

# New Directions from the Field:

*Victims' Rights and Services  
for the 21st Century*



## Viewing and Discussing the *New Directions* Videotape

The *New Directions* videotape highlights key recommendations and promising practices cited throughout *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century*. The 18-minute videotape has five key segments that correspond to the five global challenges presented in *New Directions*.

The videotape-related sample questions provided in this booklet serve as a foundation to elicit discussions among a general viewing audience. Each global challenge presented in the videotape is followed by a series of thought-provoking questions relating specifically to the corresponding challenge. The questions also have been tailored to meet the needs of discipline-specific viewing audiences.

The Office for Victims of Crime supported the development of this videotape as an educational tool to introduce *New Directions* to a variety of audiences. For

example, the videotape can be used to train staff members, at general and discipline-specific conferences, as part of a keynote address, at a media briefing, at a community forum or panel presentation, and at victim issue-related task force and advisory group meetings.

For audiences who are familiar with issues relating to victims' rights and services, the videotape can be reviewed in advance to identify where key "stop" and "start" points are located as they naturally relate to the videotape's overview of the five global challenges. The videotape's introduction to each of these challenges presents an excellent opportunity to stop and highlight the suggested questions found under each global challenge. However, for audiences not familiar with victims' rights and services, the videotape may be reviewed in its entirety before audience questions are solicited.

## Sample Discussion Questions for the *New Directions* Videotape

---

### Global Challenge #1:

**To enact and enforce consistent, fundamental rights for crime victims in Federal, State, juvenile, military, and Tribal justice systems, and administrative proceedings.**

### Sample Questions:

■ What significant changes have we seen in our community/State with respect to providing and enforcing rights to crime victims over the past decade?

■ *New Directions* emphasizes that victims' rights must be consistent across all justice systems. While there may be fairly comprehensive rights for crime victims within the criminal justice system, what is the status of rights in other justice systems—juvenile, Federal, Tribal, military, and administrative proceedings?

■ Enforcement of victims' rights is critical. What mechanisms are in place in our community/State to ensure

that victims receive their rights?

■ Are criminal and juvenile justice professionals in our community knowledgeable about and consistently applying victims' rights laws?

■ The *New Directions* videotape presents two opposing perceptions of the justice system's attitude toward crime victims. Are victims viewed as a "necessary nuisance" by our justice system or are victims viewed as a "critical part of the case process"?

■ What factors do you think affect the implementation of victims' rights?

■ Do you think that the justice system's attitude toward crime victims—favorable or not—influences the implementation of these rights?

■ What are the most critical rights for crime victims in our community/State? Why?

- What rights are currently inconsistently implemented?
- How do we begin as a community to address these inconsistencies?

---

### **Global Challenge #2:**

**To provide crime victims with access to comprehensive, quality services regardless of the nature of their victimization, age, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, capabilities, or geographic location.**

### **Sample Questions:**

- Not all crime victims have easy access to victim services. Which crime victims are currently underserved in our community (for example, crime victims with disabilities, crime victims who are non-English speaking, and crime victims living in rural and remote areas)?
- What can our community do to improve outreach and provide quality victim services to these crime victims?

■ One victim states in the videotape: "Crime victims have different needs and the criminal justice system must meet the needs of everyone." What can our community do to better reach out to all victims?

- Are victim assistance materials printed in foreign languages?
- How can we better employ technologies that enable hearing-impaired victims to access critical information and services?
- What other special needs victims do we serve, and what programs or services can we develop to help them as they navigate the justice process?

---

### Global Challenge #3:

**To integrate crime victims' issues into all levels of the Nation's educational system to ensure that justice and allied professionals and other service providers receive comprehensive training on victims' issues as part of their academic education and continuing training in the field.**

#### Sample Questions:

- The *New Directions* videotape emphasizes the importance of educating all criminal and juvenile justice and allied professionals about crime victims issues. What types of training programs currently exist in our community for justice professionals?
- What about allied professionals such as those working in the health care, mental health, business, media, faith, and legal communities?
- What can we do to increase discipline-specific training opportunities for criminal and juvenile justice and allied professionals?
- As one victim stated in the *New Directions* videotape, "Survivors have a unique understanding and the country needs to tap into that understanding." What role can victims play in educating criminal and juvenile justice and allied professionals on training needs?
- The videotape also emphasizes that higher education is critical to educate future professionals about the needs of crime victims. What courses about crime victim issues are being taught in colleges and universities in our community?
- Community awareness about crime and its victims is a critical element in increasing public support for victims' rights and services. What public awareness or community education programs currently exist in our community to increase this awareness? Where do gaps exist?
- What actions can we as a community undertake to develop or enhance public awareness about victim issues in our community?

---

### **Global Challenge #4:**

**To support, improve, and replicate promising practices in victims' rights and services built upon sound research, advanced technology, and multidisciplinary partnerships.**

#### **Sample Questions:**

■ The videotape highlighted a few of the many promising practices presented in *New Directions*. Was there a particular promising practice that you feel would be appropriate for replication in our community? Or were there any promising practices you sponsor that should be considered for expansion or replication?

■ Multidisciplinary partnerships were cited as one of several promising practices in the videotape. For example, Nashville's comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to domestic violence has reduced homicide by 50 percent. What multidisciplinary partnerships currently exist in our community/State?

■ What types of crimes might benefit from the formation of such multidisciplinary interventions, e.g., child victims, sexual assault?

---

### **Global Challenge #5:**

**To ensure that the voices of crime victims play a central role in the Nation's response to violence and those victimized by crime.**

#### **Sample Questions:**

■ Crime victims' voices are heard throughout the videotape. We heard that victims are uniformly stunned by a criminal justice process beyond their control and that defendants are advised of their rights but who advises crime victims of their rights? Crime victims want to be heard by the justice system. Are mechanisms in place in our community/State to listen to victims?

■ Do judges consistently allow victims to speak at sentencing or present written impact statements? If not, why not?

- Do prosecutors consistently confer with crime victims about the case status and plea agreements? If not, why not?
- Do probation officials consider victims' rights such as notification, protection, and restitution in their supervision plans? If not, why not?
- Do paroling authorities consistently allow victims to be heard before release decisions are made? If not, why not?
- Victims should be heard throughout the justice process and on advisory boards, education training committees, victim impact panels, and in the development of victim-related programs and services. Does our community take full advantage of the information and insights that victims bring to the professionals who assist them?
- Where else can victims' voices be heard in our community?

This *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century* discussion guide is a companion piece to the *New Directions* videotape (NCJ 178283). The videotape is closed captioned.