

Informational Webinar on the 2023 National Census of Victim Service Providers (NCVSP)

DARYL FOX: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's informational webinar on the 2023 National Census of Victim Service Providers, hosted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. At this time, it's my pleasure to introduce Dr. Rachel Morgan, BJS Statistician and Project Manager with the Bureau of Justice Statistics, for some welcoming remarks and to begin the presentation.

DR. RACHEL MORGAN: Thanks, Daryl. Thank you all so much for coming today and taking time out of your days to learn about the 2023 National Census of Victim Service Providers. So the agenda for today's webinar: first, we're going to go over the goals and the importance of BJS's VSSRP, which is the Victim Services Statistical Research Program; and then a quick history of the National Census of Victim Service Providers and National Survey of Victim Service Providers; and then some updates on our recent project, the 2023 Census; and then how we could use your help.

So the overarching goals and the importance of BJS's VSSRP. So, in case you haven't heard of BJS or the Bureau of Justice Statistics, we are one of 13 principal statistical agencies housed in the U.S. government. Each of these 13 agencies has statistical activities as their core mission, and BJS's mission is to collect, analyze, publish, and disseminate information on crime, criminal offenders, victims of crime, and the operation of the justice system at all levels of the government. BJS also provides financial and technical support to state, local, and tribal governments to improve both their statistical capabilities and then the quality and utility of their criminal history records.

So the crime funnel is a good visual to show how BJS's statistical units are organized. So the first thing is the crime occurs or the victimization occurs. It may or may not be reported to law enforcement, and then it likely may move through prosecution and the judicial system, and then sentencing and the offender may be sentenced to time in a correctional institution. And then, finally, it would end with circling back whether the offender was re-entered back into the system, or recidivism. So victimization, law enforcement, judicial statistics, corrections, and then recidivism are the primary statistical units at BJS, so the primary parts of the criminal justice system.

So BJS developed the Victim Services Statistical Research Program to build knowledge about victim service provisions across the criminal justice system. It was developed in order to improve our understanding of help-seeking and access to services among victims of crime and abuse. And to date, the VSSRP includes two data collections specifically focused on gathering information directly from victim service providers or organizations. So the first is the 2017 National Census of Victim Service Providers, and then the second one is the 2019 National Survey of Victim Service Providers. The

VSSRP also works to enhance other BJS data collections in relevant areas of importance to the victim assistance field, which I'll talk about a little later.

So before the 2017 Census and the 2019 Survey, most of the research on victim services has been conducted from the perspective of victims. And to some extent, this makes sense because victims are best positioned to tell us if they needed, accessed, or received services and whether those services actually helped them in their recovery from crime or abuse. But on the other hand, it's equally as important to know about the experiences of the organizations that serve victims, so VSPs can provide information about who they serve, who they weren't able to serve, and whether VSPs are sufficiently staffed, funded, trained, and resourced to meet the needs of victims. So the census and survey of VSPs provide the first-ever national data on the VSP field.

The VSSRP is situated within the Victimization Statistics Unit at BJS, and as I previously mentioned, we have surveys and data collections that collect data from the victim perspective and then also from the VSP perspective. Because this project is focused on the VSP perspective, I'll briefly talk about the victim perspective, but if you have any other questions, we're happy to answer them at the end, or you can look around on the BJS website for more information. So the primary data collection on the victim perspective is the National Crime Victimization Survey and its supplemental surveys. The NCVS is an annual household survey that collects data on non-fatal violence and property crimes that are experienced by persons ages 12 or older from a nationally representative sample of households in the United States. The NCVS is currently undergoing a redesign, which means that we're reviewing all the questions, revising the questions because they haven't been revised since 1992, and we're testing new and different types of questions, asking about victim service provision from the perspective of victims. And then, on the other side, the VSP perspective, we have the census and survey that I've talked about, but we also have some surveys that focus on particular types of VSP organizations. So we've worked with colleagues at BJS to add questions regarding victim service provision to their data collections, so, for example, the 2018 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies and the 2018 Census of Medical Examiners and Coroners Offices. And there's a list at the bottom right of this slide with the other surveys that include victim service questions. So it's important to collect data from both perspectives in order to get a more complete picture of the VSP field and the types of services that are being provided to victims of crime and abuse.

So, some more details on the 2017 Census--this was the first data collection to collect information from VSPs, and a roster or a list was developed of all VSPs across the country. We then conducted a pilot test to determine the quality of this roster and test a survey instrument and the potential questions that we would ask organizations. And from October 2016 to July 2017, we conducted a census of the field to examine the basic characteristics of VSPs. And then we cleaned the roster, which means we deleted

duplicate organizations, organizations that weren't providing services, or that were missing data on key census items. And our final product was a comprehensive, up-to-date, and descriptive roster of VSPs that could serve as a sampling frame or a starting point of organizations for future VSP surveys.

So, in 2019, BJS published *Victim Service Providers in the United States*, which was the first release of data from the census, and it included a number--the number of VSPs by type of organization, a map of VSPs by location, and then a map of VSPs per 100,000 residents, and this report is on the BJS website. And then, also, if you're interested in conducting your own data on the NCVSP--you know, something that may not be included in this report--the data file is available for public download and analysis from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data.

So here's just a couple of examples of what the NCVSP data can tell us. So the first one here is that nearly a quarter, or 23% of VSPs in 2017 were in the four largest states, so California, Texas, Florida, and New York.

It can also tell us things about hard-to-reach populations. So, for example, this shows tribal VSPs in green, mapped with federally recognized tribes in orange at the county level.

And then this example is showing VSPs that reported they served at least one victim of sex and labor trafficking, which would be in blue; labor only trafficking in red; or sex only trafficking in green.

And then soon, BJS is going to release an interactive county-level map analyzing 2017 NCVSP data and U.S. Census Bureau population data, which is pretty cool. So, one of the maps is going to show the number of VSPs per 100,000 persons in the county by county, so please sign up for updates from BJS--we just put the link in the chat--to find out when this is released so you can play around with it because it's very exciting.

All right, so on to the National Survey of Victim Service Providers. The survey is important because the work and effort that we put into the census that I just discussed really informs the survey and the types of statistics that BJS can produce with those data. So, for May through November 2019, BJS conducted a more detailed survey with a representative sample of VSPs, just a specific number of VSPs, that were selected from the census roster. So, to be eligible to participate in the survey, a VSP had to categorize itself as one of five eligible types, so this is a nonprofit or a faith-based VSP; governmental; hospital, medical, or emergency; tribal; or campus VSP. They had to provide victim services in the 6 months prior to the survey and then also have a specific program or staff dedicated to working with crime victims. And through these survey data, we learned more specific characteristics about the VSP field including types of

services provided by VSPs, the types of victims served, and then where there were gaps in services.

And just like with the census, we released a report with the first release of these survey data in--not last year now, in 2021, in October. And this report includes top-five services provided by VSPs, the most commonly provided services by VSP type, and then, as I said before, the gaps in services reported by VSPs. And again, this data file is available through the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data if you're interested in downloading it and playing around with it on your own time.

So what else can the NSVSP data tell us? They can tell us about victims served and victim characteristics, services provided by VSPs, type of victims that received services, services that may be difficult to obtain, referrals to VSPs--so how were the victims getting to the VSPs, is there another organization that's referring them?--and then also staffing at VSPs.

So, from the data, we have the average number of services provided by type of VSP in 2019. This is the first figure in the report, and to be clear, this is the average number of different services provided and not just the number of services provided throughout the year. So VSPs delivered, on average, 27 different services to meet the needs of crime victims, and tribal VSPs provided the most services on average at 32 different types of services.

We can also talk about the gaps in services. So VSPs reported the three services they found most difficult to obtain for victims. In 2019, the majority of VSPs indicated they had difficulty obtaining shelter or housing for victims, followed by mental health services at 52%, and then financial or material assistance at 45%. And table 6 in the report does show this breakout by those five VSP types, in case you're interested in seeing some more details there.

And then referral to VSPs. VSPs receive referrals from other entities or organizations in the community or the justice system. So, again, we asked about the three types of organizations that received the most referrals in the past year: 69% of VSPs said they received referrals from law enforcement agencies, so the FBI, police or sheriff's department; about 38% said another community-based victim service provider/organization; and then so on down the list, but you can see that the list varies somewhat, which is pretty interesting to see.

And now moving on to our current project, so the 2023 Survey--or Census. Excuse me. Its been 6 years since we've conducted the first one, so we have a few goals for this new census. The first is to refresh and build upon the 2017 NCVSP frame, our list of organizations. We know there have been significant changes in VSP operations during these years, that many VSPs have opened, many have closed, and so we really need to

get an up-to-date list on what's going on in the VSP field right now. We're going to build on the strong foundation we created with the first administration. Second, we're going to improve what did not work as intended while maintaining comparability between the 2017 and 2023, so we're revising a few survey items that had low-quality data in the 2017 survey and poor item performance, which just really means a lot of missing data, that folks weren't able to answer those questions. But we want to make sure that we can compare what happened in 2017 to what's currently going on in the field. And then 3 -- to produce a high-quality and accurate frame that can be used to sample VSPs in the next survey. So, to select a sample for this more detailed survey, and for it to be representative of the United States, we need an accurate and complete roster to sample from.

And this is where we need your help. So, in order to get a comprehensive and up-to-date list of current VSPs that will allow us to have high-quality data about VSPs in the country, we've been combining a lot of different kinds of lists. So, first, we've pulled the list of organizations from the 2017 Census and the 2019 Survey. We've pulled, you know, data and lists from these recent BJS-funded surveys that I've talked about, so they're asking about dedicated victim services with staff, with prosecutors, police, correctional institutions, and then medical examiners and coroners. We have put together and--from other colleagues in the federal government, some federal grantee lists and then other known VSP lists from states, national organizations, and other sources. And what we're doing is we're combining all of these lists together in order to get this full roster and to have a starting point to go out into the field and ask these questions that are on the census.

So, we want to make sure your organization is included in our final list, so we have two asks of you, please. Tammy just put it in the chat. There is a simple form that if you could complete it with your organization's information--it's really contact information and the type of organization that you work with, and we will be able to add your organization to our list. It may already be on one of those other lists, which would be great, but right now, we don't know. So, you know, once we get all of this information, then we'll de-duplicate and make sure we don't have duplicate entries, but we want to make sure everyone is counted. And then the second thing would be the 2023 Census will be going into the field this summer, so when you're contacted by our project team, if you could please complete it. Right now, it's running at about 20 minutes. It doesn't take that long, and we really need everyone's participation in order to make sure that we have a complete list of VSPs in the country and we are representing all of the wonderful work that you guys are doing. So, as I've shown, there's so much we can do with these data, but again, we have to have a good starting point and a good comprehensive list to start with.

So I will stop there, and I thank you all so, so much for joining today and hearing about this, and feel free to add any questions in the Q&A, and you are welcome to reach out, too. I will put my contact information here. Feel free to email, and my colleague Heather, who's the Chief of Victimization Statistics, is also on the line. Feel free to email both of us and we will get back to you. So, thank you so much.

First question: "Can you provide information on where to find the information on the archives website?" Are you talking about the previous 2017 Census and 2019? I can add the link to our Victim Services page. Yes, just the location. Perfect. Okay. I will go ahead once--give me one second here, and here is the page to the VSSRP website, and that would have all the information on the 2017 Census, the 2019 Survey, and then we'll have some updated information on 2023, and you can get to the reports from there, too.

All right, another question: "I'm confused with the initial email. It seems to be looking for individual service providers. We are a state agency who funds 46 programs around the state. Who, exactly, are you trying to get the information from?" We would be trying to get information about all of those 46 programs, and so if you had a contact list for all of those 46 programs, we would greatly appreciate that because then we could include all of those organizations in our full list.

Another question: "My organization is a statewide coalition that does not provide direct services. Would you like us to fill out this survey?" I would--we would greatly appreciate if you would fill out the form and give us your contact information because we are trying--we know not everyone provides direct services, and we're trying to gather some other information from other coalitions and agencies as well, so it'd be great if you could fill out the form and give us your information.

Any other questions?

What we're getting so far--Tammy put the form in the chat again ... and it will be up. I mean, it's quick to do now. It will be up until the end of the month at least because, as I said, we're going to go into the field in June, but we're going to need a couple months for our contractor team to de-duplicate and go through the list and make sure all of the entries have the appropriate and relevant information so we can contact folks.

All right. And we can give you guys a couple more minutes to ask questions. If not, as I said, please feel free to reach out, and thank you so much for attending today.

DARYL FOX: And Rachel, just up front, there was a link that you were sharing out from that first question. It wasn't sent publicly. If you want to send that--just chat--to everyone. That way, all the entities can access that link.

DR. RACHEL MORGAN: Okay.

DARYL FOX: Just for the archives.

DR. RACHEL MORGAN: Yes, let me... I did "All Attendees," right? That's what I need to do?

DARYL FOX: Oh, okay, we're—okay, so it did go to attendees. Yeah, we--us panelists didn't get it, so we didn't know if it was shared out. Okay, perfect. Heh heh!

DR. RACHEL MORGAN: Oh, got it. Okay. Good. Thank you. I figured you guys would see it, too. Heh heh!

"Everyone." Thank you. I missed "Everyone." There we go. Got it. Thanks, Tammy. Ha ha! All right.

Not seeing any other questions ... so I think we can end. Go ahead and give you guys about 30 minutes back in your day. So thank you again for joining, and please feel free to reach out with any questions.

DARYL FOX: Thanks so much. So, on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics and our panelist, we want to thank you for joining today's webinar. This will end today's presentation.