



Nationwide Justice Trends:

Crime Victim and Witness Initiatives Byrne JAG Purpose Area

The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program (Byrne JAG) is the nation's cornerstone public safety grant program. Under the law, states and localities may invest the funds across the entire justice system under eight broad purpose areas.* One of those, the **Crime Victim and Witness Initiatives** purpose area, may include funding victim advocate positions, domestic violence prevention initiatives, support for child advocacy centers; witness protection programs and other community victims service programs. This purpose area does not include victim compensation.

States and territories have used, or plan to use, Byrne JAG funds to implement and support a broad range of such activities, including, but not limited to:

- Responding to victims of sexual assault through coordinated community efforts
- Addressing sexual assault cases involving victims identified as minors
- Behavioral health services for victims of crime, including counseling and clinical services in secure facilities and in communities
- Services to address adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Support for Children's Advocacy Centers that provide child-centered locations for investigating possible crimes of child abuse
- Support of victim advocacy and enhanced resources to provide transparent, understandable information to victims of crime
- Comprehensive forensic medical examinations and support for shelter for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault

NCJA provides training and technical assistance (TTA) to the state administering agencies (SAAs) in each state and territory responsible for planning how Byrne JAG funds will be allocated. This brief provides a high-level **overview of trends and agency needs** in the Crime Victim and Witness Initiatives purpose area that states may find valuable as they conduct strategic planning.

National Crime Victim and Witness Initiatives Trends

A scan of national Crime Victim and Witness programming trends found several current areas of focus. These include:



[Family Justice Centers \(FJC\)](#) are multi-agency, multi-disciplinary, co-located service centers that provide services to victims of interpersonal violence, including intimate partner violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder or dependent adult abuse and human trafficking.¹ FJCs focus on increasing access to services and support for victims and their children and reducing

the number of times victims must tell their story and the number of places victims must go for help. In California, the [Alameda County FJC](#) is made up of more than thirty onsite and fifty offsite agencies.² Together, they advocate for and construct a future with zero tolerance for all forms of interpersonal violence in Alameda County.

* To learn about the Byrne JAG program and the eight purpose areas, see NCJA's [Investing Byrne JAG webpage](https://www.ncja.org/investing-byrne-jag). (<https://www.ncja.org/investing-byrne-jag>)



The [restorative justice approach](#) emphasizes accountability and making amends by, repairing the harm caused by crime.³ This occurs through facilitated meetings between victims, people accused of and convicted of crime, and other community members. There are a number of restorative justice organizations across the country, including [Restorative Response Baltimore](#), through which 95 percent of the community conferences (facilitated meetings) have resulted in written agreements created by all participants with over 95 percent compliance with those agreements.⁴



[Hospital-Based Violence Intervention \(HBVI\)](#) programs are multi-disciplinary programs that partner medical staff and credible community-based partners to support victims of violent crime through safety planning,

services and trauma-informed care.⁵ New Jersey allocated \$20 million in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding to [launch seven new HBVI programs and expand two existing initiatives](#); the nation’s largest single investment in this violence-intervention model.⁶



[Trauma Recovery Centers \(TRCs\)](#) serve victims impacted by multiple crimes, who have multiple needs, by providing wrap-around services that include connections to safer housing, medical care and treatment.⁷ TRCs also provide assistance to crime survivors that can help them return to work sooner and navigate the criminal justice system more effectively. The TRC model originated in California, and the premier example is located at [University of California, San Francisco](#).⁸

Alameda County FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER



"Justice is not served until crime victims are."

SAFETY ALERT!

Abusers can track your computer activity. If you are in danger, please call 911 or the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE). And consider using a safer computer such as one from the library or a friend's house.

**ESCAPE
this site**

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ABOUT US
NEWS & EVENTS
YOUTH
SERVICES
PARTNERS
RESOURCE LIBRARY
DONATE

- Meet DA O'Malley
- Meet the Executive Director
- Core Values
- Guiding Principles
- FAQs
- Annual Report
- Volunteer
- Employment Opportunities

The Alameda County Family Justice Center is made up of over 30 onsite and over 50 offsite agencies and programs that provide services and support to individuals and families who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault and exploitation, child abuse, elder and dependent adult abuse, and stalking.

OUR MISSION

To ensure the safety, healing, and self-empowerment of victims of domestic violence and their children, of victims of sexual assault and exploitation, human trafficking, child abuse, stalking, and elder and dependent adult abuse through easily accessible, coordinated, comprehensive and culturally sensitive services.

We advocate for and construct a future where there is zero tolerance for all forms of interpersonal violence in Alameda County.



The Alameda County (CA) Family Justice Center is a model in providing support to individuals and families in need.

This document was created with the support of Grant No. 2019-YA-BX-K002 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the SMART Office, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



National Crime Victim and Witness Initiatives Needs

Justice systems face policy, training and programmatic needs in the crime victim and witness initiatives area, many of which may be addressed with Byrne JAG funding, including:

Workforce hiring and retention—An increase of counseling and other services, driven in part by a shift away from handling certain cases through law enforcement, has increased the need for trained victim and witness service providers. This, coupled with overall staffing shortages following the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to a dire need in this field.

Data integration and information sharing—Victim and witness services initiatives often suffer from the same lack of integrated information and ability to share across agencies as other segments of the criminal justice system.

Trauma-Informed implementation training—It is critical that victims, witnesses and their families are treated in ways that recognize the harms they've endured and avoid creating additional trauma. Increased and regular training is needed to achieve this.

Mental health and support for providers' vicarious trauma—Exposure to victims' trauma on a daily basis can create trauma for providers. These professionals are healthier and more effective when they, too, have access to support.

Endnotes

- 1 Family Justice Centers. (n.d.). Family Justice Centers. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <https://www.familyjusticecenter.org/>
- 2 Home — Alameda County Family Justice Center. (n.d.). The Alameda County Family Justice Center. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <http://www.acfjc.org/>
- 3 Restorative Justice. (n.d.). The Centre for Justice & Reconciliation. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <http://restorativejustice.org/restorative-justice/>
- 4 Restorative Response Baltimore – Collective Action To Resolve Conflict. (n.d.). Restorative Response Baltimore. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <https://www.restorativeresponse.org/>
- 5 The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention. (n.d.). The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <https://www.thehavi.org/>
- 6 NJ Spotlight News. (2020, February 21). State to Expand Hospital-Based Programs to Help Victims Break Cycle of Violence. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/02/state-to-expand-hospital-based-programs-to-help-victims-break-cycle-of-violence/>
- 7 TRAUMA RECOVERY CENTERS: Addressing the Needs of Underserved Crime Survivors. (2020, January). National Alliance of Trauma Recovery Centers. <http://traumarecoverycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/TRCBrief-R3.pdf>
- 8 Trauma Recovery Center. (n.d.). The Trauma Recovery Center. Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <http://traumarecoverycenter.org/>