

Academy Forum

Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

The Association Newsletter

Issue #59- October 2022

Just a Thought

Inequities in victim services deny individuals the opportunity to heal and attain justice. This essay provides a framework for how we can work collaboratively to address the problem.
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Web Links

You never know what resources await you on the world-wide web ...come see what our latest surfing expedition uncovered.
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Save the Date!

Find out what trainings and events are just around the corner. It looks like there are lots of ways to keep you busy during the next few months!
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Certification News

Want to learn how to become a certified victim service professional in the state of Maryland? This section explains each level of certification, and what are the specific requirements for each.
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Jennifer Foxworthy shares her journey as victim advocate, and how her experience with RVAAM has influenced her personal and professional development.
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Just a thought...

Justice isn't justice if it isn't available to everyone

Many victims of crime are underserved or unserved, whether because of limited resources, lack of information, implicit bias, or an emphasis on partnership with law enforcement. As a whole, the victim services field has struggled to reach many survivors including immigrants, young people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ people, and other historically marginalized communities. Sadly, these very same individuals are often victimized at higher rates than the general population, and when people belong to more than one of these groups, they are even more likely to be excluded from services. The failure of the current system to adequately engage the full range of victims means these persons are more likely to live with unaddressed symptoms of trauma, are less likely to get

the help they deserve, and are less likely to recover.

As efforts to reform the criminal justice system grows nationwide, it has never been more important to envision new approaches to safety and justice that meet the needs of crime victims, especially those that are most harmed and least



helped.

In other words, we need to achieve equity in assisting victims of crime. This does not mean, however, there is a universal formula to meet the needs of all underserved populations because each group is unique. Each ethnic and cultural group have distinct histories, values, and traditions. So, how do we achieve such a goal? By providing competent, culturally congruent care. Culture does not simply refer

to ethnicity or race, but rather to integrated patterns of human behavior. Behavior patterns can include thought, communication, language, beliefs, values, practices, customs, courtesies, rituals, roles, and relationships. And it is important to remember there is as much diversity within cultures as there is between cultures.

Meeting victims' needs is far more difficult if their rights and access to services are complicated by geographic isolation, language barriers, cultural intolerance, disability, and /or lack of social support. Culturally sensitive responses should include a heightened awareness of how victims' environments shape their healing. Thus, to improve service delivery, it is important to understand what a victim's specific belief system is about healing and justice.

To achieve this, there are number of key strategies that one must follow. The first step is to educate yourself about the people who reside in your community and learn about their experiences. Start by collecting and analyzing data to create a demographic profile of your jurisdiction.

(Continued on page 4)

EDITOR'S CORNER

Hello Alumni!

How has summer come to an end and autumn be on our doorstep already?! The older I get, the faster time seems to go. Before we know it, the next Winter RVAAM Academy will be here. So, let's start telling our colleagues about the Academy and getting them excited to attend. We know you alums are the best spokespersons and marketing tool for the Academy because you have attended it, and can speak to how it helped to expand your knowledge, skills, and/or your connections. So, share your story so others can learn how the Academy can help them grow personally and professionally.

For those of you who attended the retreat in September, I hope you had a wonderful experience. I know many of you had the attended the Academy online, however that did not prevent you from bonding as a group. So, I'm certain that when you were together in-person, those connections got even stronger! I wish I had been able to have been there to see it all happen. Hopefully, we'll all be able to get together in person at an Alumni social event in the near future.

I want to remind all of you that since you have attended the Academy, you are now qualified to apply for certification. Certification will help to set up you apart from others in the field, and will provide you with some amazing training. So, start filling out your certification application today! If you have any questions, I am here to help you - so don't hesitate to reach out. I would love to see every victim assistance professional become certified - can you imagine how that would revolutionize our field??

Wishing you all the best - until next time ...

Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII

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Don't sit down and wait for the opportunities to come. Get up and make them. ~ Madam C.J. Walker

WEB LINKS

Although we have a virtual library at our fingertips every time we turn on the computer, we often lose sight of the forest through the trees just trying to navigate the world-wide web. Here are a few sites that relate to this issue's "Just a Thought" ... happy surfing!



Anne E. Casey Foundation - Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide

This action plan provides a clear framework in the form of seven simple steps for incorporating racial equity and inclusion at every stage of work, and demonstrates how a race equity lens can be adopted at the program, organization, and system levels. The tools were created by a group of community partners and organizations who have been forerunners and advocates in the field. To get your copy of these tools, go to: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-and-inclusion-action-guide>

The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims

The Resource Center is a one-stop shop where victim service providers, culturally specific organizations, criminal justice professionals, and policy-makers may get information and expert guidance to enhance their capaci-

ty to identify, reach, and serve all victims, especially for those from communities that too often have less access to healing services and avenues to justice. For more information about the Resource Center, go to: <https://www.reachingvictims.org/>

U.S. Department of Justice: Office for Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime - "A Vision for Equity in Victim Services: What do the Data Tell Us About the Work Ahead?"

In this video, OVC and Bureau of Justice Statistics Fellow Heather Warnken presents her work and vision to ensure equity in victim services. Ms. Wankins highlights statistics on racial disparities and violent victimization, and discusses the need to ensure that programming is in place to reach victims of color, and how VOCA assistance and compensation funds, and other discretionary funds, can be used to expand access to justice across all communities. To watch the video, go to: <https://ovc.ojp.gov/media/video/12971>

U.S. Department of Justice: Office for Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime - "Respecting Diversity: Responding to Underserved Victims of Crime"

This report provides strategies to help victim service providers be better able to recognize and understand cultural differences. It discusses the vast array of cultural differences among the people of the U.S, basic principles of culturally proficient and culturally sensitive interaction with crime victims, and specific practices and considerations that will help victim assistance professionals provide appropriate ser-

vices to crime victims of various cultures. To download a copy of this report, go to: <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/respecting-diversity-responding-under-served-victims-crime-national>

U.S. Department of Justice: Office for Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime - “Put the Focus on Victims: Consider Culture and Diversity”

Victimization knows no boundaries. It does not distinguish between racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. Victims vary by social class, spiritual beliefs, physical and mental abilities, sexual orientation, gender, age, literacy, and previous victimization. While there is no universal formula to meet the needs of all victims, we can improve our approach if we educate ourselves about the specific needs of different populations. This report outlines a set of strategies to provide culturally congruent care and how to serve specific types of victims. To download a copy of the report, go to: https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc_archives/sartkit/focus/culture-print.html

SAVE THE DATE!

2023 RVAAM Winter Academy

February 13th - 17th, 2023

Share the news with your colleagues and download a copy of the application from www.rvaam.us to give them. Any questions, contact Anne Litecky at alitecky@ubalt.edu



Envision - National Prevention Conference

November 8-9th, 2022

Envision is an annual conference that brings together diverse child advocates and organizations and empowers them to prevent child sexual abuse using a public health approach. ENVI-SION is held in partnership with Darkness to Light and the Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Envision 2022 focuses on the importance of communication in preventing child sexual abuse, and how effective communication engages and empowers us to work together to keep kids safe from harm. To register, go to <https://www.d2l.org/envision-national-prevention-conference/>



ALUMNI UPDATES

It seems like only yesterday when we were all together at the Academy. But in a blink of an eye another year has passed us by. Here’s just a snapshot of some of the special events and milestones our alums have experienced since we last met...

- **Sharnice Coleman (Class of 2020, Summer)** - a huge congrats to Sharnice for her promotion from Trauma Speciality Admissions Coordinator to Manager of Admissions & Psychiatric Urgent Care at Sheppard Pratt Hospital, Towson Campus - way to go!

- **Sharon DiMaggio (Class of 2020, Winter)** - Sharon was officially promoted to Special Projects Coordinator (specifically, Orders for Protection & Victim Services Coordinator) with the Calvert County Sheriff’s Office. Over the past 12 years, Sharon has taken the initiative to enhance and expand services and programs for the community, co-workers, and Calvert County Government.
- **Michelle (Schaffer) Shae (Class of 2007)** - Michelle was recognized by the Department of Justice in April by receiving the Pennsylvania Victim Advocate with National Crime Victim Service Award. This award category honors extraordinary individuals and programs that provide services to victims of crime. It also recognizes programs and individuals whose work exemplifies the long-term commitment that characterizes many victim service providers, some of whom are also victims of crime. Wow! What an honor! Thank you, Michelle, for 30 years of amazing work.

- **Rebecca Smith (Class of 2018)** - This past August, Rebecca started a new position with Montgomery County Health and Human Services. Her colleagues at Baltimore County Department of Social Services, Family Violence Unit, were very sad to see her go but everyone is very happy for her and excited to see all the great work that she is going to accomplish in her new role. Congratulations Rebecca!!



CERTIFICATION NEWS

Why aren't you certified in victim services yet? When you pick a doctor or a lawyer to work with you, you almost always certainly base your decision on their credentials, such as the school they've attended and the cases they have worked on. After all, you want to make sure that you choose someone who knows what they are talking about and who has the most experience in the appropriate domain. The same applies to victim services - the right certification not only helps you to bolster your knowledge and skills that you can use when working with victims, but also provides quantifiable evidence of your competence in this challenging and competitive field. So, what are you waiting for? Go to www.rvaam.us to learn more about the certification process and download a copy of the application today!



There are three levels of certification in Maryland, each require a specific set of qualifications and are described in detail below:

- * **Level I (VAS-I)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of two years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 40 hours of training (RVAAM, NVAA, or other SVAA); d) interview; e) \$50 application processing fee
- * **Level II (VAS-II)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of five years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 80 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 40 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services,

including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) written essay on what changes are needed in victim services; e) \$75 application processing fee.

- * **Level III (VAS-III)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum eleven years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 120 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 80 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) oral presentation on approved topic in Victim Assistance; e) \$100 application processing fee.

There is also a similarly tiered renewal process in place for those advocates who want to remain current with their certification:

- * **Level I** - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within the past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; and b) complete renewal application packet and pay the \$25 renewal fee.
- * **Level II** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level I to Level II - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) written essay on what changes are needed in victim services; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$50 fee.
- * **Level III** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level II to Level III - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) oral presentation on approved topic in victim as-

sistance; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$75 fee.

All application materials are available online at www.rvaam.us (click on the Certification tab at the top of the page). Keep an eye out for upcoming classes on ethics. For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org or by phone at (410) 638-4905.

Congratulations to Our Newest Certified Victim Service Providers!

Yolanda M. Nelson-Swaim, VASI

Elaina De La Cruz, VASI

Norma Turner-Waters, VASII

Evette Matthews, VASII

Jennifer Foxworthy, VASII

Yvonne Simmons, VASIII

"Certification for me helps to enhance recognition, credibility, and mobility in the field. MVACP certification also allows for professional identification with a group who shares a common background in victim services, and adheres to a Professional Code of Ethics. Thus, it enhances both my education and credentials in the field." Yolanda Nelson-Swain

Just a Thought (Continued)

Then, seek out opportunities to learn about the differing perspectives and belief systems across the different groups (and generations) residing in your community. Learn about cultural practices that may or may not support intervention and prevention efforts.

Not everyone shares the same belief systems, including what is considered criminal and what causes crime, or that is appropriate (or justified) to seek help from an outside party.

With the increasing number of individuals emigrating to the United States, it is critical to educate oneself about the emigration experience of the non-native citizens in your community. The length of time an immigrant spends in this country does not necessarily lend itself to acculturation. Their individual emigration experience, as well as trauma and oppression experienced in their native country prior to emigration, may affect a person's sense of vulnerability, trust in others, and behaviors.

The second step is to identify opportunities to collaborate with others. As the diversity within our communities grows, so do the needs of victims of crime. This presents complex challenges for many organizations, especially when needs exceed available resources. Thus, we should actively seek out funding opportunities for a specific outreach project or to expand our partnerships with culturally specific organizations. Many times, crime victims are unaware of the resources that exist within their communities or may think the services are not relevant to their needs or accessible. Linking victims with organizations they can trust and with whom they can easily communicate can facilitate their recovery and participation in the criminal justice process. Thus, a good place to start is to work with community partners who are familiar with the different populations in your community to help develop an outreach plan that is specific to their needs. These partnerships can go a long way to set the direction, define results, leverage new resources, identify issues, and develop solutions that will increase outreach for underserved victims and help to increase accessibility to the justice system and service providers.

The third step is to ensure that all policies for your program or organization are written, are consistently implemented, and are grounded in evidence-based practices. Equally important is to regularly monitor program initiatives and evaluate the services to ensure they are appropriate for diverse populations. This requires identifying any type of barriers different groups may encounter when trying to access the services your program offers. These may include physical, sensory, mental/cognitive, language/literacy, and economic obstacles. Then devise a plan for how you can provide reasonable accommodations to make services accessible to individuals.

In sum, equity in victim services can only be achieved when we make a commitment to:

- * Identify service delivery systems or models that are appropriate to specific populations and make appropriate referrals.
- * Establish responses that are attuned to victims' cultural or bicultural experiences.
- * Generate a wide variety of verbal and nonverbal communication skills in response to the direct and indirect communication styles of diverse clients.
- * Master interviewing techniques that reflect an understanding of the role of the language in victims' cultures.
- * Effectively use victims' natural support systems (e.g., folk healers, religious and spiritual leaders, families).
- * Evaluate the response to victims from diverse populations.

The bottom line is that inequities will continue to persist in the justice system and in victim services until we have a better understanding of the diversity that exists within our communities, and the unique experiences and needs that exist within different groups. Only after we educate our-

selves can we develop a plan to address these inequities and help to facilitate justice and healing for all.

Essay contributed by Heather Pfeifer, Ph.D., RVAAM faculty

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

It's important we all keep abreast of changes to laws and/or policies that have a direct affect on victims of crime. If you hear of a new law or policy being proposed at the local, state, or federal level, be sure to share it with us!



Maryland Second Look Act - SB 842

was recently presented to the Judicial Proceedings Committee. The bill allows *all* convicted offenders to have a new sentencing hearing after 20 years. **Please call or email your State Senator to urge them to deny this bill.** You can look up who represents you in the Maryland Senate [here](#).

SB 328 - Criminal Law - Stalking - Definition

This bill seeks to expand the current statute to include electronic communication and tracking devices. The original stalking statute was passed at a time before the existence of electronic methods of communication made it possible to track a person. As such, the current statute only addresses physical forms of following a victim. However, nowadays, most stalking is committed using electronic means - such as, hiding a GPS tracker in a victim's car, turning on the vic-

tim's phone location application to track their whereabouts, putting a camera or listening device in a child's toy in order to hear / watch what happens at the victim's home, or installing spyware on victim's computer. With the constant evolution of technology, offenders are finding more ways to stalk their victims, which makes it more difficult for victims to ensure their own safety and that of their loved ones.

Under the proposed change in the law, such actions could be considered stalking if the victim can prove that the perpetrator intended to cause or knew or reasonably should have known that the conduct would cause serious emotional distress. Such changes would bring the law in line with the forms of stalking that are most widely used today.

SB 280 - Interim and Temporary Protection Orders - Electronic Filing and Video Conferencing - This bill seeks to allow victims of abuse who are eligible to request interim and/or temporary protective orders to do so virtually in a hospital or urgent care setting. Currently, if a victim is in one of those facilities due to a violence incident, they cannot leave the hospital protected from their abuser. Further, victims who are in a hospital or urgent care setting for other medical reasons, who trust their medical professional and feel safe to disclose their abuse, cannot receive a protective order before leaving. This legislation applies to everyone who is eligible for protective orders, including domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and vulnerable elder adults.

Alumni Showcase

My Journey with the Roper Victim Assistance Academy

I have first-hand experience with overcoming adversity. So, I have made it my mission to ensure no victim slips through the cracks or has to navigate their crisis. This is the motivation that fuels my passion and motivation to be the pebble in a pond that creates ripples far and wide. I believe in doing something bigger than myself. That's why I joined the U.S. Navy in 1991. I had a very fruitful and interesting career, serving our country for over 20 years. As a Navy combat veteran, I knocked down stereotypes and dealt with discrimination as I became the first African-American female Aircrewman in the enlisted ranks, and the first female In Flight Technician during my squadron tours. While serving in the Navy, I also experienced more than five years of service-member on service-member domestic violence. I suffered in silence in a male dominated industry, afraid to confide in anyone. During my time in the Navy, I found myself facing a war on three fronts. I was facing a personal war with an abusive partner who professed to love me, enduring workplace bullying, and career sabotage because of the color of my skin and gender, all while flying combat missions in three wars (Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq). I am grateful to be alive to share my story of overcoming so many dynamic circumstances. I have made it my mission to bring awareness of domestic violence so that survivors can heal without a life of guilt and shame. When asked about my mission, I explain "I use my voice to help others find theirs."

As a change champion and someone dedicated to making a greater impact in the world. I became the Founder and CEO of Unstoppable You Ministries, Inc. in 2017. UYM is a faith based non-profit 501©(3) social enterprise that educates, empowers, and inspires men and women to have whole and healthy lives, by providing emergency services, education, and awareness, as well as supportive resources to communities around the country, especially those affected by

domestic violence, human trafficking, and homelessness. Me and my dynamic team recognize there are still many people who don't understand the cause and effect of domestic violence, human trafficking, or homelessness. It's important for people to realize that one person can experience all three. UYM desires to collaborate with other organizations to fill those gaps across our multiple platforms.

Thus, attending the Roper Victim Assistance Academy afforded me the opportunity to meet new people with the same passion to help others in crisis. Being a part of the Roper Alumni gives me access to additional training as well as colleagues in different professions that I can connect with for questions or concerns.

If UYM is truly to be in the trenches with our clients or provide public education and awareness, I want to be a subject matter expert, qualified and equipped with the knowledge and resources to truly make a difference. It was instilled in me during my training as a Navy Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program Counselor to "Do No Harm." At UYM, we want to provide the best service possible whether there is a crisis or not. Therefore, being VASII certified will allow me to be more well-rounded in providing services to our clients. Additionally, this certification enhances my LMSW licensure. Ultimately, being a VASII allows me to be a valuable resource at the micro, mezzo, and macro level.

Essay contributed by Jennifer Foxworthy (Class of 2022, Winter).

Thoughts, Ideas, Suggestions?

Are you looking for more information about a particular issue in the field of victim services? The Editorial Board is always looking for new topics to profile in the newsletter that can assist our Alums both personally and professionally. Please send any suggestions you might have for a future topic to Debbie Bradley at bradleyd@harcfordsheriff.org. And remember, we are also happy to share any information you have about job openings and professional trainings you might think your fellow Alums would benefit from!



Editorial Board

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**Watch for the next edition of the
Academy Forum in January 2023**