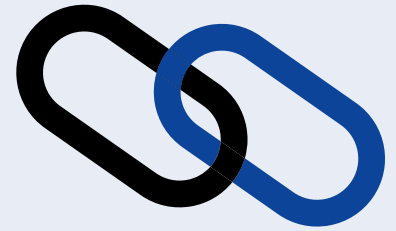


# Responding to People Who Have Been Victimized by Individuals with Mental Illness



The Council of State Governments (CSG) has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC), part of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, to help state and local government officials better serve victims of crime committed by individuals with mental illness. CSG is working with OVC and a bipartisan group of leading practitioners, policymakers, and victims' advocates to:

- Determine what services, policies, and laws key stakeholders agree should be in place to protect the rights of—and to ensure proper response to—victims of crime committed by individuals with mental illness
- Promote awareness of the unique challenges that people who have been victimized by individuals with mental illness face
- Disseminate information to federal, state, and local officials attempting to improve supports and services for this unique segment of the crime victim population

## Issue

- It is not uncommon for the rights of a victim to be overlooked or ignored when the person who committed the crime is found “not guilty by reason of insanity” or is otherwise ordered to receive treatment from the mental health system.
- Efforts to improve outcomes for people with mental illness in the criminal justice system rarely consider the needs of the people who are the victims of the crime committed by individuals with mental illness.
- Victims of crime committed by individuals with mental illness often find themselves victimized again—by a process that leaves them feeling uninformed, unable to participate, unprotected, and angry about a seeming lack of accountability.

## Response

OVC, representatives of the criminal justice and mental health systems, crime victims, and victims' advocates guided CSG's work on the following projects:

- **Analyzed state legislation:** With the aid of the National Center for Victims of Crime, CSG analyzed victims' rights laws in 10 states that address this population of victims.
- **Surveyed key stakeholders:** CSG surveyed state forensic mental health authorities, victim advocates, and victim services providers in the same 10 states to understand the existing responses to people victimized by individuals with mental illness, and how those responses could be improved.
- **Convened focus group:** CSG convened a focus group of victims of crimes committed by individuals with mental illness to discuss their experiences and frustrations, and to garner advice about changes to policy and practice that would improve the response to this subset of victims.

## Current Status

Important products describing the results of this work will soon be available online. In addition, over the next 12 months, user-friendly tools will also be made available to jurisdictions interested in assessing how this population of victims' rights are enforced in their respective states. CSG will also announce the availability of technical assistance to select jurisdictions to improve their response to victims of crime committed by individuals with mental illness. Please check the Consensus Project website at <http://consensusproject.org> for these updates.