2020 Wyoming VOCA-SAC Partnership Final Project Report

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

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Introduction

Gaining access to accurate and actionable data to address crime victimization is not always easy or possible for victim service providers on the Wind River Reservation (WRIR) in Wyoming. Although tribal and federal institutions collect data on crime and crime victimization, the data may not be searchable or shared across organizations. Further, some of the data the providers would like are not collected.

With access to timely and relevant crime victimization data, victim service providers serving the WRIR, home to the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes, could identify patterns of victimization, develop effective interventions, and measure program outcomes. Victim service providers could use the data, for example, to address substance use and abuse amongst both victims and perpetrators, to ensure victim rights are upheld, and to address emerging concerns in the community proactively.

In early 2020, when the third round of the Victim of Crime Act – Statistical Analysis Center (VOCA-SAC) partnership grants was announced, the Wyoming VOCA administrator suggested that the Wyoming SAC (WYSAC) work with the Eastern Shoshone Victim Services Program (ESVSP)[1] to envision a project that could improve victim service planning on the WRIR. Upon suggestion from ESVSP, WYSAC invited two additional victim service providers to join the project,[2] Red Paint Alliance (RPA)[3] and Wind River Cares (WRC).[4] Collectively, the five organizations decided to propose a project that would identify the data needs of crime victim service providers on the WRIR, determine their data sources, and evaluate the accessibility of the data.

Collaboratively, the three victim service organizations, WYSAC, and the Wyoming VOCA administrator identified four project goals: (1) build and strengthen a partnership among the organizations; (2) recognize key data needs related to crime victimization on the WRIR; (3) determine what crime victimization data are collected and any barriers to access; and (4) develop next steps and future goals for the partnership to access and use WRIR crime victimization data. Despite the work being interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the partnership made progress on all four goals and also 1) identified how the victim service providers would use the data, and 2) brainstormed recommendations for improving access to collected data and for filling the data gaps associated with uncollected data

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[1] Launched by the Eastern Shoshone Tribe, ESVSP is a resource for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

[2] While additional victim service providers may serve the WRIR, WYSAC focused on developing a partnership with providers identified by the VOCA administrator.

[3] Red Paint Alliance serves families on the WRIR who are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault.

[4] Wind River Cares (aka Wind River Family and Community Health Care) provides medical services, including care to the victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Methodology

Beyond the basic categorization of data needs and data sources, this project did not use typical quantitative social science research methods; rather, the organizations used qualitative methods to complete the project's goals. WYSAC conducted semi-structured interviews with the victim service providers. Interviews were conducted over the phone and lasted approximately one hour. WYSAC took notes during these interviews and then combined them into a final list of data needs.

Strengthening the Partnership (Goal 1) and Planning for the Future (Goal 4)

WYSAC originally proposed three face-to-face meetings with victim service providers on the WRIR for the six-month project. These meetings were intended to strengthen the partnership and provide time to collect information from the victim service providers on their data needs. Face-to-face meetings did not occur, however, because of COVID-19. Rather than meet, the group solely communicated virtually. The group met twice virtually through Zoom in the second month of the project to discuss project goals. Because of challenges scheduling group meetings, WYSAC transitioned to semi-structured interviews with each partner separately to learn about their data needs and access to data.

Identifying Data Needs (Goal 2) and Locating Data Sources (Goal 3)

DATA NEEDS

In the project's first month, WYSAC conducted an Internet search to identify variables that might be useful to victim service providers. This search identified 6 data types (e.g., crime, judicial) and 31 variables. Through semi-structured interviews, between the second and fifth months of the project, WYSAC shared these variables with project partners (particularly ESVSP who communicated with WYSAC most frequently and consistently) and asked questions to determine if the variables were useful to their programs and if they had access to them. These semi-structured interviews led to the identification of 22 variables unavailable to the victim service providers—a combination of the 31 variables WYSAC presented to generate discussion, modifications to them, and the generation of new variables.

During the fourth to sixth months of the project, WYSAC communicated with the victim service providers to finalize the list of data needs, to identify how the victim service providers would use the data, and to learn their recommendations for improving data access. The final list

of variables represents the data the victim service providers would like to use, but to which they do not have reliable and timely access. Data for which the victim service providers have access are not included on this list nor were they the focus of this project.

DATA SOURCES

When this project started, WYSAC expected data sources to be spread across law enforcement (e.g., across the Bureau of Indian Affairs [BIA], county law enforcement, and the tribal court) and that WYSAC researchers would locate these sources. In discussions with partners, however, WYSAC learned the victim service providers knew what data were collected, by whom, and where they were stored: the problem for victim service providers was in accessing the data, not locating it.

WYSAC researchers organized the needed data into two categories: **collected** and **uncollected**. **Collected** data are systematically collected and stored, but the victim service providers do not have access. **Uncollected** data are data for which there is no expectation of collection and no clearly defined protocols (e.g., time frames, coding instructions) for collection or storage.

DATA ACCESS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING ACCESS

The victim service providers, especially ESVSP, provided details and context about the barriers they experience when attempting to access the collected data. The partnership brainstormed recommendations for improving access to collected data and for filling the data gaps associated with uncollected data.

Findings

Data Needs

The victim service providers identified 22 variables they would find helpful in better serving current victims and developing programs to limit future victimization.[5] Although most of the victim service providers' data needs related to crime and crime-victimization (e.g., *access to and use of Sexual Assault Nurse Examination [SANE] Kits*), they were also interested in other variables (e.g., housing [*the need for immediate shelter*], substance abuse [*substances used by perpetrators*), judicial data [*the number of plea agreements]*, and data involving child welfare [*out-of-home placements*]. Table 1 lists the 22 variables by the 6 data types and depicts how victim service providers will use the data to improve their programs.

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[5] This list only includes variables the victim service providers would like but to which they do not have reliable and timely access. This list does not include variables for which they can access the data.

Table 1: Data Needs of Victim Service Providers on the WRIR

Variable	How Data Will Inform Programs
Victim Services	
Percentage/ number of people who declined advocacy services offered by law enforcement (Wind River Police Department [WRPD]) during initial contact for domestic violence or other crime victimization	Raise community awareness about victim services and how victim service providers can help. Provide training and talking points to law enforcement on victim services.
Reasons people have for seeking advocacy services later, on their own, after originally declining advocacy services offered by WRPD during initial contact for domestic violence or other crime victimization.	Educate the community to dispel misunderstandings about victim services. Educate the community on how victim service providers can be involved. Provide training and talking points to law enforcement on victim services.
Judicial	
Percentage/number of repeat perpetrators	Improve advocacy for victims. Support safe spaces in the community. Create a coordinated multi-agency plan to reduce repeat offenses.
Resolution of cases	
Day/time perpetrators are released from jail	Ensure victim rights are upheld.
Percentage/number of protection orders that are not served	Improve advocacy for victims. Ensure safety of victims.
Reasons protection orders are not served (e.g. no address)	
Time it takes to serve a protection order	Improve advocacy for victims.
Percentage/number of plea agreements out of all violent crime cases	Improve advocacy for victims. Ensure victim rights are upheld.
Original charges when a plea agreement occurs	Improve advocacy for victims. Advocate for just outcomes. Assess crime victimization in the community.
Percentage/number of victims taking an active role in plea agreements	Ensure victim rights are upheld.

Percentage/number of cases dismissed because they have not been brought to trial within 90 days (i.e., right to a speedy trial)	Improve advocacy for victims.
Child Welfare	
Out-of-home placements	Improve advocacy for victims.
Housing	
Percentage/number of crime victims for whom immediate or emergency shelter is not available	Assess community need for shelter of crime victims. Apply for funding to meet the need. Support efforts to create programs that address the need.
Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence	
Percentage/number of perpetrators who use substances/have addiction	
Percentage/number of victims who use substances/ have addiction	Assess community need. Apply for funding to meet the need. Support efforts to create programs that address the need.
Percentage/number of victims who sought treatment for substance use/abuse	
Percentage/number of victims who fear seeking services for substance use (e.g., because they believe they would lose their children)	Provide targeted outreach. Educate about the services and resources that victim service providers offer.
SANE kits	
Number of SANE kits used	Allocate funding.
Percentage/number of prosecutions based on SANE kit outcome	Determine funding needs. Advocate for just outcomes. Improve victim advocacy.
Number of SANE kits needed by victims, but not used (e.g., not nearby, no one trained to administer them)	Assess community need. Apply for funding to meet the need.
Reasons SANE kits were not used	

Data Sources and Data Access

Table 2 identifies the data sources for the 13 variables on which data are collected, and it details the barriers to access.

Table 2: Collected Data Not Reliably Accessible to Victim Service Providers

Variable	Source	Barriers to Access
Judicial		
Percentage/number of repeat perpetrators	Tribal court or prosecutor's office	Data are contained in individual case files and are not aggregated.
Resolution of cases	Tribal court and courts in the surrounding area	Inconsistent notification practices
Day/time perpetrators are released from jail	Jail	No automated system exists. The current system relies on victim service providers delivering a paper request to be notified when a perpetrator is released and victim service providers are not always notified.
Percentage/number of protection orders that have not been served	Tribal court and courts in the surrounding area	Information is not shared with victim service providers unless they are directly involved in the case.
Reasons protection orders are not served (e.g. no address)	Tribal court and courts in the surrounding area	Data are contained in individual case files and not aggregated.
Time it takes to serve a protection order Percentage/number of plea agreements out of all violent crime cases	Tribal court and courts in the surrounding area Prosecutor's office	Information is not shared with victim service providers unless they are directly involved in the case
Original charges when a plea agreement occurs	Prosecutor's office	Data are contained in individual case files and not aggregated. Often the final conviction resulting from the plea

		agreement is only listed, the original charge is difficult to access.
Percentage/number of victims taking an active role in plea agreements	Prosecutor's office or tribal court	Information is not shared with victim service providers unless they are directly involved in the case
Percentage/number of cases dismissed because no trial within 90 days (i.e., right to a speedy trial)	Prosecutor's office	
Child Welfare		
Out-of-home placements	DFS or BIA	DFS does not share information on minors with victim service providers. The data are not required to be reported in the BIA system for every incident.
SANE kits		
Number of SANE kits used	FBI or BIA	No process for FBI or BIA to share this information with victim services unless they are providing services to a victim who has had a SANE kit performed
Percentage/number of prosecutions based on SANE kit outcome	Tribal court, courts in the surrounding area, or FBI	Data are contained in individual case files and not aggregated.

Of the 13 variables collected but inaccessible to the victim service providers, the majority are held within the community. The victim service providers noted that many of these variables were contained in individual case files, but the files were not in systems that allowed querying. The providers also said they were often restricted from accessing data in crime victimization cases unless they were directly involved in the case.

The victim service providers would like to engage with a system that allows for data sharing while still protecting confidential data, such as minor status or details of an ongoing investigation. The providers recommended developing an online tool, similar to ones that already exist to collect, store, and report victimization data (e.g., https://vstracking.com). Multiple agencies, (WRPD, tribal court, jail, and other service providers) could enter relevant data into the system, and authorized users could query the database to access timely and complete data. Victim service providers and the institutions that collect and store the data could

collaboratively institutionalize data sharing practices to facilitate the distribution of crime victimization data. Table 3 lists the 9 variables on which data are not collected and suggests ways in which the data could be collected.

Table 3: Uncollected Data

Variable	Recommendations for Collecting Data
Victim Services	
Percentage/ number of people who declined advocacy services offered by law enforcement (Wind River Police Department [WRPD]) during initial contact for domestic violence or other crime victimization	Work with BIA to change data collection requirements
Reasons people have for seeking advocacy services later, on their own, after originally declining advocacy services offered by WRPD during initial contact for domestic violence or other crime victimization.	Conduct an anonymous survey of victims.
Housing	
Percentage/number of crime victims for whom immediate or emergency shelter is not available	Conduct community assessment of housing for crime victims.
Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence	
Percentage/number of perpetrators who use substances/have addiction	Work with BIA to change data collection requirements.
Percentage/number of victims who use substances/ have addiction Percentage/number of victims who sought treatment for substance use/abuse	Conduct an anonymous survey of victims. Work with treatment providers and tribal court to assess community needs.
Percentage/number of victims who fear seeking services for substance use (e.g. Because they believe they would lose their children)	Conduct an anonymous survey of victims. Gather input from WRPD who has contact with victims who declined services.
SANE kits	
Number of SANE kits needed by victims, but not used (e.g., not nearby, no one trained to administer them) Reasons SANE kits were not used	Work with FBI, BIA, or certified medical personnel to assess needs.

Brainstorming identified ways to fill the data gaps in Table 3. For law enforcement data, victim service providers recommended collaborating with local law enforcement and BIA to develop a plan for collecting the data needed to inform their programs. BIA could add reporting measures (e.g., the number of perpetrators who use substances or have an addiction) to their local data collection efforts.

A community needs assessment could assess the need for housing to shelter crime victims. An anonymous survey of victims of crime could fill other data gaps (e.g., the reasons people do not seek services). Working with others in the community who also serve victims of crime (e.g., FBI, medical personnel, other social service providers) could lead to reciprocity in data sharing.

Using existing tools could also help with data access. The Center for Victim Research (CVR) shared information with the partnership on a statewide automated victim information and notification (SAVIN) program: Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE; https://www.vinelink.com/#state-selection). VINE bills itself as "the nation's most reliable and confidential source for updated custody status and criminal case information" (Empowering Victims of Crime, n.d.). VINE is a victim notification network that allows victims of crime to access timely and reliable information about perpetrators and criminal cases. Registered victims are notified automatically by VINE when an offender has a status or custody change. VINE is limited to participating detention facilities. Victim service providers could have conversations with non-participating detention facilities to advocate for the use of VINE to support victims of crime. If the jail on the WRIR wishes to allow the VINE system to interface with their booking system, the VOCA administrator is supportive of facilitating the relationship so the WRIR jail could become a VINE participating facility. While the Wyoming Division of Victim Services fully funds VINE in Wyoming, outside funding through the Bureau of Justice Assistance could possibly support the development of a SAVIN program should WRIR choose to pursue a different option to fit their needs.

Project Challenges and Lessons Learned

The partnership encountered two significant challenges during the project and a third related challenge.

Challenge 1: The COVID-19 global pandemic began impacting the United States, Wyoming, and the WRIR during the first month of the project.
Lesson Learned: Developing relationships with tribal partners remotely is difficult.

The COVID-19 virus had a disproportionate effect on the Native American community in Wyoming. To put it in perspective, as of October 20th, 2020, the Wyoming Department of Health had reported 7,673 lab-confirmed positive cases in the state and 8% of them were Native

American (Wyoming Department of Health, n.d.). Native Americans, however, account for just under 3% of the Wyoming population (US Census, n.d.).

The emergence of COVID-19 and the public health policies implemented to limit its spread made in-person meetings unrealistic; all project goals, including partnership development, had to be completed remotely. WYSAC tried to mitigate some of the challenges related to remote communication by offering resources (e.g., headsets) to aid in communication. ESVSP requested headsets, which WYSAC provided.

Building a partnership virtually is not ideal--especially when the partners value face-to-face meetings. Although WYSAC has a history of working with partners on the reservation, the relationship with victim service providers is new. Further, asking the victim service providers to focus on identifying data needs when the community is disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 seemed insensitive. Additionally, victim service providers faced new challenges in supporting victims during the pandemic as victimization increased during stay-at-home orders, and many families were challenged by working remotely and educating their children at home. **Recommendation:** Strive to hold in-person meetings when possible. Be aware of other issues confronting community partners; these may take precedence.

Challenge 2: WRC could not participate in the project without an MOU and tribal approval. **Lesson Learned:** Obtaining tribal approval could have removed some of the obstacles in conducting this project.

WYSAC had originally understood that it only needed tribal approval when collecting or requesting data about tribal members. As this project was only identifying data variables and not collecting actual data, WYSAC interpreted this protocol to mean tribal approval was not required. When WYSAC learned WRC was unable to participate without tribal approval, it was too late in the project to begin the process of obtaining that approval. WYSAC learned the importance tribal approval carries, even if it is not mandated. Tribal approval would have allowed one of the original project partners to participate, have helped the VOCA-SAC project gain legitimacy, and have mitigated any concerns about the cultural appropriateness of the project. **Recommendation:** Seek tribal approval of a project, even in cases where it is not mandated.

Challenge 3: Tribal data are often protected, and interested agencies need approval to gain access. **Lesson Learned:** Tribal perspectives should be included in all aspects of research involving the tribes, from identifying data needs to interpreting the data to disseminating findings.

To release data, BIA requires an applicant to submit a Freedom of Information Act request to the Department of the Interior, and the WRIR Tribal Court requires a data-sharing agreement. These safeguarding measures are in place to ensure data protection and respect for tribal sovereignty. Informal discussions with victim service providers on the WRIR during the project highlighted the importance of interpreting tribal data within the tribal context.

Historically, non-tribal entities have used data in ways that have caused them harm. WYSAC realized it could do more to support the research and data capacity on the WRIR. WYSAC, a department within the University of Wyoming, often employs student interns. These students develop research, evaluation, and data analysis skills. In September, WYSAC partnered with the University of Wyoming Native American Education, Research, and Cultural Center and the Native American and Indigenous Studies department to create a paid internship opportunity designed for Native American students to develop their research skills and increase WRIR's capacity to use data.[6] The internship should also help strengthen the relationship between Wyoming SAC's and the WRIR, a primary goal of this project. **Recommendation:** Ensure tribal perspectives are sought when working with tribal data.

Conclusion

Despite challenges, WYSAC and victim service providers on the WRIR identified crime victimization data needs. The group also identified the sources of data, barriers to access, and potential solutions. In the process, this VOCA-SAC project established a new partnership, identified 22 inaccessible crime victimization variables that could inform victim service programs on the WRIR. With timely access to accurate and complete crime victimization data, victim service providers could assess community needs, apply for funding, engage in outreach, provide education, and develop strategies and programming to improve their support of crime victims.

The project team identified barriers to accessing the 13 variables that are currently collected, as well as potential solutions for the future collection of 9 variables that are not collected data. Victim service programs realize they would benefit from the development and institutionalization of protocols for data collection and sharing across agencies within the WRIR. Moving forward, WYSAC will continue to seek opportunities to grow the relationship with victim service providers on the WRIR and have already discussed other projects on which the five organizations could collaborate.

Disseminating Information

The primary product from this project is the comprehensive list of crime victimization variables the victim service providers on the WRIR developed but to which they do not have access. This report, another tool for dissemination, could open a dialogue with other WRIR agencies to develop and institutionalize data-sharing protocols and create opportunities for the collection of new data that, ultimately, will prevent crime; increase support to crime victims; and reduce the incidence of crime.

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[6] To date, three Native American students at the University of Wyoming have applied for the internship

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