

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

DARYL FOX: Afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's informational webinar on the 2023 National Census of Victim Service Providers, NCVSP, 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 welcome remarks and to begin the presentation. Dr. Morgan?

RACHEL MORGAN: Thanks, Daryl, and thank you all so much for taking time out of your day to learn about the 2023 National Census of Victim Service Providers. So, a quick overview of our agenda for today's webinar. I'm going to go over the goals and importance of BJS's Victim Services Statistical Research Program, or VSSRP; a quick history of the National Census of Victim Service Providers and National Survey of Victim Service Providers; and then give you an update on our recent 2023 National Census; and then how we could use your help. So, the overarching goals and importance of BJS's VSSRP.

So, first, the Bureau of Justice Statistics is 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, the 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 also 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, first, over on the left, the crime or the victimization occurs. It may or may not be reported to law enforcement, and then likely move through prosecution and the judicial or court system. Then sentencing, and the offender may be sentenced to time in a correctional institution. And then finally would be recidivism or reentry, possibly back into the criminal justice system. So, victimization, law enforcement, judicial, corrections, and recidivism are primary statistical units at BJS and are responsible for many different types of data collections within those specific areas.

So, BJS initiated the VSSRP to build knowledge about victim service provisions across the criminal justice system. It's 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. So, the 2017 National Census of Victim Service Providers and then the 2019 National Survey of Victim Service Providers. The VSSRP also works to enhance other BJS data collections in those other areas I just briefly mentioned to support the victim assistance field as well. So, before the 2017 Census and 2019

Survey, most of the research on victim services has been conducted from the perspective of victims, and to an extent, this makes sense, because victims are best positioned to tell us about the services they needed, accessed, or received after they were victims of crime or abuse, and services that helped them in their recovery from crime or abuse. But on the other hand, it's equally as important to hear from victim service providers about their experiences as 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 victims' needs. So, the census and survey of VSPs provide the first-ever national data on the VSP field in the United States.

The VSSRP is situated within the Victimization Statistics Unit at BJS, and as previously mentioned, we have data collections that focus on the victim perspective as well, and our 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 nonfatal violent and property crimes 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 is when we review and revise the survey questions that we ask respondents, and we're testing new and different types of items about victim service assistance. So—and then, on the other hand, the victim service provider perspective includes the census and survey, as I've previously discussed, and then also focuses on particular types of VSP organizations. So, we have worked with colleagues in other BJS units to add questions regarding victim service assistance to their data collections, for example, the 2018 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies and the 2018 Census of Medical Examiners and Coroners Offices. And if you are interested in learning more about either one of these areas, Tammy has put the web links to the BJS website for the NCVS and then the VSSRP in the chat. So, it's important to collect data from both of these perspectives to get a more complete picture of the VSP field and services being provided to victims of crime and abuse.

So, now we're going to turn to the 2017 National Census of VSPs. So, the first data collection, to collect information from VSPs, and a roster or a list was developed of all VSPs across the country. And then we conducted a pilot test to determine the quality of that roster and test a survey instrument and questions. And from October 2016 to July 2017, BJS conducted a census of the field to examine basic characteristics of victim service providers, and then we were able to clean this roster or list of all VSPs, deleting duplicate organizations, organizations that were not providing services, and organizations that were missing data on key census items or survey items. And the final product was a comprehensive, up-to-date, and descriptive roster of VSPs that could serve as a sampling frame or a starting point for future VSP surveys. So, in 2019, BJS

published “Victim Service Providers in the United States,” which is a statistical report analyzing the census data, which includes the number of VSPs by type of organization, maps of VSPs by location, and maps of VSPs per 100,000 residents, and you can get to this report through those links that Tammy put in the chat a few minutes ago. And then also, if you are familiar with statistical analysis, you could download the data file and the codebook through the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data and do your own analysis if you are interested in something that wasn’t in this report.

And I’m going to go through just a few examples of things that we know because of the census data. So, the first thing is that nearly a quarter, or 23%, of VSPs were in the four largest states. So, this would be California, Texas, Florida, and New York. These VSP collections offer new perspectives on services for hard-to-reach victim populations. So, this map shows tribal VSPs in green mapped with federally recognized tribes in orange at the county level, which is very interesting, and as we would imagine, they’re clustering out west and in Alaska. Another example, this example shows the VSPs that reported they served at least one victim of sex and labor trafficking in blue, labor only trafficking in red, or sex only trafficking in green. And then finally, we’re excited to announce that there are interactive, county-level maps analyzing these census data along with U.S. Census Bureau population data at the county level, and this is supposed to be released at BJS in the coming weeks. So, please sign up for updates on BJS releases on our website, and Tammy will put that in the chat, so you can get information on when this is going to come out, because it’s going to be very cool.

All right, so, turning to the 2019 National Census—or National Survey, excuse me. So, from May to November 2019, BJS conducted a more detailed survey with a representative sample of VSPs. So, this was organizations that were included on the census roster, just a select number of them, and to be eligible to participate in the survey, a VSP had to first categorize itself as one of five eligible types. So, that would be nonprofit or faith-based; governmental; hospital, medical, or emergency; tribal; or a campus VSP. They also had to provide victim services in the 6 months prior to the survey and then, finally, 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 the specific types of services that they are providing, the types of victims they are serving, and then also where there may be gaps in services. And, again, like the census, we released a report using the survey data, and this is called “Services for Crime Victims, 2019,” which is on the BJS website, and it includes the top five services provided by VSPs; most commonly provided services by VSP type, so, by those five main types; and then gaps in services reported by VSPs. And, again, these data are available for public download and analysis from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data.

So, with these data, we're able to tell which victims were served and victim characteristics; services provided by VSPs; type of victims that received services; services that are difficult to obtain; referrals to VSPs—so, VSPs are often—or victims are often referred to VSPs from other types of agencies or organizations; and then staffing at VSPs. So, just a few findings from these data that are also included in that report. So, this is the first figure in the report, which examines the average number of services provided by type of VSP. And to be clear, this is the average number of different types of services provided. So, on average, VSPs delivered 27 different types of services to meet the needs of crime victims. And then tribal VSPs actually provided the most types of different services to crime victims, at about 32. We can also examine gaps in services. So, VSPs reported the three services they found most difficult to obtain for victims locally in their area. So in 2019, the majority, or 81% of VSPs, indicated that victims had difficulty obtaining shelter or housing, followed by mental health services at about 52%, and then financial or material assistance at 45%. So, table 6 in the report does show these gaps in services by those five main VSP types, if you're interested in that information. And then, finally, referrals. So, VSPs receive referrals from other organizations and entities, as you all know, and the survey did ask VSPs to report the three types of organizations they receive the most referrals from. So 69% reported receiving referrals from law enforcement agencies. So this is the FBI, police, or sheriff's department; followed by community-based victim service providers or other types of VSPs at about 38%; and then child protection agencies at 35%. So, now to turn to the 2023 NCVSP, which is our current project.

So, we have three goals for the current project. This project kicked off in—let's see—October of 2021, and our first goal is to refresh and build upon the 2017 NCVSP's frame. So, it's been 6 years. We know there have been significant changes in VSP operations during these years. Many VSPs have opened. Many have closed. So, we want to build on the strong foundation we created with the first administration and really understand, you know, what changes have been made in the field since then. The second is to improve what did not work as intended in the 2017 NCVSP while maintaining comparability between the two censuses. So, we're going to focus on revising a few survey items that had low quality data or poor item performance. So, this is lots of missing responses on survey items that folks couldn't answer questions or the questions weren't worded correctly. So we're working on that as we speak. And then the third would be to produce a high-quality and accurate frame that can be used to sample VSPs in the next survey. So, as I said before, you know, in the 2019 survey, we used a list of organizations from the 2017 Census, and the only way to make the survey successful is in order to have a comprehensive and up-to-date census list to start from. So, we need your help, please. So, in order to have a comprehensive and up-to-date list of current victim service programs and organizations, we have to start with a comprehensive list and get information from all service providers in the country. So, at

this time, BJS and the project team have collected lists from the 2017 Census and 2019 Survey and the organizations included on both of those lists, and then recent BJS-funded surveys that ask about dedicated victim services staff with prosecutors, police departments, correctional institutions, and medical examiners and coroners. We've received a few updated federal grantee lists from some of our federal partners within DOJ and then also external to DOJ. And then also, we've received some VSP lists from states, national organizations, and other sources.

However, we want to make sure your organizations are included in our final list, so, we have two asks of you. The first would be to complete the simple form that's in the chat with your organization's information, and this is just so that we can get you on our list so that later this summer, when the census is in the field, you will be contacted to complete the census. So, as I've shown, there's so much we can do with these census data. However, in order for them to be accurate and representative of VSPs in the country, we must start with the most up-to-date and accurate list of VSPs. So, thank you so much for joining today. I will put my contact information, along with my colleague Heather, who's on the call. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions about this project. And we do have some time for Q&A if anyone wants to put those in the Q&A section, and we will get to those.

One question. So, we also did this webinar earlier in the week with another group of folks, and one of the questions they did have was, which is a common question we've been receiving, is that they were a state agency that gave out money to lots of different organizations in their community, and they weren't sure if they should sign up on the simple form or they should send the form out to all the folks that they work with within their state. And we asked them to send it out to everyone within their state, because we really want to get—we want the state agency to also fill out the census but we also want to get all those little agencies that report to the state agency or receive money from that agency to be included as well. So, that's one common question we have been getting lately that I wanted to clarify.

We can give folks another minute to write in a question. If not, can give the rest of your afternoon back to you. This survey--is the survey on the BJS website? So, the—the draft survey instrument for 2023 is not on the BJS website yet because we are testing it right now. There's—there are going to be revisions to it. But if you would like to send me an email, I can send you the draft instrument that we have. So, I'll put my email up one more time. We won't put it on the website until after it's been in the field, and we know that it's final. But thank you for that question. Good question. The 2017 Survey instrument is up on the website but the new one is not.

All right. Anything else? All right, well, as I said, feel free to reach out. Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to listen, and please fill out the simple form, and

please fill out the census when you receive it. Oops, sorry. One more question's coming in. Wait for the 2023 Survey. Yeah, so, the 2017 is done. So, you're going to want to complete the simple form with your organization's information. Tammy just put it in the chat again. And then you'll wait to hear, it'll be a few months, from our project team with a link to complete the actual census. This form is in order to get you on our, like, master list in order to send the census information out to you. So, complete the SurveyMonkey form now. Thank you for those questions. Those are good questions. All right, thank you all. Hope you have a wonderful day.

DARYL FOX: Great. 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.