



Victim Services

Working with police to help crime and trauma victims

STRATEGIC PLAN 2004 – 2006

(Revised March, 2006)

Victim Services Origins and History

For centuries, the responsibility for punishing offenders and obtaining retribution for crimes was left up to victims, their families and friends. However, this system of "an eye for an eye" justice soon became publicly viewed as unjust and ineffective. While the emergence of a formal system of justice was a positive step for society, serious flaws existed that negatively impacted victims of crime. While intended to magnify the seriousness of crime, the change of focus from crime being perpetrated against a victim, to crime being perpetrated against Society (the government and the people) diminished the role of the victim to a provider of information. In addition, while the need for rehabilitation services for offenders was recognized and addressed, the needs of the victims themselves were largely ignored.

What was needed was a re-focusing of attention to a neglected component of the criminal justice system: the victim.

A Canadian study, *Services to Victims of Crime*, by Norquay and Weiler in 1981, stated that traditionally, victims' needs have not been a priority in the criminal justice system: "It has been a justice system for the criminal...". Victims reported frustration, as they acutely felt the adjunct nature of their role. Many victims of crime viewed the justice system as non-responsive to their needs and concerns.

The following victims' rights were identified in the 1984 report, *Victims and Witnesses of Crime in Canada*:

- The right to protection,
- The right to compensation for injury, loss, trauma, suffering, and other consequences,
- The right to regain the state of physical, psychological, social, and financial well-being present before the crime, and
- The right to be fully informed.

Grassroots involvement played a major role in improved legislation and services for victims and their families. As a result steps were taken to improve legislation protecting victims and to expand the services available to them.

Provincial and federal governments improved the status of victims within the criminal justice system by expanding service options and creating legislation to address the effects of victimization. The establishment of the Criminal Injury Compensation Board in 1972 was a step in reducing the financial hardship often resulting from crime. The use of victim impact statements in pre-sentence reports has been a significant improvement for victims of crime. British Columbia created legislation, the *Victim Rights and Service Act*, guaranteeing victims the right to receive information about their case and the services available to them.

The momentum for positive change in Canadian society regarding the needs of victims has resulted in the growth in service agencies and staffing for victims and witnesses of crime. Since the first police based victim/witness services were established in British Columbia in 1983, they have expanded to over sixty communities.

In 1996, British Columbia established the *Victims of Crime Act* which stipulates that to the extent practicable, the government must promote the development of victim services and promote equal access to victim services at all locations throughout the province. Within the Act, victim service is defined as a service designed to assist victims and is provided or funded by the government. The *Victims of Crime Act* defines a victim as a "person who has suffered physical or mental injury or economic loss as a result of a criminal act, or omission that forms the basis of the offence". The Act specifies victims' rights, including:

- the right to be treated with courtesy and respect by all justice system personnel;
- the right not to be discriminated against on the basis of gender, race, economic or social status, age, physical or mental disability, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, political beliefs or religion;
- the right to information on the structure and operation of the justice system, victim services, the *Crime Victim Assistance Act*, *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Victims of Crime Act*;
- the right to information, upon request, on the status of the investigation of their case, specific counts with which the accused is charged, and the date of commencement of sentence by the offender; and
- the right to receive, upon request, the date, locations and outcome for each court appearance that is likely to affect the final disposition or sentence of the accused, the date of the beginning of sentence that the offender is serving, as well as the eligibility and review dates applicable to the offender and how to make representations in any proceedings that may lead to a change in the custodial status or release conditions of the offender.

Introduction

A 2002 study commissioned by the Solicitor General of British Columbia, *No End to the Pain*, found that most victims of crime felt re-victimized by the criminal justice system and that they placed a high value on police-based victim services as one of the few areas of the criminal justice system focused on assisting the victims of crime. The Greater Victoria Police Victim Services Society (GVPVS) provides these services for the Greater Victoria community, offering emotional support and practical assistance to the victims of crime and trauma. GVPVS, however, is facing significant challenges in the delivery of its services, particularly with respect to funding and access to information.

Like many organizations relying on corporate donations and government grants, GVPVS cannot depend on these historical funding sources for continued future funding. Larger numbers of organizations are seeking funding from fewer sources. As a result, those seeking financial support for their programs are being required to establish and report against performance measures that assess program performance.

In addition, when victim services such as those offered by GVPVS were originally conceived and implemented, the current information and privacy laws were not in place. Adoption of such legislation at the federal and provincial levels has resulted in restricted access to police files, meaning that in some cases program volunteers are unable to access information regarding the crime or the victim. While many challenges relating to access have been resolved, significant issues remain and greatly hinder the Society's ability to fully deliver its mandate.

To assist the Society in addressing these and other challenges, the Board of Directors, in conjunction with staff and volunteers, has developed a plan for the next three years. This plan provides high-level direction to guide decision-making, priority-setting and resource allocation. The Executive Director incorporates these directions into the Business Plan prepared each year.

To be relevant, GVPVS must adapt our services to the changing needs of our clients, the environment in which we operate and the criminal justice system. Thus, adjustments will be made throughout the period of this plan to take into account changes within and external to the Society. The future of victim services within the province will continue to evolve, with government and other stakeholders in the community largely determining the degree of change. While the implications for GVPVS may be unknown, our strategic planning process will ensure that we will be able to respond to and succeed in future environments.

GVPVS' Mandate

GVPVS was established in 1983 in response to the recognition that the needs of victims of crime have not been a priority in the criminal justice system. With the assistance of volunteers and in partnership with local police agencies, GVPVS provides emotional and justice-related support to aid the victims of crime and trauma, as well as referrals to other agencies, services or professionals as appropriate.

In 1996, the Province of British Columbia introduced the *Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)* which stipulates that to the extent practicable, the government must promote the development of victim services and promote equal access to victim services at all locations throughout the province. The Act gives victims the right to information on the structure and operation of the justice system and to victim services, which are defined as services designed to assist victims that are provided or funded by the government.

To meet the obligations of *VOCA*, the government has engaged police-based victim service agencies such as GVPVS to provide victim services under contract. The Society is independent and not an employee or agent of the Province. Through our funding agreement with the Province, GVPVS is mandated to provide the following services:

- ◆ Emotional support to help victims come to terms with the effects of their victimization;
- ◆ Information about the criminal justice system and practical assistance to victims;
- ◆ Court support, including client accompaniment and general information about the court process; and,
- ◆ Referrals of victims to other community services.

In addition, GVPVS may provide the following services if staffing and funding resources permit:

- ◆ Attendance at crisis incidents at the request of a police officer;
- ◆ Accompaniment with police to assist with death and accident notification;
- ◆ Public education programs relating to criminal victimization and victim services; and,
- ◆ Recruitment, training and supervision of volunteers providing victim services.

GVPVS also receives funding from the Capital Regional District, the United Way of Greater Victoria, the District of North Saanich, United Way of Greater Victoria, corporate/private donations, and community fundraising efforts.

Environment and Situation Analysis

GVPVS' strategy must consider changes in the criminal justice system as well as government priorities that affect the Society's mandate and funding. In addition, GVPVS has to balance external pressures from clients, stakeholders, and volunteers. It is our goal that the quality of victim services provided will continue to improve, providing victims and witnesses with better support.

An analysis of GVPVS' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) is summarized as follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Program has a provincial mandate ▪ Partnership with local police agencies ▪ Integrated relationship with police ▪ Program serves an identified need ▪ Unique service ▪ Skilled team ▪ Community support ▪ Co-located with police (same facilities) ▪ Flexible service ▪ High-quality volunteer training program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Team frustrated by inability to provide service as a result of FOI / PRIME issues ▪ Staff morale ▪ Inadequate sustainable long-term funding ▪ Have yet to achieve desired level of support from police on a consistent basis ▪ Low levels of public awareness
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fundraising potential, within limitations ▪ Enhanced media coverage and other public awareness ▪ Enhanced government relations ▪ Obtain a public champion ▪ Enhanced court liaison role ▪ Establish a "brand" for the Society ▪ Enhanced relationship with Area Chiefs Association ▪ Build partnership with Military Police ▪ Leverage benefits of police members being on the Board of Directors ▪ Enhanced alliances with community agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reliance on short term provincial and municipal funding commitments ▪ Lack of a long term agreement for the provision of facilities ▪ Unresolved FOI / PRIME issues ▪ Aging infrastructure ▪ Uncertainty of future governance model resulting from potential changes to police service delivery model

GVPVS' Mission

In partnership with police, support victims in their recovery from the impact of crime or traumatic incident.

GVPVS' Vision

Victims regain, to the fullest extent possible, a state of well-being.

GVPVS' Values

GVPVS is committed to the following values:

- Integrity
- Compassion
- Empathy
- Respect
- Empowerment
- Commitment
- Dedication

GVPVS' Strategy

To achieve our mission, GVPVS' strategy is:

To enhance program effectiveness, public awareness and relationships with community partners.

GVPVS' Strategic Perspectives

To achieve GVPVS' mission and vision, our efforts must support the six strategic perspectives listed below.

- Client
- Financial
- Stakeholder
- Volunteers
- Employees & Board
- Police

GVPVS' Strategic Objectives

GVPVS' plan is based on the following key objectives for each of the six strategic perspectives. Tactics for achieving these objectives are also outlined.

1. Client: We will be focused on the needs of our clients

Our clients are the reason for our existence. They depend on GVPVS to provide the services they need in a timely, effective and compassionate manner. The primary objective of GVPVS' strategy is, therefore, to be client-focused in the development and delivery of our services.

To focus on the needs of our clients, GVPVS will:

- ◆ Monitor client outcomes from the delivery of our services.
- ◆ Formalize our relationships with other agencies in the community.
- ◆ Expand court support services to our clients.

2. Financial: We will be financially viable

As a non-profit agency with limited funding, GVPVS must manage its services, staff and funds effectively in order to be sustainable. In addition, the Society needs to develop new sources of revenue to supplement and, in some cases, replace historical sources of funding.

To be financially viable, GVPVS will:

- ◆ Maintain a balanced budget.
- ◆ Develop and implement a long term funding strategy that provides for:
 - adequate, stable base funding for the program, including infrastructure, facilities and in-kind services, and
 - fundraising beyond base funding.

3. Stakeholder: We will be community oriented

Our stakeholders are committed to the successful achievement of GVPVS' mandate. Through respectful engagement, GVPVS will establish and enhance successful relationships and, where applicable, partnerships with key stakeholders. They include:

- **Our Funders** – Our primary funders are the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (which sets the standards against which the agency must operate) and the Capital Regional District. Funding is also provided by the United Way of Greater Victoria and the District of North Saanich. Donations are also received from service clubs and businesses.
- **Other Community Service Providers** – GVPVS works closely with specialized agencies in the delivery of programs. Those with which the agency works closely include:
 - Men's Trauma Centre;

- Child Abuse Prevention and Counselling Society of Greater Victoria (also known as the Mary Manning Centre);
- Victoria Women’s Transition House Society; and,
- Women’s Sexual Assault Centre.

Each of these organizations runs programs in their area of specialty, and GVPVS regularly refers clients to them. In addition, GVPVS refers clients (as the situation requires) to almost fifty other agencies.

To be community oriented, GVPVS will:

- ◆ Formalize clear accountabilities within and external to the society.
- ◆ Improve communication with stakeholders.
- ◆ Establish mechanisms for monitoring our performance and obtaining feedback from stakeholders.
- ◆ Increase community awareness in support of victim services.

4. Volunteers: We will have skilled and engaged volunteers

Our volunteers are the heart and soul of the Society. They provide the all-important direct services to our clients, wherever and whenever they are needed.

To engage our volunteers, GVPVS will:

- ◆ Establish clear accountabilities within and external to the Society.
- ◆ Increase the number of skilled volunteers.
- ◆ Objectively measure volunteer satisfaction.

5. Employees and Board: We will have a skilled and engaged staff and Board

GVPVS is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors comprised of both civilian members and police members (one from each of the participating police agencies). There are five paid employees who carry out the Society’s day-to-day operations:

- *Executive Director* - provides overall direction and leadership;
- *Program Manager* - responsible for client services including recruitment, training and direction of the volunteers and day to day management of staff;
- *Case Coordinator* – co-facilitates training and supervises the work of volunteers and ensures that the service they provide meets organizational standards;
- *Program Assistant* – provides court support and carries out case work as needed; and,
- *Administrative Assistant* – performs administrative and receptionist duties.

To be successful, GVPVS must be able to attract and retain competent, dedicated and productive employees and Board members.

To engage our staff and Board, GVPVS will:

- ◆ Establish clear accountabilities within and external to the Society.
- ◆ Improve communication between staff and Board.
- ◆ Cultivate a productive working environment for our staff.
- ◆ Recruit and maintain Board members with a broad range of skills.
- ◆ Establish a future-oriented governance structure for the Society and publish the Governance Manual.

6. Police: We will be trusted partners of the police

GVPVS provides services in partnership with four municipal police departments, two RCMP detachments and the Military Police:

- Central Saanich Police Service
- Oak Bay Police Department
- Saanich Police Department
- Military Police
- Sidney / North Saanich RCMP
- Victoria Police Department
- West Shore RCMP

These departments and detachments depend on GVPVS to provide the services to which victims are entitled under the *Victims of Crime Act*.

To be trusted partners of the police, GVPVS will:

- ◆ Enhance the working relationship with senior police managers.
- ◆ Educate front-line officers in the referral process.
- ◆ Pursue the integration of victim services referrals into the PRIME system.
- ◆ Ensure access to case information.
- ◆ Expand victim services to include military police cases.

Implementation Priorities

The following represents the priority and sequence of the steps the Society will undertake between now and 2007 to realize our vision. (The arrows indicate where activities span more than one fiscal year.)



