



# The Michigan ADVOCATE

## At the Heart of Grant Compliance & Needs Assessment

■ by Leslie O'Reilly and D. Thomas Nelson

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*A Michigan*

*Crime Victim Services  
Commission Publication*

Volume 3 Issue 2

A few questions for our VOCA Grantee readers: Do you remember your last VOCA site visit? Do you recall spending hours with your colleagues poring

over the self-review checklist sent in advance? Did you feel you had an opportunity to provide honest feedback to your funder? Did the non-adversarial format make you feel more at ease? Was it a learning experience for those involved?

If your answer to some of these questions is “yes,” then you are part of the vast majority of VOCA Grantees who, after having participated in the mandatory process called *Grant Compliance Review & Needs Assessment*, said “Hey, not bad!”

Over the last four years, the Crime Victim Services Commission (CVSC) and the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) have worked together to involve VOCA Grantees in a fair-minded process that fulfills the accountability requirement of the federal Victims of Crime Act *and* solicits feedback on your agency’s needs in serving victims of crime. At the heart of this process is the concept “You speak; we listen.” Further, the process was designed to gather the essential information in as little time as possible so that victim advocates can get back to the job at hand—helping victims heal.

If you’ve been around long enough, you’ve seen many positive changes in the way VOCA Grants are administered and reported upon: improved application and

reporting forms, an online process for both, eased schedules for reporting, multi-year grant commitments, grant administration and program evaluation training workshops, and the annual VOCA Council of Advocates meeting as yet another Grantee forum. In fact, this very publication is a result of the grant compliance and needs assessment process. We heard from vast numbers of VOCA Grantees who wanted a vehicle in which to share information about victim services in Michigan and beyond. Your responses to the grant compliance and needs assessment process are truly at the heart of positive change for VOCA Grantees throughout Michigan.

Still, there are always things to improve upon. Rest assured that the CVSC, with the assistance of MPHI, is continually working to help you so that you may best help victims. Now all VOCA-supported agencies in Michigan have participated in the Grant Compliance & Needs Assessment process. We look forward to continuing to work with you through the next round of site visits.

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Michigan Department  
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# Program Evaluation Training for VOCA Grantees

by Shari Murgittroyd

On June 26<sup>th</sup> VOCA grantees attended the *Program Evaluation for VOCA Grantees – Level 1* workshop sponsored by the Crime Victim Services Commission (CVSC). Representatives from VOCA-funded agencies gathered in East Lansing at the Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center for a day-long exploration of the methodology and challenges of program evaluation.

This year marks the third year victim service agencies have had the opportunity to attend training in program evaluation. The Grant Compliance Review & Needs Assessment process has been a clear indicator that VOCA grantees desire technical assistance and training in the area of evaluating victim services. The CVSC, with assistance from the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI), has responded to this need by planning and presenting annual training events.

Dr. Cris Sullivan has been an integral component of the workshops for VOCA grantees. She is the highlight of the workshops, lending her expertise and dynamic presentation style to ensure successful learning events. Dr. Sullivan is an Associate Professor of Ecological/Community Psychology at Michigan State University, and Director of Evaluation for the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. She has published extensively in the areas of evaluating victim services and community interventions for battered women and their children and is the author of the *Program Evaluation for VOCA Grantees Training Manuals*.

The June 26<sup>th</sup> evaluation training included a lecture by Dr. Sullivan and interactive breakout groups that focused on three types of victim services: 1) crisis intervention, 2) counseling and support, and 3) legal advocacy. Each group practiced developing short-term outcomes, outcome measures, and language for actual outcomes.

A workshop on evaluation would not be complete without administering a satisfaction survey to evaluate the quality and usefulness of the training itself. Forty-two out of 48 participants completed evaluation surveys at the end of the day. Out of those 42 workshop participants, 72% indicated the resource materials would be *very useful* when conducting their own agency evaluations and 83% said they were *very satisfied* with the skill and expertise of Dr. Cris Sullivan. One participant wrote: "I think the evaluation workshop was very, very helpful. The information was clear, understandable, and applicable in a practical way." The CVSC and MPHI utilize feedback obtained from the satisfaction surveys to make continual improvements in the evaluation workshops.

Grantees interested in attending future program evaluation trainings can look forward to spring 2003 when another Level 1 workshop will be held—maybe we'll see you there!

*Shari Murgittroyd, MSW, is the Project Coordinator of the CVSC Technical Assistance Project at the Michigan Public Health Institute.*

# The Art of Volunteerism

■ by Tanya Sevier

**A**s a Volunteer Coordinator for the Women’s Justice Center, I have worked with volunteers at every stage, from recruitment to exit. Along the way I have faced many challenges in creating an effective system of volunteer recruitment and retention. These are my recommendations for other crime victim service agencies working with volunteers—I hope they spark ideas for you.

## Determine core groups of volunteers

When recruiting, the first question I consider is “Which groups would be ideal as volunteers?” Identify different populations of volunteers. For example, our three primary volunteer sectors are college students, retirees, and stay at home caregivers.

## Consider the benefits of different volunteer groups

Recruiting is only one step in a long process. Weigh the potential benefits and disadvantages of different groups before you begin recruiting.

- *Students* seeking internships for college credit may be plentiful if you are located near a university. On the other hand, students are often able to commit for only one semester and working around class schedules may be challenging.
- *Retirees* may be able to commit more time to an organization and offer more flexible schedules. More than other groups, retirees may want explicitly stated expectations.
- *Stay at home caregivers* provide a stable volunteer base if you can work around commitments to children. This group may find it difficult to offer hours during holidays or after school, but offer excellent networking opportunities.

## Rewarding volunteers

Rewards acknowledge volunteers’ selfless efforts while reinforcing that volunteers are an essential part of an agency’s work. Consider the following methods of rewarding volunteers.

- Celebrate special occasions such as birthdays and volunteer milestones (we mark the first month and third month anniversaries).
- Include a gift certificate in birthday cards if you are able (we give movie coupons).
- Acknowledge volunteer efforts on a monthly basis with cards or certificates listing the amount of hours they have contributed.
- Purchase inexpensive and creative gifts such as appreciative balloons or mugs filled with candy. Delivering such gifts to a volunteer’s home or place of work adds a special touch.
- Reward volunteers *even* if you have no budget to do so—you simply *can’t* afford to lose this precious agency resource!

## Create leadership opportunities

Like employees, volunteers enjoy advancing within an organization. Consider allowing volunteers to take on leadership roles.

- Encourage volunteers’ creativity. Motivated volunteers in our shelter have initiated local ribbon fundraising campaigns during domestic violence awareness month, ‘beauty days’ (salon services), and ‘smoothie nights’ (fruit drinks).
- Allow volunteers to network. Offer volunteers the option of working as a community liaison to network for more volunteers or funding.
- Suggest volunteers apply for permanent positions. Speak to volunteers about opportunities to become staff members or board members within your agency.

## Maintain constant vigilance

My greatest challenge as a volunteer coordinator is *keeping the interest of the volunteer*. To avoid having volunteers grow tired of routine tasks, I meet with them frequently to assess the following:

- *Is their interest waning? Are they motivated?*
- *Are they still excited about the philosophy of the agency?*
- *Has their time commitment changed?*

A significant decline in hours volunteered may be an indication of dissatisfaction. I offer to switch dissatisfied volunteers into different positions—for example, from kitchen work to office work.

## Think like a volunteer

Where would *you* most like to volunteer? Chances are you’d prefer working in an agency that 1) respects your skills, 2) appreciates your work, and 3) benefits *you*, the volunteer. Yes, people volunteer for largely altruistic purposes; yet volunteers will be more satisfied with their work if they also see how it benefits them. Promote intensive trainings as skills that benefit volunteers long after they leave your agency. Acknowledge volunteers’ training in a letter and suggest volunteers include this training in their resumes.

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*Tanya Sevier, BA, is the Volunteer Coordinator at the Women’s Justice Center located in Detroit, Michigan.*

### Reaching Victims in Rural Areas

■ by Jan Mancinelli

It's a daunting task to reach and carry out comprehensive services to victims in the best of circumstances. More daunting is to broaden that task to reach victims over a geographical area of 2,600 square miles. It's a challenge the Women's Resource Center of Northern Michigan, based in Petoskey, has been faced with throughout its 25-year history. The Women's Resource Center provides victim services for domestic abuse, sexual assault, child abuse, and other victims of violent crime in five counties in the Northwest Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

In the late 1980s, VOCA funds supported our efforts for victims in outlying counties. Since then, the expansion of VOCA funding and the addition of new funding has enabled the agency to operate regular business hours, five days per week, in four offices serving five counties: Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet, and Otsego. Our agency utilizes three satellite offices in addition to our main office to serve victims where they live. The importance of the satellite offices cannot be underestimated. Having staff on location in each of the county seats allows us to participate in local activities, attend local meetings, and most importantly, interact with the key individuals who work in the criminal justice and human service systems. We have found that advocating for a survivor when you know the systems and the players involved can be far more successful when done in person rather than calling from three counties away.

Rural areas, unlike many urban areas, lack public transportation. Survivors in urban areas have a much shorter distance to navigate to receive services. In an area that has no public transportation, as well as unemployment and poverty rates that are above state averages, reliable transportation can be a challenge as well. We go to the people because they can not come to us. Whether you are driving across an urban area in wall-to-wall traffic or traveling long stretches of country roads, the end task of serving victims of violent crimes remains the same.

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*Jan Mancinelli, MSA, is the Executive Director of the Women's Resource Center of Northern Michigan in Petoskey, Michigan.*

### Taking Counseling to Children

■ by Debra Mielke

The Women's Aid Service of Mt. Pleasant has been serving child victims of domestic and sexual assault for almost four years. With limited staff, reaching children who need services in our three county service area has been challenging. More challenging still, many children are not able to come to us to utilize our service, so we must go to them.

Transportation can be a barrier for children relying upon working parents who sometimes do not have vehicles or are unable to leave work to transport children. We try to eliminate transportation as a barrier by going to meet the children. As a children's counselor, I am extremely flexible about when and where I meet victims, and almost half of my sessions with children take place out of the office.

My preferred location for counseling sessions is my office, where there is more access to therapeutic toys, privacy, and space to be loud. When that just isn't possible, counseling sessions are held in many locations, including a client's house, public parks, libraries, and schools. The location must be convenient, safe, and offer some privacy.

There are times when these "sessions on the move" are not ideal. When a child is working through extremely emotional issues it is unlikely that meeting in school would be appropriate. Children may not feel comfortable revisiting powerful emotions that might elicit tears if they need to return to class in twenty minutes. Distractions are also far more likely "in the field" than in a counselor's office: siblings running around or a class bell ringing. If distractions become an issue, I may cut the session short and select another location to meet in the future.

The counseling that occurs in a public place is not substantially different than the counseling that occurs in my office. No matter where counseling sessions occur, they are always opportunities to work through emotional issues, facilitate safety planning, foster healthy relationships, and convey to children that they are not responsible for abuse.

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*Debra Mielke, MA, LLPC, is a Children's Counselor at the Women's Aid Service in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.*

# Valuing Diversity in Our Organizations

■ by Kiran Dhingra

**A**s service providers to victims of crime, we work with diverse groups of people and should be mindful of the diversity within our community. Our organization is not separate from the community we serve; the challenges we face as an organization reflect the challenges we face as a community. To work effectively with our communities and provide competent and sensitive services, we need to be aware of the experiences and perspectives of those outside our own frame of reference. Bringing together staff members with varying experiences and perspectives helps us better represent our community.

## Awareness of diversity

We can talk about being committed to diversity, but demonstrating our commitment is not easy work. It requires that we examine and understand ourselves in relation to other people. It means being open and committed to learning about others' experiences. It can be uncomfortable to think outside of our own cultural frame of reference, but the benefits of what we learn from each other will help us better reach out to those who have been victims of crime.

## Constantly striving

I work at Turning Point, Inc., a non-profit agency that provides services to domestic and sexual assault survivors, including shelter, counseling, and advocacy. Our agency is located in Macomb County, a predominantly Caucasian community, with less than ten percent of county residents claiming Native American, Hispanic, African American, Middle Eastern, or Asian American descent. We are working to strengthen our commitment to diversity. Our plan is to diversify staff to be more representative of the age groups, sexual orientation, languages, and racial and ethnic backgrounds that exist in Macomb County.

## Working toward diversity

Despite our goal, we are experiencing challenges in assembling a diverse and culturally competent staff for our organization. We are doing a number of things to address this challenge: 1) we require all staff and volunteers to attend training on oppression; 2) we are examining our hiring

practices and organizational policies; 3) we are recognizing a need to hire a diverse management staff to attract and retain diverse frontline staff; and 4) we are conducting focus groups with women of color to assess our policies and create a dialogue with underserved communities. These efforts have already led to one positive change in our hiring practices. In the past we advertised vacancies in mainstream newspapers and publications; now we advertise on the web and place ads in ethnic newspapers to reach a more varied audience.

## Achieving cultural competency

Training in cultural competency for staff members is an essential aspect of a commitment to honoring a community's diversity. It is important to note that *diversity* and *cultural competency* are different concepts and that a diverse staff is not always a culturally competent staff. Diversity can be achieved simply by maintaining variety among staff. Cultural competency, on the other hand, is a far more difficult—and ultimately more important—

goal. Cultural competency involves staff being sensitive to cultural norms, values, and beliefs of different individuals and groups. It involves understanding how different cultures access our services and being conscious of how acceptable our services are to different cultures.

The process of achieving cultural competency involves ongoing training and commitment. Our staff recently received training that provided experiential exercises and made us more aware of the language that we use when providing services and the power it has to hurt and silence those we are so interested in helping.

The challenge for us at Turning Point is to continue our commitment to diversity and cultural competency. We are learning that valuing diversity in our organization is an ongoing process—one that involves long-term commitment that is never finished.

*...being committed to diversity means thinking outside of our own cultural frame of reference...*

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*Kiran Dhingra, MSW, was formerly a Sexual Assault Therapist at Turning Point, Inc., in Mt. Clemens, Michigan.*

# Experiential Play Therapy with Traumatized Children

■ by Shawn A. Rubin

For the past three years I have worked as a therapist for the Catholic Social Services of Wayne County (CSSWC). Under innovative leadership, this organization has supported the creation and implementation of a play therapy treatment program for traumatized children, a program I have found highly effective.

## What is play therapy?

Using “play” in therapy with children is not a new practice. Writings from England in the early 1900s reveal that therapists used toys with children in expressive ways. Experiential play therapy goes beyond simply playing games with children. This approach acknowledges that for children play is a natural process of exploration and discovery of their environment and their relationships. It is a truly client-centered therapy, allowing children to create and develop the expressions that are most meaningful to them in a safe environment.

The philosophy of the VOCA treatment program at CSSWC is rooted in the humanistic and experiential psychological theories of Erikson (1977), Moustakas (1959, 1997), and Norton & Norton (1997). These psychologists suggest that children should be allowed to move toward the events that caused them pain. They believe that a child’s play can be a vehicle for confronting and integrating painful experiences.

## Who benefits from play therapy?

Many children referred to our VOCA program manifest acute symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) including frequent dissociation, nightmares, enuresis (bed-wetting), and depending upon the nature of their trauma, extreme aggressive and sexualized behaviors. These young children often demonstrate repetitive trauma-specific behaviors during their play. One of the first psychologists to explore PTSD reactions in children differentiated between normal play and the “forbidden games” of traumatized children:

*The everyday play of childhood is free and easy. It is bubbly and light-spirited, whereas the play that follows from trauma is grim and monotonous. Play does not stop easily when it is traumatically inspired and is obsessively repeated. Post-traumatic play is so literal that if you spot it, you may be able to guess the trauma with few other clues (Terr, 1990, 31).*

I have found that using experiential play therapy is most effective with younger children, especially those between the ages of three and nine. Once children reach a certain age and maturity level, play is no longer the primary means of expression.

## How does play therapy work?

### *Phase 1: Building Trust*

This approach begins with an emphasis on establishing a therapeutic alliance with a child, in other words, building a relationship that communicates respect, trust, and patience for the psychological processes of the child. Therapists create a safe environment, letting the child know they can act and play freely, and establish comfortable limitations of time and space (telling children when the sessions will begin and end and letting them know that experiential play can only take place in the office). For the initial sessions, parents are included, allowing children to see that therapists are adults who can be trusted.

### *Phase 2: Role-playing*

Once comfortable with the surroundings and therapist, a child will initiate play. The therapist follows the child’s lead in the direction of activities and the creation of role-playing scenarios. Therapists provide an environment of increased permissiveness of expression while maintaining constant boundaries of safety. This feature of the relationship promotes a sense of the therapist’s acceptance of the child despite his or her expression of intense aggression and trauma-specific reenactments of abuse. I have found in this work that even those children who are apprehensive at first become engaged by and drawn to the permissive-structured relationship—so much so that often children resist ending sessions.

Play generally begins in a light-hearted fashion, with solitary activities such as playing with sand or blocks. Children then

grow curious about the therapist and move to playing cooperative games; the children always set the rules and pace of the games. As time passes, children move to more traumatic play where they begin to express their hopes and fears, and the “games” become more emotional. Children begin to reenact traumatic events and express the suffering, torture, or pain that they felt. In these “games” children often assume the role of the perpetrator, placing the therapist into the position of victim and allowing the therapist to experientially reflect the depths of suffering and hurt experienced by the child.

### *Phase 3: Resolution*

It is in this phase that the therapist maintains the limitations of time and safety, and assists the child in managing overwhelming emotions. As the child internalizes a sense of consistency and structure in the therapy over several sessions, the working stage of treatment commences. The child’s experience of the trauma, fear, and pain is disclosed through the content of the play scenarios and role-playing games. As the child begins to resolve these events, the emotional intensity lessens, and the frequency of the play-acting of these traumatic events lessens. Progress is gradual, as the child develops mastery over the intense emotions and physiological flooding of fear.

## **Effectiveness of play therapy**

The practice of this child therapy has yielded excellent results in many cases at CSSWC. Parents report decreases of acute symptoms and the children themselves display a growing sense of empowerment, impulse control, and increased hopefulness and confidence.

It has been a humbling endeavor to assist children on the journey into the depths of their fears. It has been an honor to bear witness to the resilience and defiant power of the human spirit as demonstrated by the progress in these children.

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## **Web Resources**

### **The National Center for Victims of Crime Multicultural Services**

<http://www.ncvc.org/>

<http://www.ncvc.org/infolink/Info31.htm>

*This site contains a virtual library, stalking resource center, public policy and civil litigation. The second link offers an article on multicultural victim services considerations.*

### **Court Appointed Special Advocate Association Volunteer Management**

<http://www.casanet.org/program-management/volunteer-manage/>

*This site provides a wealth of information for any agency responsible for recruiting, supervising, and evaluating volunteers.*

### **National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information**

<http://www.calib.com/nccanch/>

*This comprehensive site offers information on child welfare, including statistics, publications, and funding sources.*

### **Violence Against Women Office**

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/>

*This official US Department of Justice website for the Violence Against Women Office presents information on interventions to stop violence against women.*

***The Michigan Advocate welcomes article contributions and suggestions for articles from those in crime victim services and related fields.***

**Please send submissions, letters, and inquiries to:**

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## FY 2003-2004 VOCA Victim Assistance Grant Funding Schedule

<b>October 29-30, 2002</b>	<i>CVSC Grant Award Workshops at the Michigan Library and Historical Center (9 am to 5 pm) Participants attend either the October 29th or October 30th session</i>
<b>February 14, 2003</b>	<i>Announcement of VOCA grant funding Application and Guideline Package becomes available</i>
<b>February 24, 2003</b>	<i>VOCA Grant Application website activated <a href="http://sigmaweb.mdch.state.mi.us/sigma2/">http://sigmaweb.mdch.state.mi.us/sigma2/</a></i>
<b>March 6, 2003</b>	<i>VOCA Grant Application Workshop (8:30 am to 12 pm) VOCA Grant Reporting Workshop (current contractors only) (12 pm to 4 pm) Both events to be held at the Michigan Library and Historical Center</i>
<b>March 11, 2003</b>	<i>VOCA Grant Application Workshop (8:30 am to 12 pm) VOCA Grant Reporting Workshop (current contractors only) (12 pm to 4 pm) Both events to be held at the Michigan Library and Historical Center</i>
<b>April 4, 2003</b>	<i>Final Application submission deadline</i>
<b>April 6-12, 2003</b>	<i>National Crime Victims' Rights Week: Fulfill the Promise</i>
<b>August 29, 2003</b>	<i>VOCA agreements mailed</i>
<b>October 1, 2003 - September 30, 2004</b>	<i>VOCA agreement fiscal year</i>



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