior to being selected as an Underserved Teen Victims Initiative project partner, the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) was conducting outreach and providing services to underserved populations of teens. To further this work, FAP developed BOUNCE, a youth victim outreach campaign focused on homeless Hispanic and Latino runaway and homeless youth in their

community. Dr. Whitney Maynor, FAP project leader, believes strongly in the therapeutic benefit of teen sexual violence survivors reaching out to peers who may have been directly or indirectly affected by sexual violence. With direction and support from Dr. Maynor, BOUNCE youth survivors and leaders facilitated a three-stage outreach workshop for youth at their local homeless shelter on understanding sexual victimization and how to receive help. Activities incorporated sociodrama, journaling, and verbal and non-verbal creative expression, including contributing to making a traveling quilt that was displayed at additional venues to further expand BOUNCE's outreach. The three-stage workshop model helped to foster rapport and a trusting relationship with homeless youth and provided them with a safe space to express their thoughts and feelings about sexual victimization issues with their peers.

Dr. Maynor feels that "it was a very empowering experience for the youth leaders. The teens who participated in the workshops felt it was also empowering for them, seeing the power of expressing their feelings. They felt they could reach out to other people about their victimization."

The **Spartanburg Public Safety Department (SPSD)** is composed of Law Enforcement, Fire Divisions, and Technical Support serving approximately 20 square miles in South Carolina. SPSD is responsible for providing a safe environment for all members of the community. SPSD strives to provide services that are responsive to community needs; community outreach and the maintenance of open communication between the community and SPSD public safety teams are essential to achieving this.

YWCA of New Hampshire, *Manchester, New Hampshire*

The YWCA of New Hampshire worked hard to create a number of resources for runaway and homeless youth. Its focus being on raising awareness of the YWCA's services for runaways, the YWCA created a number of items listing its contact information and services to hand out to youth at community events. The YWCA also created a permanent section on its website raising awareness of the issues affecting runaways and also encourages runaway and homeless youth to seek help.

In 2009, the City of Spartanburg Public Safety Department saw an increase in teen victimization and a spike in the number of runaway and homeless youth who passed through its department. With the knowledge that many runaway and homeless youth are unaware of the help available to them; the department set its sights on generating awareness of the support and services for runaways that the department offered.

Throughout her career at the police department, Esther Gosnell has continued to notice the stigma placed on these young runaways by the community; that they are just 'bad kids.' In reality, many runaways have lived through some incredibly tragic experiences, including prostitution, sex trafficking, drug dealing, and abuse. Having worked with a number of runaways, Ms. Gosnell understood the need to gain support from her community to effectively reach this population. "The community looks away from these issues, nobody wants to think it's happening in their backyard."

In order to get the community thinking about the needs of runaways, the department, led by Ms. Gosnell and a number of passionate youth leaders, many of which were former runaways, set to work on building awareness. To kick-off the program, the department hosted a candlelight vigil to bring a voice to runaway and homeless youth. The vigil served as a place for young people to come and share their experiences and to encourage the community to gain a better perspective, and to gain a "new and different view" on runaways. Although attendance was generally low, the event generated a significant amount of media attention, which enabled them to get the message out to teens about the resources available to them.

Eager to build off the attention of the candlelight vigil, the department began working on a documentary to spread the word at not only the local level but also the statewide level. With hopes of diminishing the stigma attached to runaways, the documentary enabled young people to share their story with the world. The experiences shared told of such stories as Anna, a young woman born into a gang who was repeatedly sexually abused, and of Noah, a young man with an abusive father and a mother addicted to drugs. These stories not only portrayed the tragic experiences many runaways face but also brought to light that fact that help is available, and there things can get better. The documentary has been shown at local homeless shelters, a number of local schools, and on the local cable network. The department hopes to move on to the

statewide level and have the documentary shown in all middle and high schools in South Carolina.

Supportive community partners, passionate youth leaders, and new resources to further their outreach to runaways, the department has set high goals for the future. Prior to the UTVI program, the little attention runaways did receive in Spartanburg, SC was largely negative. Now however, a change has begun, and individuals are beginning to recognize runaway and homeless youth not as "bad kids," but as a group that needs consideration and assistance. A change in the youth who have been reached through this program has also begun, empowering runaways to feel confident in their ability to share their stories to help others.

Though times may be tough, and support may be lacking Ms. Gosnell says "keep going with it, even if you don't get that much support from the community. Initial lift off is hard, but keep going. It's worth it."

OUTREACH TO YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

It is important to consider the needs of people with disabilities when planning any outreach event, and to be particularly aware when you are reaching out specifically to youth with disabilities so that you will be prepared to accommodate a variety of needs and ensure the inclusion of all youth. While it may not always be possible to determine such needs before each event, it is best to be prepared.

- Face the audience when speaking. Speak loudly, clearly, and slowly enough to be understood.
- Repeat or paraphrase all questions and comments from the audience.
- Sign language interpreters and live captioners should be provided as requested.

Guidelines for Bias-free Communication: Ability Status

People-first language acknowledges the personhood of people with disabilities (as opposed to the disability) and avoids derisive labels. For instance, please say "people with disabilities," not "the disabled." Similarly, it is important to be aware of current language preferred by people with disabilities. For instance, use "a student with a cognitive disability," not "a mentally retarded student." Unless relevant, avoid mentioning a person's disability status.

- When a sign language interpreter or companion is present, face the person speaking with you, not the interpreter or companion.
- If utilizing flipcharts or whiteboards, write in large, clear print with jumbo blue or black markers and hang the flipcharts in a visible area for reference. Do not speak while writing.
- Visual aids (e.g., slides) should be accompanied by a spoken narrative or description of what is being shown.
- If a program includes an audio broadcast, provide a transcript, and make sure all videos used in any program are captioned.
- Be prepared to provide copies of outreach materials in Braille, large print (20+ font), and plain text, as needed.

LGBTQ? YOUTH

LGBTQ? youth, as well as those who are perceived to be gay, are at high risk for victimization, especially as the targets of bullying and harassment in school. It is imperative to reach these youth with appropriate messages about their rights to safety and acceptance and the availability of help. Gay youth who are victimized face the same obstacles to seeking help as other teen victims, plus some

> **Culturally specific outreach** signals to LGBTQ victims that the available services will address their real-life needs and communicates that LGBTQ youth's feelings, experiences, and concerns about the victimization are valid, and that someone else understands this.

additional ones. These include the fear of "outing" themselves if they report their victimization and the possibility that the person designated to receive reports of victimization (an assistant principal or a police officer, for instance) will be homophobic and therefore less responsive or nonresponsive to the teen.

When reaching out to youth who are or may be gay, remember that they may fall into one of three groups: those who are "out," those who are certain of their orientation but are not "out," and those who are questioning. Questioning youth—especially those who live or attend school in an environment that is hostile toward gays—are not likely to respond to messages aimed explicitly at gay youth (while the others might). The challenge to those designing and conducting outreach for this population is to convey a clear message of welcome and acceptance that is

believable to gay youth (many of whom do not feel welcome or accepted in most places) but that does not make them feel singled out or exposed. The best strategy is to consult with young people who identify as homosexual and ask what would appeal to them or would have appealed to them when they were teenagers.

For example, youth who are perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) are at a higher risk for violent verbal, physical, and sexual victimization. To complicate matters, LGBTQ teens may still be struggling to understand and accept their sexual or gender orientation and gender expression, and may reasonably fear social and familial rejection if they are "outed" and this identity is disclosed in the process of seeking help for victimization.

Homophobia is any attitude or behavior predicated in the assumption that heterosexuality is both normative and desirable, resulting in the marginalization of lesbians, gay men, and queer people at personal, familial, and/or societal levels. **Biphobia** is any attitude or behavior predicated in the assumption that engaging in intimate/sexual behavior solely with those of the opposite sex is both normative and desirable, resulting in the marginalization of bisexuals at personal, familial, and/or societal levels. **Transphobia** is any attitude or behavior predicated in the assumption that biological sex and gender are binary and synonymous, resulting in the marginalization of transgender individuals at personal, familial, and/or societal levels. Heterosexism denotes negative attitudes, biases, and discrimination in favor of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships. It can include the presumption that everyone is heterosexual or that only opposite-sex attractions and relationships are valid and therefore superior.

Mitru Ciarlante and Kim Fountain, "Why It Matters: Rethinking Victim Assistance for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Victims of Hate Violence and Intimate Partner Violence", (Washington, DC: National Center for Victims of Crime, 2010).

Office of Alternative Education, Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), *California*

Growing up is hard, there are no arguments there. Growing up lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender queer, or questioning one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, however, can be even harder. The Office of Alternative Education at Oakland Unified School District (OUSD Alt Ed) offers young people who may be misunderstood by their families, peers, and society—or may not thrive in a traditional school setting—a place to "fit in." A number of students who attend the school have faced a great deal of challenges growing up in Oakland, California, including exposure to violence, poverty, and a lack of family stability. Even though OUSD allows young people a different type of learning environment

focused primarily on providing a safe place for students to attend school, growing up is still hard.

A 2009 student survey conducted at the OUSD found *homophobia* to be the number one concern students identified as needing to be addressed in the school. In response to this, OUSD Alt ED quickly made its stance against homophobia known school-wide.

As a 2007 YOVA mentor site, OUSD Alt Ed understood the power that young people can have in making a positive change in their community. To continue their efforts to bring awareness about homophobia and related bias incidents and hate victimization in their school, OUSD Alt Ed started their Underserved Teen Victims Initiative campaign at the top of ladder: the school staff and educators.

Naming their group the Rainbow Warriors, the high school peer educators conducted training for school staff and educators on homophobia, how to interrupt it, and how to intervene and reach out to youth victims and connect them to help. Young people spoke out about their personal experiences with homophobic victimization and implored staff to take an active role in ending homophobia in the school.

> LGBTQ victimization is under-reported due to many risk factors*
>
> **Isolation** inhibits full participation in society and exacerbates vulnerability to crime by creating less awareness of what constitutes a crime, crime victims' rights, and options for reporting.
>
> **Revictimization** by homophobic and transphobic responders, lack of specific services, and environments that force victims to educate the providers contribute to fears of seeking help.
>
> **Shame** in the face of societal stigma and victim blaming may be exploited by perpetrators. By targeting victims in highly stigmatized communities, perpetrators count on shame to keep victims from reporting the crime.
>
> **Discrimination and rejection** are risks for victims "outing" themselves by seeking help. Being identified as LGBTQ means risking public rejection and stigma, discrimination in employment and housing, threats, and revictimization. Within the LGBTQ community, risks include confidentiality being violated, retaliation by the perpetrator, and being perceived as betraying the community by taking problems to outsiders.
>
> *Mitru Ciarlante and Kim Fountain, "Why It Matters: Rethinking Victim Assistance for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Victims of Hate Violence and Intimate Partner Violence", (Washington, DC: National Center for Victims of Crime, 2010).

While the Rainbow Warriors were advancing their outreach work, a young friend at a neighboring alternative education school was shot and killed. A number of the Rainbow Warriors were personally affected by this tragedy as they were close to the student. It seemed as if

campaign activities were about to come to an abrupt halt, so adult facilitator Shirley Yee focused on resiliency and worked with the youth to help support one another. Continuing their campaign to end homophobia was tough, but the Rainbow Warriors chose not to give up and instead transformed their frustration and hurt into fuel to finish their outreach campaign.

The Warriors held a Day of Recognition for the entire school where young people came together to share how they felt about relevant issues in their lives. Youth leaders led their peers in thinking about new ways to make their school safer and homophobia-free. The Warriors managed to gather an entire school together where "everyone was silent during the event. Young people hearing from other young people was really powerful. Students felt as if their fears and concerns were being validated and left feeling empowered," Shirley Yee describes.

With an overall positive reception from the school, the Rainbow Warriors plan to continue their work. Ms. Yee says it best, "part of this work is reclaiming our hearts and healing, and we did just that. What we really need now is an ally."

Kansas City Anti-Violence Project (KCAVP), Kansas City, Missouri

KCAVP identified a gap in resources available for LGBTQ teens living in Kansas City. To address these gaps, KCAVP produced and directed a documentary about growing up LGBTQ in Kansas City. The documentary gives a powerful and emotional look into the lives of teen victims who have experienced bullying, dating violence, and harassment because of their sexual orientation. To launch the documentary, KCAVP hosted a 'red carpet event' where teens from all over the community came to view the documentary. KCAVP plans to show the documentary at other community events to further their outreach to LGBTQ teens.

YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, *Batavia, Ohio*

Working with the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the YWCA of Greater Cincinnati trained school staff and students in rural communities on how to make their school a safer and more supportive place for LGBTQ youth. As a result of the training, KCAVP along with the trained staff and students hosted a *Challenge Day* where participants were asked to accept each other's differences and celebrate diversity.

HISPANIC/LATINO

Holly Ventura Miller, assistant professor, University of Texas-San Antonio, explains, "Most people have long assumed that immigration automatically leads to crime. The empirical evidence doesn't suggest that that's the case."

"…what we found consistent with most research is that third generation immigrant Hispanics were more likely to be involved in violence compared to second and first. Also, with victimization we found that second generation immigrants were more likely to be victims than first generation," Chris L. Gibson, assistant professor, University of Florida.

Holly Ventura, assistant professor, University of Texas-San Antonio, and Chris L. Gibson, assistant professor, University of Florida. *How Does Assimilation Status Among Hispanic Youth Impact Their Involvement in Violence and Victimization?* Transcript of interview at NIJ Conference 2010, June 14-16, Washington, DC. The National Center for Victims of Crime and the National Crime Prevention Council gratefully acknowledge the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, for allowing us to reproduce, in part or in whole, the video transcript *How Does Assimilation Status Among Hispanic Youth Impact Their Involvement in Violence and Victimization?* The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this video are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

According to the U.S. Census, Latinos represented 12.5 percent of the U.S. population in 2000, and the Latino population in the United States grew by 58 percent between 1990 and 2000. It is expected to grow at three times the rate of the total U.S. population during the next decade. The Latino community in the United States is younger than its Black and White counterparts. More than one-third of the Latino population is under the age of 18. Latino adolescents make up 42 percent of the general adolescent population in California, 40 percent in Texas, 35 percent in Arizona, 21 percent in Florida, and 19 percent in New York (Puzzanchera, Finnegan, & Kang, 2005). Latina adolescents are the largest racial/ethnic group of girls in the country. Nationally, statistics show that most Latino adolescents come from two-parent households, participate in the labor market at high rates, value education, and work extremely hard at reaching their goals.[42]

With a growing population comes increased challenges. The poverty rate among Latinos is three times higher than that of Whites, even with

two-income households (Kockhar, 2004). In California, Latino children and youth are more likely to live in poverty than children of any other ethnic group. In 1999, 32.3 percent of Latino children lived in poverty. One in four Latino children is uninsured and has limited access to health care. With regard to education, Latino adolescents drop out of school at rates as high as 50 percent in some districts or graduate unprepared to go on to college, thus ultimately decreasing their competitive advantage in the workforce. For Latina youth specifically, a 1999 report by the

Adelante Mujeres, *Forest Grove, Oregon*

Adelante Mujeres engaged Latino/Hispanic teens in its community through a number of different outreach efforts. Youth leaders created a traveling mural that depicts facts about cyberbullying and encouraging words to empower victims to seek help. The mural is being displayed at community centers and schools to encourage victims of cyberbullying to seek help. Adelante Mujeres also produced and aired a public service announcement on the local Spanish television station about victim resources.

National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organizations suggests that the most serious threats prevalent among Latina girls included pregnancy, depression, substance abuse, suicide, and delinquency. Particularly challenging for both second and third generation Latina and Latino youth is substance use.[43]

RYASAP-Youthspeak, *Bridgeport, Connecticut*

Tackling the issue of teen dating violence, RYASAP developed an innovative and interactive youth outreach campaign that included movie discussions, a red carpet event, and the launch of a new Website. Using recent movies like *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* as focal points for discussion, RYASAP hosted a film series that brought young people together to identify and discuss healthy relationships. RYASAP also launched a youth outreach Website, MYOSpace where youth can log on and learn about dating violence, participate in online discussions, and learn about future outreach events.

Snohomish County Health and Safety Network, *Everett*, *Washington*

A former YOVA mentor project site, Snohomish County Health and Safety Network continued its youth outreach efforts on the issue of healthy relationships. Using its *PowerPlays* program,[44]

the youth peer educators presented to local youth and community leaders to provide a comprehensive understanding of healthy relationships and key steps to take to get help and overcome teen dating violence.

YWCA of Bergen County (YWCA), *Hackensack, New Jersey*

In collaboration with the Urban League of Bergen County, the YWCA hosted a panel event bringing together experts in the field to educate teens on issues related to cyberbullying. Internet experts, law enforcement officers, and victim service providers spoke with young people on the tragic effects of cyberbullying and how to report cyberbullying incidents and get help. Youth participants gained a better understanding of how to recognize cyberbullying is and steps to take if they are cyberbullied.

Texas Network of Youth Services-diyYOUTH Art Program, *Austin, Texas*

The diyYOUTH art program helps at-risk youth explore their talents through art and expression. Using the creativity of the youth in the program, diyYOUTH developed a number of unique resources educating peers on cyberbullying. They developed and distributed t-shirts, bags, and key-chains with phrases such as "*Connect with Respect"* to let teens know that they have a right to expect respectful interpersonal behavior online and offline, and where to go for help if they believe they may be cyberbullied.

The Shelter for Abused Women and Children (the Shelter), *Naples, Florida*

Upon leaving the national Underserved Teen victims Initiative training event, the Shelter team knew exactly what it wanted to do. The youth leaders got right to work on writing, directing, and producing their very own public service announcement to reach out to Latino peers about teen relationship abuse. The brief film was shown at local Parent-Teacher Association meetings and youth-centered events in Naples. The Shelter also launched a Facebook page for its initiative to continue its outreach to Latino/Hispanic youth in its community.

Nevada Hispanic Services (NHS), *Reno, Nevada*

An organization dedicated to conducting outreach to Hispanic and Latino youth in Reno, Nevada, NHS joined the Underserved Teen Victims Initiative to expand its existing outreach efforts. With a great working relationship with the local schools, NHS was able to do a number of workshops in three surrounding high schools. NHS high school peer educators taught their Latino peers about stalking victimization and the resources available to victims of this crime.

Bright Horizons, *Norfolk, Nebraska*

As a former YOVA mentor project site, Bright Horizons applied to the Underserved Teen Victims Initiative to build on its successful youth outreach efforts and expand in educating Latino/Hispanic youth about resources and options for victims of teen dating violence. Bright Horizons hosted a middle school assembly featuring Miss Ohio, Becky Minger, talking about how she overcame bullying and dating violence. With the support of its local media outlets, Bright Horizons also produced a radio public service announcement to reach out to Latina teen dating violence victims.

Hogar Escuela, *Bayamón, Puerto Rico*

As one of the few organizations in Puerto Rico offering prevention and social services, Hogar Escuela focused its campaign on conducting outreach to runaway and homeless youth living in its community. Hogar Escuela created a number of resources including t-shirts, a brochure, and other free items to hand out at local events. Hogar Escuela used these resources to raise awareness about its services at a number of local events, including International Peace Day, International Women's Day, and National Youth Violence Awareness week events.

UMOS Latina Resource Center, *Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

Described as the "heart of the Hispanic community" in Milwaukee, UMOS Latina Resource Center provides services for underserved Latino/Hispanic individuals and families living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. To educate Latino youth on teen dating violence, UMOS hosted a teen summit featuring interactive workshops, sociodrama, and outreach posters. UMOS peer educators taught their peers about the dangers of dating violence and created a public service announcement to demonstrate healthy versus unhealthy relationships, and alert teens how UMOS can help with abuse issues.

TRIBAL YOUTH

Outreach to youth in tribal communities combines many of the factors mentioned throughout this document, whether the youth are in reservation, rural, or urban Native communities. It is important to learn about and respect the culture of the youth, their family, and their "extended family" in the tribal community, which usually consists of blood relations and relations by marriage or tribal affiliation in reservation and rural areas, but may take on an entirely different appearance as "community" in an urban setting. It is equally important to try to understand the added weight strong cultural traditions can bring to normal intergenerational tensions. Moreover, one must attempt to understand how, in contrast, those same cultural traditions can be utilized to reinforce cultural value systems and a sense of community and family among American Indian and Alaska Native teens. In tribal communities, whenever possible, call upon respected elders to deliver messages to youth. Then involve teens directly in project goals and objectives as valued members of the community-at-large. In reservation and rural areas, consider methods for conducting outreach to tribal youth through tribal casinos, health clinics, recreational resorts and retreats, and powwow and ceremonial events. In urban areas, consider methods for conducting outreach through urban Indian health clinics, powwow, and ceremonial cultural events, and through urban Native organizations that are utilized as "meeting places" by Indian people.

> **Is this your first time working with youth as project partners?**
>
> No problem! Follow these tips from the adult facilitators of the Underserved Teen Victims Initiative projects.
>
> - Come as a blank slate. Don't be the adult who acts like they know everything.
> - Be flexible. Teens have crazy schedules with their clubs, after school programs, and sports so be flexible when arranging meeting and event dates.
> - Take the time to get to know the teens. Building a trusting relationship is a key component to working with teens.
> - Create a safe place for teens to openly share their thoughts and feelings. Let teens facilitate the meetings, or voice any concerns they may have. It may be hard, but don't overtake the conversation.
> - Consider connecting with teens through different means. Use cell phones, social media websites, or e-mailing to get in touch with teens.
> - Use encouraging words. Teens want instant results and change can

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MCBI), Tribal Court Services, *Choctaw, Mississippi*

Judging or being judged by one's peers is not easy to face for adults or young people. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) has created the tribal court service, TEEN Court program to do just that. The TEEN Court program is an alternative to the formal Tribal Youth

Court System for youth in the community who have committed delinquent offenses. The program allows for youth to judge their peers in determining a sentence for delinquent acts with a focus on intervening early to prevent escalation of such behavior.

Having the unique inside look at issues affecting young people coming before their court, MBCI chose to focus its efforts on teen dating violence. Diversion Coordinator Andrew Jones found that "in our community, dating violence is a normal part of a family structure. Young people don't view domestic violence as something wrong, but as something that is normal." MBCI felt that participating in the Underserved Teen Victims Initiative was an opportunity to change Choctaw youths' views about dating violence and inform them about the network of support and services available from MCBI.

Youth peer educators devised a plan to reach teens through community events and workshops. These workshops educated children and teens about the many levels of violence in relationships, including multi-generational messages like *"Hands are not for hitting."* The events successfully reached more than 500 teens and 275 children in local schools. The message that dating violence is wrong and that victims' have rights was an entirely new concept being brought before these young people. These workshops were a critical step in creating a change in young people's attitudes towards domestic violence in their community.

MBCI's outreach messages were designed to make a lasting impression upon youth about relationships: you have a choice, you have rights as a victim, and you deserve help. These clear and effective messages, accompanied by Tribal colors and images of Tribal youth, were reinforced through a number of outreach items. The peer educators designed popular t-shirts and brochures, and emblazoned their messages on basketballs, cups, and pens for distribution. "*Love is respect. Stop teen dating violence*" was one tagline they used.

Andrew Jones reflects, "This campaign was so important. We finally got young people and adults to see dating violence as a problem that we need to address. We have brought the issue to the public's attention, and no longer are we going to stay silent. Young people have choice; they don't need to stay in these destructive relationships."

The American Indian Child Resource Center (AICRC), *Oakland, California*

Located in a community with a high rate of youth victimization, AICRC struggled with selecting the type of victimization it wanted to focus on. Sensing its community needed to gain an overall understanding of the tragic effects of youth violence; AICRC created resources and sparked awareness on sexual, physical, mental, and emotional abuse. Its youth leadership team generated awareness on youth victimization and participated in community events that annually attract Native Americans from across the region.

Inspired To Create Change in Your Community?

If you're feeling inspired to do similar work in your community, here are some tips to get you started.

- Talk to other organizations, schools, and community leaders about the importance of conducting outreach to underserved populations.
- Let them know the facts: teens are victimized at high rates, underserved teens face barriers in getting help, and there is a gap in resources available to these underserved populations.
- Recruit young people to help educate their peers on victims' rights and awareness. Young people have the power and passion to drive your outreach campaign to an instant success.
- Contact the National Partners for additional information. NCPC and the National Center for Victims of Crime are always available to direct you to resources, and offer consultation, assistance, and guidance as you move forward with your campaign.

PROVIDER PREPAREDNESS

Additional barriers to youth accessing victim assistance may be related to the limitations of available programs. Victim service providers may not be trained in youth development and may be generally uncomfortable working with teens. In addition, a lack of understanding the cultural experiences, values, and needs of teens from underserved populations may contribute to hesitancy to provide specific outreach and promote ongoing assistance. Some victim service providers, especially those who do not regularly work with youth victims, are unclear about the confusing legal issues surrounding the rights of minors to access their services and the confidentiality rights of minors, parental consent, and mandatory reporting requirements, so they avoid providing services to youth victims.

(For guidance on these issues, please refer to our resources, Reaching and Serving Teen Victims of Crime, and Chart a Course: Policies that Affect Victim Services for Youth at www.ncpc.org.)

Youth-led outreach: Involving teens in designing and delivering outreach programs is sure to increase their effectiveness. Teens are the experts on their peers, and they can tell you what approaches, messages, designs, colors, and language are most likely to appeal to other teens. Many teens are also enthusiastic presenters, and youth-led skits and educational presentations often have a far greater impact than information provided by adults. Strategic placement: Outreach materials should be made available in the places where teens gather (schools, recreational programs, restaurants, movie theaters, malls, amusement parks, community pools).

CONCLUSION

This guidebook, *Outreach to Underserved Teen Victims of Crime*, and accompanying Web-based resources were created to provide an overview of the challenges faced in conducting outreach to underserved teen victims of crime and to provide examples of the various projects and resources developed and implemented in local communities through the Underserved Teen Victims Initiative. The National Crime Prevention Council, the National Center for Victims of Crime, and the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice are committed to providing resources, training, and assistance to help professionals conducting youth victim outreach.

The importance of culturally specific outreach is made clear by the data on youth victimization that shows that many marginalized youth often experience higher rates of violence and victimization than the general youth population.[45] When young people have access to culturally appropriate and specific outreach, they are more likely to recognize when they are victims of violence or abuse and to seek assistance to become safe and build resilience. Victim assistance professionals partnering with underserved youth on youth victim outreach campaigns is an effective and exciting solution.

As the Underserved Teen Victims Initiative has demonstrated, when youth and adults work together to reach out to victimized youth, everyone benefits: the adults and their organizations build more and stronger community coalitions, learn how to better serve youth and marginalized

populations, and often feel reinvigorated by engaging with youth. Young people develop leadership skills, build their resilience, and learn the intrinsic value of being engaged in their communities. Communities become more welcoming and ultimately safer places and individual teen victims learn that they are not alone and there are people and places that offer support and hope.

Statistical Overviews on Underserved Teen Victims

According to the 2008 National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, more than 60 percent of children from birth to 17 years of age in the United States were either directly or indirectly victimized within a one-year period. More than one in four children (25.3 percent) witnessed an act of violence within the same one-year period, and 38 percent witnessed an act of violence sometime during their lifetime.[46]

Just under one-half (45 percent) of all child victims of maltreatment were white, 22 percent were African American, and 21 percent were Hispanic. African American children, American Indian or Alaska Native children, and children of multiple races had the highest rates of victimization.[47]

Youth ages 12 to 19 with a disability experienced violence at nearly twice the rate of those without a disability.[48]

In 2008, 15 percent of child victims of abuse or neglect had a reported disability. Disabilities considered risk factors included mental retardation, emotional disturbance, visual or hearing impairment, learning disability, physical disability, behavioral problems, or other medical problems.[49]

A total of 227 anti-Semitic acts were reported at middle and high schools in 2007, compared to 193 in 2006.[50]

In 2007, 35 percent of students ages 12 to 18 had been exposed to hate-related graffiti at school, and ten percent reported someone directing hate-related words at them.[51]

In 2005, African American students (41 percent) were far less likely than white students (60 percent) to say they "agree or strongly agree" with the statement "I feel safe at school."[52]

In 2005, fewer than half (41 percent) of special education students said they strongly agree or agree with the statement "I feel safe at school."[53]

In a 2009 study that included youth in grades six to 12, 61 percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) respondents said they felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, and 40 percent felt unsafe because of their gender expression. Thirty percent missed at least one day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.[54]

In 2009, 85 percent of LGBT youth respondents had been verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation; 40 percent had been physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved); and 19 percent had been physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation.[55]

Of LGBT students who had been harassed or assaulted at school, 62 percent did not report the incident to school officials, most commonly because they doubted anything would be done.[56]

From 1993 to 2003, black youth ages 17 or younger were five times as likely as white youth to be victims of homicide.[57]

American Indian and Alaska Native teens and young adults suffer the highest violent victimization of any age category in any racial group. Victims ages 18 to 24 make up almost one-third of all American Indian and Alaska Native violent crime victims and have a violent victimization rate of one in four.[58]

In 2008, 18 percent of hate and bias incidents against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ) victims reported to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs were against victims ages 18 and younger.[59]

From 1995 to 2008, 23 teens were murdered because of their gender identity or expression.[60]

ENDNOTES

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