

She works behind the scenes to provide support services for victims of crime.

Eugenia Pedley is a Program Manager for the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) within the Office of Justice Programs (OJP). She works directly with other government agencies, non-profit organizations, and communities to provide resources that support victims, family members, and first responders affected by mass violence. The resources, under the Antiterrorism Emergency Assistance Program (AEAP), fund services ranging from crisis counseling and emergency shelter to compensation for medical and mental health expenses or support at criminal justice proceedings.

“I love my job,” said Pedley, who has been a federal employee for more than 30 years. “It’s the kind of job where you can feel rewarded for being able to help people in crisis - even though we don’t work with the victims personally. We know what we are doing is having an impact.”

And an impact she has had.

Immediately after the school shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. OVC Director Joye Frost and Pedley traveled to Newtown, to meet with state and local officials to offer assistance. Pedley, along with OVC staff, and an expert consultant worked with FBI victim assistance personnel met with Newtown city officials, and Connecticut Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) officials to determine the community’s needs, which culminated in two AEAP grants totaling over \$8.6 million to support crisis and longer-term victim services. Other recent examples of victim support in larger mass violence incidents include the theater shootings in Aurora, Colo. in July 2012; the August 2012 shootings at the Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wis.; and the Boston Marathon bombings in April 2013.

There are many aspects to Pedley’s job, such as evaluating the issues behind mass violence and terrorism and asking if there is a way for communities to be proactive before one of these events occur?

Pedley said after looking at the question, it seemed like the best response was to develop a toolkit to help communities look at all their victim service activities before, during, and after a mass violence incident. The result is a *Mass Violence Lessons Learned Toolkit*, which will be available online in late 2014 or early 2015.

“OVC worked diligently to connect us with our colleagues nationally to ensure help was provided,” said Liam Lowney, the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance, referring to OVC’s work on the Boston Marathon terrorist attack. “They are now building upon those connections and sharing the experiences to develop a toolkit for states to use in planning for mass tragedy and developing a response to it.”

As Pedley discusses her job, her excitement for her work is obvious.

“I wish more Americans knew about the important work that goes on at OJP,” Pedley said. “I’m humbled by the dedication I see and how passionate my co-workers are in their support of victims, even though most of what we do is behind the scenes.”

“Her work has been extraordinary,” said Frost. “She is already recognized as an expert on assisting victims of these crimes by her colleagues in OVC and our constituents in the field.”

Pedley works primarily on the mass violence and terrorism programs, but VOCA funds support so many programs and services that help crime victims as they begin to rebuild their lives. “These people have had their lives upended by a criminal act,” Pedley said. “But it’s gratifying to know that the work we do may help them in their time of need. I feel truly blessed to work for an organization whose mission gives so much help to crime victims.”

Each year, hundreds of millions of dollars are deposited into the Crime Victims Fund (CVF), established by VOCA, from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalty fees, and special assessments collected by U.S. Attorney's Offices, U.S. Courts, and the Bureau of Prisons. These dollars come from offenders convicted of federal crimes and not from taxpayers. The AEAP program, which specifically supports victims of mass violence, is funded by the Antiterrorism Emergency Reserve, an annual set aside of up to \$50 million under the CVF.

“Whenever I tell someone where the (VOCA) money comes from everyone says, ‘what a fabulous idea’ – and most people admit they’ve never heard about OVC,” Pedley said. “Even I didn’t know about it until just before I started to work here. It should be on every news channel.”

Pedley also went on to say, “OVC is here to help victims and it’s almost invisible to the general public. Even people who use services that are funded by the Crime Victims Fund, like battered women in many domestic violence shelters, probably don’t realize OVC exists.”

Pedley plans to remain with OVC for many more years before she’s ready for retirement.

“What a great way to end a career – helping people who are traumatized,” she said. “Some of these people have been through so much and most are so positive. It amazes me, the resilience of the human spirit, and I feel privileged to be able to help them in some small way.”