



VICTIM SERVICES EVALUATION PROGRAM ACTION PLAN

The NWT Victim Services Program is delivered by community organizations and provides person-centered services based on client needs. Through the Victim Services Program, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) provides funding for 11 community-based Victim Services Workers in eight communities, as well as GNWT staff to support the program. This program is funded by both the GNWT, through the Department of Justice, and Justice Canada with the commitment to ensuring that victims of crime, survivors and their families are connected to the supports and services they need, when they need them the most. Through the Victim Services Program, Victim Services Workers offer:

- immediate emotional support;
- information on safety planning, emergency shelters, and court processes;
- court accompaniment if requested;
- accompaniment to an RCMP detachment, hospital or health center;
- assistance with victim impact statements, applications to the Victims of Crime Emergency Fund;
- registration for victim notification programs; and
- referrals to community programs and services.

Purpose

One of the Department of Justice's strategic priorities is to improve access to the Justice system by working with stakeholders to foster a culture of continuous improvement in our programs and services so that they meet the needs of NWT residents and are available to them in their home communities more efficiently. One of the ways in which a culture of continuous improvement can be sustained is through scheduled evaluations of the Department's programs and services.

In 2020, the Department of Justice contracted FWCO Management Consultants to complete an [evaluation of the Victim Services Program](#). The objectives of the evaluation were to look at responsiveness to victim needs, achievement of outcomes, effectiveness of design and delivery, and opportunities for future improvement. There was an explicit effort to ensure that the evaluation of the program's outcomes did not only focus on core programming but the



collective impacts of the program in communities. This was deliberate to ensure we had a clear picture and did not unintentionally negatively impact communities with changes.

The report resulted in five recommendations directed toward the GNWT and three recommendations directed toward the community-based victim services providers. This Action Plan is the GNWT's response to those recommendations. It identifies actions that have already been completed or will be completed in short-/medium-term, as well as actions that will take longer to be realized, where ongoing education and community capacity building need to be undertaken.

Major Findings

The major findings of the evaluation have been summarized in an Executive Summary and attached as **Appendix 1** to provide additional context to the recommendations from the evaluation listed below, and for ease of reference.

Recommendations

The following recommendations arising from the Victim Services Program Evaluation reflect the roles and responsibilities of the GNWT and community-based victim services providers. The five recommendations directed at the GNWT and the three recommendations directed at community-based victim services providers are broken out separately.

RECOMMENDATIONS DIRECTED AT GNWT

1. Introduce police-based Victim Services in Communities where community-based victim services providers have demonstrated an inability to provide stable, ongoing service.

There have been challenges in providing the level of 24/7 victim services support within a community-based model in Yellowknife. As a result, the Department of Justice is currently exploring the viability of the development of an alternative service delivery model within the City of Yellowknife. The RCMP have been consulted about their interest in exploring options that would also better support their operational needs.

As part of exploring other options, the Department of Justice is completing a jurisdictional scan of models throughout Canada that may be utilized within the City. Factors that need



to be considered are potential placement and location of program, roles and responsibilities of the RCMP and the GNWT, collaboration with other stakeholders such as the Department of Health and Social Services, as well as supervision and funding models associated with program delivery.

Resources: Additional resources will likely be required, depending on the nature of the model accepted for implementation.

Timeline: Model development will be drafted and engagement with stakeholders completed Sept 2021.

2. Restructure the Victims of Crime Emergency Fund to clarify its mandate and requirements and improve access.

The Department of Justice has provided clarity regarding the Victims of Crime Emergency Fund (VCEF) mandate to provide short-term funding for emergency needs related to a serious violent crime, balancing the need for consistent, transparent, evidence-based decision-making and a person-centered, trauma informed approach.

Community-based service providers will soon have access to a new software program that the Department of Justice has procured and is currently in the process of programming, which will include a real-time VCEF application process. A web-based application form is also being developed to support victims who do not have access to a Victim Services Worker in their community, or choose to access the resource on their own. This will ensure that anyone will be able to submit an application regardless of where they live. Additional information and consents are being incorporated into the new application forms which will allow for a more streamlined, timely and efficient process between Victim Services Workers and Department of Justice staff as they try to gather enough information to make an eligibility decision.

Information gathered on the new software and web-based application form will ensure a consistent application of the fund and that Victim Services Workers are maximizing the use of community-based referrals and resources to support longer term needs.

Resources: No additional resources are required.



Timeline: May 2021 for Contribution Agreement Terms of Reference. Hard copy and web form release: early June 2021. Education about the VCEF mandate and requirements for community-based service providers has already been initiated and will be ongoing.

3. Introduce additional requirements to be met by community-based victim services providers with respect to providing training and ensuring the well-being of victim services providers.

The Department of Justice has developed a Terms of Reference to be included in the 2021-2022 contribution agreements with each community-based service provider that incorporates issues identified in the evaluation. Included in the TOR is a list of Community Justice and Policing and service provider responsibilities that ensures the proper support for Victim Service Workers. This document will also outline expectations and deliverables that must be met by community-based victim services providers. Organizations will be responsible for the continuity of their program, including training and ongoing professional development. Community Justice and Policing staff's primary responsibility moving forward will be to ensure our ongoing commitment to the capacity building of each community-based provider.

The Department of Justice has completed work on a new NWT Victim Services Training Manual that will assist all programs with training and developing Victim Services Workers. This manual will be used a resource for all victim service programs throughout the NWT with the goal of improving capacity levels in all Victim Services Workers and building consistency within the Victim Services Program.

The Department of Justice has an annual funding allocation of \$25,600 since 2018-19 to support the emotional well-being of Victim Services Workers. Victim Services Workers experiencing work-related wellness issues can access this funding through the Community Justice and Policing (CJ&P) Division, on a short-term basis as needed. The fund is easy to access, with an email sent between the worker and CJ&P staff requesting access to the fund. The fund is used to pay for the services of a mental health worker if there are no appropriate community-based mental health workers available. The community-based victim services organizations, Victim Services Workers will be reminded on a regular basis of the fund.



Resources: A reallocation of existing funding will support increased training and related travel costs. No additional funding required.

Timeline: Updated Terms of Reference included in 2021-22 contribution agreements with each community-based service provider. Training and capacity development ongoing; occurring throughout each fiscal year.

4. Create a more effective reporting and monitoring strategy.

The Department of Justice has entered into a formal procurement with *Social Solutions* as a vendor providing cloud-based case management software that is safe and secure and easy to use by front-line service providers. This software is currently being used by the Integrated Case Management Pathfinders. A contract is currently being executed with Procurement Shared Services (PSS) in consultation with Informatics Shared Services (ISS), ensuring the software complies with all GNWT Legislation and Canadian Law surrounding Protections of Privacy and ATTIP. The contract will incorporate all CJ&P programs, including ICM (Integrated Case Management), whose contract with *Social Solutions* is expiring July 2021.

Work is simultaneously being completed to identify service design requirements for the software so it can be used for the day-to-day file management activities of Victim Services Workers. The software will also support other Community Justice and Policing programs such as Restorative Justice, Community Safety Officer Program. Specifically for Victims Service Programs, the online platform will assist in capturing timely, accurate, relevant information and data that will ease reporting requirements and ensure objectives and outcomes are met, while minimizing duplication of work from the service providers, as well as Community Justice and Policing staff.

Designated Community Justice and Policing staff will be trained as system administrators. They will be responsible for the initial training of all users of the software, including the community-based service provider's administrative staff. This is important to ensure the capacity building of each organization. System administrators will also ensure compliance with information security protocols as well as data integrity.

Resources: The software has been purchased through a reallocation of existing funds, in the 2020-21 budget.



Timeline: July 2021 estimated completion date for software programming and implementation. Community-based service provider staff training will commence in July, with a target date for completion the end of September. Training will be ongoing as new Victim Services Worker staff are hired.

5. Create additional resources for travel to outreach communities.

The Department of Justice has submitted new and amended Federal proposals to Justice Canada and Public Safety and has been granted permission to re-allocate funding to directly increase funding for victim services itinerant travel to communities without a permanent Victim Services Worker. The re-allocation will also allow for increased outreach activities throughout the Territory, including Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU) outreach.

A plan has been developed to restructure the Community Justice and Policing Division within the Department of Justice to better support community capacity building through an increase to travel to communities and provision of outreach resources. The model will also enhance the Division's internal capacity to better support communities throughout the NWT. The changes to the organizational structure will also re-allocate funding to support two additional community-based Victim Services Workers. These Workers will be placed in communities without a Worker. Negotiations with two communities with demonstrated need for a Victim Services Worker are currently underway, with an announcement regarding the two communities expected in June 2021.

Community Justice and Policing is also re-allocating their portion of administrative fees from Federal Agreements with Justice Canada, Public Safety to the communities, by increasing the funding for community-based travel, outreach activities, as well as a new funding model for Victim Services Worker salaries based on the Northern Living Allowance Model.

Resources: No new funding required. As noted above, funding for travel, in addition to an increase in the salaries for victim service workers, has been secured through the reallocation of existing funding agreements.

Timeline: Completed.



RECOMMENDATIONS DIRECTED AT COMMUNITY-BASED VICTIM SERVICES PROVIDERS

1. Create in-house onboarding process and internal protocols.

Community Justice and Policing will address issues identified in the evaluation with community-based victim services providers with the development of new Terms of Reference that will identify roles and responsibilities of each party and mitigate onboarding and internal protocols for the community victim services providers. Community Justice and Policing has completed work on a new NWT Victim Services Training Manual that has been provided to all community-based victim services providers. The manual will assist in building capacity within each community-based agency to train and manage their own staff. The focus is to shift the responsibility of onboarding, including training and performance management to the community-based organizations who employ Victim Services Workers. Enhancing community-capacity to manage their own resources is a priority for the Department of Justice.

Resources: No additional resources required as this work is part of the regular operations of the Department of Justice.

Timeline: Ongoing. Terms of Reference will be attached to 2021-22 Contribution Agreements. Support for community-based capacity building is already underway and will continue throughout the year. It is recognized organizations are at different levels in their capacity to manage their own programs. CJ&P staff will prioritize their time with those requiring the most support in developing their internal capacity to manage their Victim Services Program.

2. Introduce referral-based protocols and information sharing agreements to improve integration of services.

The Department of Justice is aware that in small communities a victim may not be comfortable approaching their local Victim Services Worker due to privacy concerns. Web-based information and resources are being updated, including an on-line VCEF form, to better support victims throughout the Territory. Updated consent forms are also in the process of being developed to ensure work being performed through victim services remains compliant with relevant information privacy legislation. The Department of Justice will continue to regularly engage with stakeholders to increase awareness and knowledge of victim services and the referral process for victim services supports.



Resources: No additional financial resource as this work is part of the regular operations of the Department of Justice.

Timeline: Revised consent and VCEF forms release in early June 2021. Collaboration with stakeholders will be ongoing.

3. Create a more strategic approach to public education and preventative measures.

The Department of Justice will explore options to collaborate with other GNWT Departments and NGOs with shared mandates, on the development of materials and resources to improve public education and preventative measures. GNWT web-based information and resources will be updated. The Department of Justice staff have increased collaboration amongst their own program areas (ex: victim services, restorative justice, guns and gangs, community safety). This will further enhance the ability to develop a more strategic approach to public education and preventative measures.

As the GNWT moves forward with Integrated Service Delivery, it is expected the collaboration will result in opportunities for a more wholistic, multi-disciplinary approach to community wellness, safety and public education and preventative measures.

Resources: No additional financial increases required as the Department of Justice is adequately funded for public education and preventative measures.

Timeline: Ongoing throughout 2021-22 fiscal year and beyond.

Ongoing Reporting

The Department of Justice is committed to fully exploring, addressing, and implementing the program changes identified above and will continue to follow up quarterly with the Minister of Justice on all progress that is made. The community-based victim service organizations will be engaged in real-time reporting with the Department through the new software, as well as through frequent capacity building dialogues. Decisions moving forward on additional improvements to victim services will be evidence based and informed through the community-based providers and community members.