

OHIO FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION CENTER

OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

A DIVISION OF THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

# Excellence in Advocacy: A Victim-Centered Approach

2010

## ***Chapter 2: The Different Disciplines of Victim Advocacy***

There are many different types of advocacy for victims. Some programs are community-based and others are affiliated with criminal justice agencies such as prosecuting attorney's office, law enforcement agencies, the court, probation or the prison system. Some programs specialize in serving domestic violence or sexual assault survivors, while others work with victims or surviving family members regardless of the crime. Below are brief descriptions of the various disciplines of victim advocacy.

- **Court Advocates:** Court advocates work with survivors who are going through either the civil or criminal justice system. In the case of a civil matter, the court advocate is available to help survivors in their efforts to obtain a Civil Protection Order (CPO), or Civil Stalking Protection Order (CSPO)/Civil Sexually Oriented Offense Protection Order (CSOPO). In some jurisdictions these advocates may even help survivors through the divorce process.

In the matters of a criminal case, a court advocate can assist a victim or surviving family members (in cases of death of the victim) through the misdemeanor, felony or juvenile criminal justice process. These advocates can explain and help obtain Temporary Protection Orders (TPO's) and Criminal Stalking Protection Orders (CSPO's) for victims of domestic violence or stalking cases in which criminal charges have been filed. The court advocate may work for a government agency or for a community-based program. Some of these advocates are on-call 24/7, 365 days of the year.

- **Corrections -Based Advocates:** These advocates are part of the adult or juvenile correctional system and work with victims and survivors after an offender has been committed to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Corrections or the Ohio Department of Youth Services. These advocates provide notice of the offender's current status (incarcerated, paroled, etc.) as well as upcoming hearings and reviews. They assist the victims with making impact statements, both written and oral, to the adult parole board or the juvenile release authority. Correction-based advocates may resolve situations where victims are receiving unwanted contact from the offender.

They may accompany victims to parole violation hearings. Adult corrections-based advocates may also work with surviving family members through the execution of their murdered loved one's offender. As with the court-based advocates, the corrections-based advocates also serve as monitors, working to ensure that the victim's rights are not violated.

- **Domestic Violence (DV) Shelter Advocates:** Domestic violence advocates play a vital role in assisting victims of domestic violence in understanding their rights as a victim of crime and assessing their safety as they make decisions about next steps in their relationship. A shelter-based advocate can range from a shelter case manager to a court liaison to a therapist. Shelter-based advocates walk a thin line in collaborating with other community agencies. They have the responsibility of assisting victims of domestic violence in accessing the resources they need to stay safe, while maintaining confidentiality and advocating on behalf of the victim.
  
- **Law Enforcement-Based Advocates:** These advocates are employed by a law enforcement agency. Many of these advocates are available in the immediate aftermath of a crime and they link the survivor with either the court-based advocate or the prosecutor-based advocate which could also be one in the same. Some of the law-enforcement based advocates are on-call 24/7, 365 days of the year and accompany law enforcement to crime scenes.
  
- **Prosecutor-Based Advocates:** These advocates are employed by the elected prosecuting official. These advocates work closely with prosecutors, law enforcement and other professionals within the criminal, civil and community justice system. They may work with victims of crime at any level, misdemeanor, felony or juvenile crimes. Some of these advocates are on-call 24/7, 365 days of the year and may also accompany law enforcement to crime scenes. Prosecutor-based advocates work to ensure that the victim's rights are not violated throughout the court process, offer emotional support, accompany the victims to court and can serve as the victim's designee and speak for them in court. As their name implies, prosecutor-based

advocates are also employees of the prosecutor's office and as such often assist in gathering information from victims to aid in the prosecution of offenders. This could include taking statements from the victim, photographing injuries, requesting medical records or listening to 911 calls.

- **Rape Crisis/Hospital Advocates:** Rape crisis advocates may be employed by the rape crisis program or be a trained volunteer. These advocates respond to emergency departments and police stations to provide survivors and their friends or family members with information, support, resources and advocacy and to facilitate communication with law enforcement, medical professionals and others. Rape crisis programs may be available 24/7, 365 days a year.

### **State and National Credentialing**

Victim Advocates can be credentialed on a state and national level. On a state level victim advocates may apply to the Ohio Advocate Network (OAN), a division of the Ohio Victim Witness Association (OVWA) <http://ovwa.org/> . The Ohio Victim Witness Association is a statewide organization that seeks to bring together all of the different types of advocates for networking and training purposes.

On a national level advocates may apply for credentialing to the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) <http://www.trynova.org/>.