



## Victim Assistance

*The Office for Victim Assistance (OVA) was established shortly after 9/11 to ensure a robust, operational response to victims of crimes investigated by the FBI. The OVA develops policy related to victims, monitors compliance with legal requirements related to victims' rights and assistance, administers program resources, and coordinates the Bureau's victim assistance response to terrorism, mass casualties, and criminal transportation disasters. The OVA works across all operational FBI divisions at Headquarters and in the field, including legal attaché offices around the world.*

### Workforce Development

- During the last decade, the capacity of the FBI to deliver victim assistance evolved from brochures being mailed to a small percentage of victims by a handful of employees as a collateral duty to a wide range of crisis intervention and social services provided by a highly skilled and professional, full-time workforce.
- Almost 10 years after the creation of the Office for Victim Assistance, approximately three-quarters of program employees across the Bureau have master's degrees in a social and/or behavioral science, and several have doctoral degrees.

### Program Growth

- OVA management has worked to ensure a stable source of non-appropriated, reimbursable funding that provides 100 percent of the funds necessary to support victim services positions and operational activities, including emergency victim assistance. The FBI receives funding each year from the federal Crime Victims Fund, which consists of fines, special assessments, and forfeited bail paid by convicted federal offenders or individuals who pled guilty to federal offenses.
- Since fiscal year 2002, the number of reimbursable positions has grown from 112 to 135. There are now 156 individuals assigned to the program, including the professionals staffing the OVA at FBI Headquarters. Last year, victim specialists provided more than 188,000 services directly to victims in FBI investigations.
- As the program expanded beyond criminal cases to include cyber, terrorism, hostage, and other cases, the OVA established specialized capabilities to ensure the most effective response to vulnerable victims. Special victim programs based in the OVA include forensic interviewing of child and adolescent victims, Internet child pornography victim assistance, and the only fully operational unit for terrorism and hostage victim assistance. The OVA staff now includes a clinical neuropsychologist, a forensic operations manager, medical social workers, and an operational psychologist.

### Victim Assistance as an Operational Asset

- Victim assistance has increasingly become viewed as a critically important operational asset in many cases, including major investigations. Victim specialists respond to crime scenes with agents and provide a wide range of crisis intervention and other specialized services and support throughout the investigation.
- The ability of the FBI to provide timely, skilled assistance to victims when they need it most and when agents need information and cooperation from them cannot be understated. Victim specialists have moved from behind desks to working with victims and beside agents, Evidence Response Teams, and others to ensure that victims receive the information and help to which

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they are entitled and which helps support investigations. Following mass casualty crimes—such as the shooting in Tucson, Arizona in January 2011—OVA staff and Victim Assistance Rapid Deployment Teams can be found expertly supporting victims and families, providing for emergency travel and other immediate needs, and helping agents resolve challenging problems related to victims' remains, personal effects, and other sensitive issues. The FBI's victim assistance program is often used as a model for early intervention with crime victims, including victims of emerging crimes.