

OVS Outreach

Winter 2019

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From the Director's Desk



People often think that human trafficking is something that happens in other countries, but the crime can – and does – occur everywhere, including New York State. In fact, the Polaris Project, which is the leading organization in the fight against human trafficking worldwide, ranks New York fifth in the nation for sex and labor trafficking cases.

To fight this modern-day slavery, New York has the most comprehensive anti-trafficking laws in the country and a robust [Interagency Task Force](#) focused on improving the state and local response to trafficking and meeting the comprehensive needs of victims. Representatives from OVS and nine other state agencies constitute the Task Force, which:

- Recommends interagency protocols and best practices for training and outreach to law enforcement and service providers;
- Collects data on the number of victims and the effectiveness of the laws related to human trafficking, and;
- Evaluates ways to increase public awareness about trafficking and make recommendations on those approaches.

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New Resource Connects Crime Victims with Civil Legal Help, Information

A new website and online resource developed by OVS and three nonprofit organizations that connects crime victims with information and free legal assistance is being piloted in three Western New York counties, allowing victims to learn about their rights and connect with resources or legal representation. Established using \$1.5 million in federal funds secured by OVS, [New York Crime Victims Legal Help](#) currently serves Erie, Genesee and Niagara counties and will expand to serve crime victims Upstate and on Long Island by the end of this year.



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OVS.NY.GOV / 1-800-247-8035

From the Director's Desk *(continued)*

As part of its work, the Task Force created a Human Trafficking Awareness Training that focuses on identifying and assisting potential victims of human trafficking. OVS has used this presentation to train its staff and is currently developing a training plan designed for victim assistance programs and service providers, as well as a refresher course for new OVS staff.

But we can't rest on this work. Traffickers will always find a way to exploit those who are most vulnerable, especially women and children, as recent cases in the Hudson Valley and Suffolk County on Long Island illustrate. Human trafficking is estimated to be a \$150 billion global industry and with approximately 40 million people worldwide trapped in forced or bonded labor and sex work, it is the second-largest international criminal industry. In 2017 alone, the most current year for which data are available, New York State confirmed 1,022 victims of trafficking: 88 percent of female and 27 percent under the age of 18.

New York joins the nation and international community in recognizing January as Human Trafficking Awareness Month. To mark the month and provide resources and information to service providers, law enforcement and others, the state Task Force is hosting a presentation on labor trafficking, featuring Martina E. Vandenberg, founder of [The Human Trafficking Legal Center](#) in Washington, D.C., and Fainess Lipenga, a labor trafficking victim who is an active member of the [National Survivor Network](#). The event is scheduled for **6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 31**, in the Moot Courtroom at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan. Email nyspio@otda.ny.gov to RSVP or for more information.

To that end, I urge all victim service professionals and victim advocates who are not familiar with trafficking cases to learn how to [recognize the signs of human trafficking](#) and the ways in which they can report suspected instances of this crime.

This issue of *OVS Outreach* highlights some of the ways in which OVS is helping to combat this crime. In addition, there are designated [service providers](#) across the state that can help victims of human trafficking become secure, independent individuals, and the Human Trafficking Resource Center (1-888-373-7888) can assist with locating resources in your community.

Please take advantage of these resources. By working together, we can get that much closer to reducing – and hopefully, one day eliminating – human trafficking in New York State.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Cronin, Esq.

Save the Date: OVS 2019 Conference

Innovation in Victim Services



Office of
Victim Services

2019 Conference • November 19-21 • Albany

Details Coming Soon!

New Civil Legal Help Resource *(continued)*

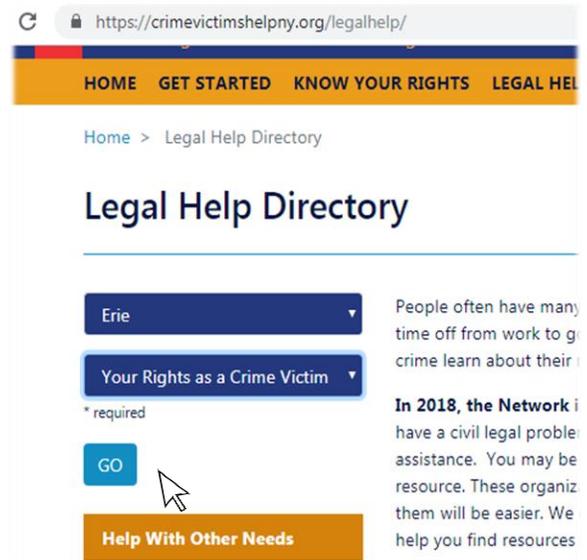
The Office of Victim Services partnered with the Empire Justice Center, Pro Bono Net and the University at Albany's Center for Human Services Research to create the website, which will assist crime victims outside of New York City. Civil legal resources can be scarce or difficult to access in the rest of the state, particularly in rural communities.

The website features a user-friendly screening tool that allows crime victims to identify what legal needs they may have and then locate relevant resources; a searchable legal service help directory with filters to isolate organizations that can assist with specific issues; a self-help resource library to inform them of their rights; and a live chat function to access referral information in real time.

The website's screening tool and legal help directory will help connect crime victims from Erie, Genesee and Niagara counties with advocates and non-profit legal organizations that may be able to assist them. Crime victims in areas outside of those three counties may still use the website to find information about their rights, learn more about their legal issues and access resources such as legal forms and links to other service providers. By the end of this year, the screening tool and legal help directory will be available in the state's 57 counties outside of New York City.

[New York Crime Victims Legal Help](#) focuses on the most common civil legal problems identified by crime victims and service providers through a needs assessment conducted by the Center for Human Services Research: family, housing, finances, employment and immigration matters. Erie, Genesee and Niagara counties were selected for the pilot because they already have a strong network of civil legal services and the three counties have a cross-section of urban and rural communities.

Bookmark the [site](#) and share the [link](#) with individuals served by your organization and law enforcement, court and other professionals who assist victims in your community. Future issues of *OVS Outreach* will include updates on the status of the site's expansion. ■



OVS Awarded New Federal Training Grant

OVS has been awarded a \$1.5 million grant from the federal Office of Victims of Crime. This exciting funding opportunity will allow OVS to continue to offer research, professional development, trainings and conferences – at little or no cost – to victim assistance programs and others who work with victims of crime across New York State.

Announcements of scheduled trainings will be posted to the [OVS VAP Training Center](#) in the coming months. Bookmark the page so you can easily stay up-to-date about these opportunities. ■



Funding the Fight Against Human Trafficking

Across New York State, OVS funds 222 programs providing direct services to crime victims, including those who are victims of labor and sex trafficking. Here's a snapshot of OVS-funded victim assistance programs providing effective services to aid these victims:

- Womankind, located in New York City, operates a hotline staffed by advocates who can offer assistance and provide information in more than 18 languages and dialects.
- The International Institute of Buffalo, which helps foreign-born Western New Yorkers with immigration and integration, provides intensive case management to human trafficking victims.
- The McMahan/Ryan Child Advocacy Center in Syracuse provides focused advocacy and education programs to train social workers, law enforcement, teachers and the public to identify and assist potential human trafficking victims.
- My Sisters Place in White Plains strives to end domestic violence and human trafficking through comprehensive services, advocacy and community education.

During the 2017-18 state fiscal year, 72 victim assistance programs funded by OVS provided services to 2,269 human trafficking victims. OVS received 24 personal injury, two death and one essential personal property claims for trafficked individuals during the same fiscal year. The state [Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance](#) (OTDA) also has a network of providers specifically designated to assist these victims.

In general, to be eligible for assistance from OVS, an individual must report the crime to law enforcement. In the case of human trafficking victims, OVS will accept a notice of confirmation from OTDA to verify a victim's status. The agency also operates with the rebuttable presumption that human trafficking victims have suffered physical injury for purposes of establishing their eligibility for compensation.

In addition, OVS offers training and educational opportunities through regional coalition meetings and special events, including its biennial training conference for service providers and advocates. The next biennial conference is scheduled for November 2019; additional details will be available soon. ■

Highlight: Center for Victim Research

Are you considering incorporating research and evaluation into your work? Visit the [Center for Victim Research \(CVR\)](#), a one-stop shop dedicated to assisting with your research and evaluation needs. Through the Center, you can:

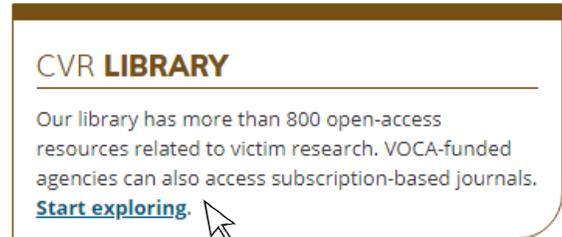
- Get a basic understanding of the research process through various tools and trainings;
- Review timely research featured on the monthly Spotlight page;
- Find a research partner from a directory of more than 100 research experts;
- Search for the research and data relevant to your needs in a library that provides free access to subscription-only, peer-reviewed journals;



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Highlight: Center for Victim Research (*continued*)

- Access podcasts and webinars featuring researchers and practitioners discussing their latest projects; and
- Contact a CVR staff member for technical assistance with data collection and evaluation. These experts can review questionnaires, explore ways to recruit research participants, focus your program outcomes and more.



The federal Office for Victims of Crime funded the Center for Victim Research as part of its work to support research on victims and victimization. Visit victimresearch.org for more information and:

- [Register](#) using your organization's VOCA number for free access to more than 1,000 journals to support your planning and programming.
- [Sign up](#) for the monthly e-newsletter to learn about new resources, webinars and more. ■

Victim Service Portal Listserv Launch

The OVS Compensation Unit has launched a listserv to improve and streamline communication with advocates who use the [Victim Service Portal](#) to file, review and update claims.

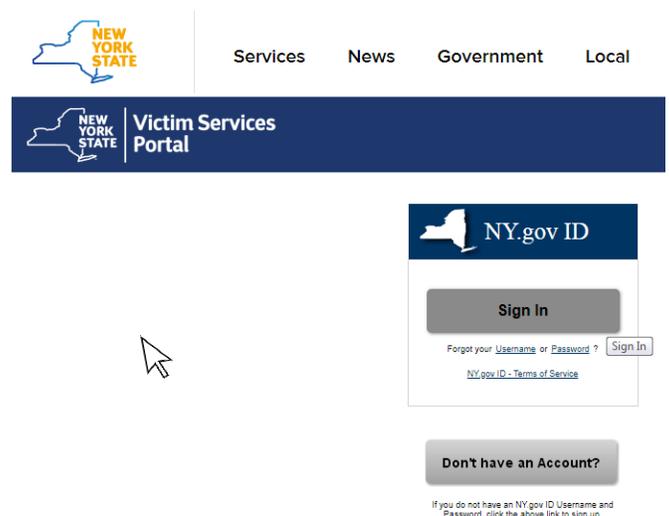
Nearly 1,700 advocates are registered to use the Portal, which went live on April 1, 2015. Through the listserv, OVS will notify users of scheduled outages due to maintenance, planned updates and enhancements; detail best practices for using the system; and share tips and tricks to assist with filing claims. Last year, 78 percent of compensation claims were filed using the Portal. We expect usage to increase this year, with the goal of having all claims filed online.

OVS also has updated its telephone system to improve how service providers contact the agency's crime victim specialists. Callers can now reach individual crime victim specialists without speaking to a representative from the Call Center. Here's how:

Dial the agency's toll-free number: 1-800-247-8035. After hearing the language prompt, select option 3, then option 1.

At that point, the caller will be asked to key in the first four letters of the staff member's last name. The system will provide the name of the person the caller identified and if correct, the caller will press 1 to be connected to that crime victim specialist.

In addition, a directory of phone numbers for the agency's crime victim specialists, organized by office and supervisor, is available on the [VAP Training Center](#) page on the OVS website. The directory is the first link under "Advocate Guidelines for Compensation." ■



OVS Training and Technical Assistance Program Receives Rave Reviews

More than 900 professionals from 200-plus victim assistance programs were trained in just six months through a pilot program offered by OVS. The [Training and Technical Assistance Request Program](#), designed and implemented in partnership with J.A. Strategies and with input and feedback from victim service providers, offered free training for providers that was tailored to their specific organizational needs.



The program connected service providers with experienced trainers and victim service professionals who designed and delivered customized training, both online and in person, to help them operate more effectively and efficiently. Through the program, professionals attended 24 different, in-person classroom trainings, benefitted from more than 375 hours of extensive coaching and consulting, and logged on to five statewide webinars. Training topics included 24 soft- and hard-skill subject areas, such as “Developing a Strategic Plan” and “Dealing with Difficult People.” The trainings offered through the program received extremely high marks from those who attended.

Given the overwhelming success of the program, which ended in September 2018, OVS is now exploring ways to continue this program through future federal funding opportunities. ■

Save the Date: National Crime Victims' Rights Week

April 7-13, 2019: *Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for Our Future.*

New York State will join the nation in marking this week, which promotes victims' rights and honors crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf.

[Sign up](#) for the National Crime Victims' Rights Week mailing list to receive notification when the 2019 Resource Guide is available and information about future commemorations. ■

Civil Legal Assistance Announcement Tour

New York Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul (left) and OVS Director Elizabeth Cronin visited Rochester and Manhattan last fall to [highlight federal funding](#), administered by OVS, that will allow victim assistance programs across the state to provide civil legal services to victims of crime. Here, they join with Mary Jo Marino, director of outreach and education at RESTORE in Rochester, and Meaghan de Chateauvieux, CEO of the Willow Domestic Violence Center of Greater Rochester, after announcing this critical initiative. ■

