



Office for Victims of Crime

August 1999

# OVC Fact Sheet

*Advocating for the Fair  
Treatment of Crime Victims*

## Community Crisis Response

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), within the U.S. Department of Justice, provides Federal funds to support victim assistance and compensation programs around the country and advocates for the fair treatment of crime victims. Through its Community Crisis Response (CCR) program, OVC funds services to communities that have suffered crimes resulting in multiple victimizations or community-wide trauma. Historically, OVC, through the CCR program, responded to communities in crisis by training local service providers and deploying crisis response teams. For example, OVC's CCR program promptly deployed crisis response teams to Oklahoma City after the 1995 terrorist bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building; to Jonesboro, Arkansas, after four students and a teacher were killed in a 1998 school shooting; and, to Salt Lake City, Utah, after the 1999 fatal shooting that killed two people and injured several others in a Family History Library.

In the past, OVC's goal was to provide short-term training and technical assistance to communities in crisis. However, experience has demonstrated that every community would benefit greatly by having its own extensive community-based response plan. Today, OVC is working to help States and communities accomplish this by helping them prepare crisis response plans that include local and state-based emergency counseling and intervention and long-term mental health services for victims and surviving family members. Many States and communities already have the personnel, resources, and teams to effectively respond to major crises, so OVC is encouraging them to develop or enhance their own integrated response plans to ensure victims are provided long-term services. Through training and technical assistance, OVC can help local teams mobilize. OVC recently did this in Yosemite and Eureka, California, after two teenage girls and a mother disappeared while on vacation and in Springfield, Oregon, and Littleton, Colorado, where hundreds witnessed the brutal murders of a teacher and classmates.

### OVC's Strategy

Many States have devised and implemented centralized crisis response plans. A community may already have many resources, such as mental health and victim services, emergency preparedness support, the clergy, and search and rescue services. When a crisis occurs in a community, OVC encourages the community to first contact their State VOCA (Victims of Crime Act of 1984) administrator who will determine whether existing resources can be pooled to provide the necessary services.

In cases when a State cannot provide the needed immediate assistance, OVC will continue to accept requests for training and technical assistance from eligible agencies, including victims service agencies; Federal, Tribal, State, and local criminal justice system agencies; and other agencies that regularly assist victims of violent crime. OVC can still mobilize crisis response teams to communities in need after reviewing and evaluating the request for assistance, taking into consideration the potential impact of assistance, the need for Federal support, OVC's ability to respond, and the clarity of the request. Send requests for assistance to:

**Office for Victims of Crime**  
**810 7th Street, NW, 8th floor**  
**Washington, DC 20531**  
**Tel: (202) 307-5989**  
**FAX: (202) 305-2440**

Crisis response should be rapid and effective as well as long-term and sustaining. To this end, OVC is coordinating with nationally-recognized mental health and emergency preparedness experts to devise a strategy to help States develop and implement their own centralized crisis response plans. OVC also plans to

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conduct a series of regional seminars and training courses to train local crisis response teams to respond to needs in their communities. States and local communities are encouraged to formulate and perform test-runs of crisis response plans similar to those for natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, fires, and hurricanes. States and communities should identify mental health experts within each community. States should coordinate as much information as possible to maximize access to resources in a crisis. Several States have already undertaken these activities. OVC encourages communities to find out more

information about their community crisis response plans by contacting their State VOCA administrators.

For more information about OVC, contact the following sources:

OVC Telephone ..... (202) 307-5983  
OVC Web Site ..... <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/>  
OVC Resource Center Telephone ..... (800) 851-3420  
OVC Resource Center Web Site ..... <http://www.ncjrs.org>

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**U.S. Department of Justice**  
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