

## **LESSONS LEARNED:**

# THE PA SEPTEMBER 11<sup>th</sup> VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Network of Victim Assistance Bucks County, Pennsylvania

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Barbara P. Clark, NOVA Executive Director

## **PREFACE**

I am sure that most of us can recall exactly where we were and what we were doing on the morning of September 11, 2001. I, for one, remember clearly that I was driving to Harrisburg for a meeting at the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) when the announcer interrupted programming to report on the first plane strike in New York City.

At that moment, it was unclear that the United States was under attack; the incident was being described as a commuter plane crash. I certainly had no thoughts that this event would be the beginning of a multi-year undertaking to develop and provide services to Pennsylvania's victims and families directly affected by the terrorist attacks that day. However, as the morning progressed and the events continued to unfold, I began to feel that these events might, in fact, reach Bucks County, home to dozens of New York City commuters, and my agency, Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA). As the comprehensive crime victims' services organization, we would need to find ways to reach out to these commuters and their families and provide the support we would all need to get through the days ahead.

NOVA, which had provided leadership and secured funding to form the Bucks County Crisis Response Team, deployed three teams in the weeks that followed to help the World Trade Center victims and families of the missing access information and crisis services at the Liberty Park Family Assistance Center. With help from other social service agencies and Bucks County government, NOVA initiated and coordinated a county-wide hotline to respond to calls from community members for support and assistance, a service that NOVA operated until the end of the year.

With these initiatives underway within days after the attacks, it was with great trepidation that we accepted a call in late September from PCCD to organize a program to serve the United Flight 93 families who lost loved ones in Somerset, Pennsylvania as well as those state residents directly affected by the attacks in NYC and at the Pentagon. Although we had no real sense of the "who, what, where or how" beyond our experiences with local crime victims, we knew that the program would become a critical resource for those victims and families as they coped with their very public losses.

The following manual presents our experiences in what we hope will serve the victim services community should another program of its type be needed. The victims and families universally showed courage and strength and we are honored and humbled that they let us into their lives. We all learned a tremendous amount from them as well as from the many other individuals and organizations who helped along the way. While every situation presents unique challenges, I believe that sharing what we learned will help other organizations undertake this very important work when and if they receive the call.

Barbara P. Clark, NOVA Executive Director

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In mid-September, 2001, the Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, informed those states directly affected by the terrorist attacks (New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Pennsylvania, California, Massachusetts and Connecticut) that funding would be available to establish assistance programs for September 11<sup>th</sup> victims of those states. The form that these programs would take in the different states would vary based on many factors, including the number of affected residents, the services already available, as in the case of the Pentagon, and the needs of the victims and communities most directly affected. Legislation would define the range of allowable services and different grants would be made available to address the immediate crisis, consequence management, and criminal justice support, should any legal proceedings be held. In all, more than \$1 million would be spent in Pennsylvania to support victim services operations over a four year period.

In Pennsylvania, the Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) subcontracted with the Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA), a comprehensive community based victims' services organization founded in 1974, to develop the state's response. Located in Southeastern Pennsylvania along the border with New Jersey, NOVA serves the 600,000 residents of Bucks County, a county which lost close to two dozen residents in the New York City attacks. Others escaped with injuries, both physical and emotional. Additional World Trade Center and Pentagon victims were identified in neighboring counties easily accessible to NOVA. The families of those victims who died on United Flight 93, which crashed in Somerset, Pennsylvania, lived throughout the country, with concentrations in New Jersey and California; two families lived overseas. The Flight 93 families would pose more logistical challenges to service but they all shared a common bond with the site of the crash, a place many would gather for strength and support and a relatively uncomplicated four hour drive for NOVA staff.

NOVA developed a program that would serve more than 650 victims, family members, proximal residents and first responders in the four years following the attacks. As with any group, needs varied and NOVA's response was to utilize a case management model to ensure that client needs were clearly identified and appropriate services or resources obtained for them. NOVA worked closely with many organizations including the American Red Cross, crime victims' compensation programs in Pennsylvania and New York, Catholic Social Services and the local United Way chapters to advocate for Pennsylvania's victims. Still, it was often a struggle to open doors to the many public events and charitable resources available because of a lack of understanding about the range of residents affected. At the outset, the families of the many Pennsylvania commuters who lost their lives in New York City, the traumatized Somerset residents, the many first responders and clean-up workers and those who lost their jobs and livelihood were not factored into the casualty counts.

Confidentiality of victim information, federal guidelines that would change during the course of the program, the myriad of programs both public and private that would be developed to meet specific needs of specific victims, and the sheer volume of work all posed challenges for the program. Compounding these issues were such factors as the diversity of needs of the victims and families, and the logistical issues of helping them comply with the many requirements to obtain support and services. The vicarious trauma by staff of dealing so closely with people who faced a very public and prolonged period of grief complicated service delivery issues.

While the sheer numbers involved made it sometimes seem overwhelming, NOVA encountered a great deal of compassion, cooperation and energy to resolve issues. The Family Assistance Centers at Pier 94 in New York City and Liberty Park, New Jersey were a testament to the ability of many people to come together quickly to address the immediate concerns of victims and families in the days and weeks following September 11<sup>th</sup>. The conference calls with other states facilitated by the federal Office for Victims of Crime, the cooperation of federal and state victims' services and compensation staff, and the willingness of volunteers and others to give their time, best thinking and support were critical to the success of the program.

As the months passed and the sense of crisis subsided, the program found a rhythm. The anniversaries were physically and emotionally draining as staff helped to coordinate events in Somerset County with local, state and federal officials, making certain that the families had the privacy and support they needed at these difficult times. They would make logistical arrangements and accompany clients to the New York City events, ensuring that Pennsylvania's victims were full participants in the memorial recognitions. At other times, staff would advocate for victims with relief organizations, provide support and comfort when their loved one's remains were identified and returned, link them to legal and financial advisors, and arrange for counseling and support groups. When families wanted to get together in a more casual way, project staff helped organize Family Days with funding from the National Red Cross.

NOVA knows from its work with all victims of crime that people experience grief and healing differently and that the social, emotional and economic needs change over time. With September 11<sup>th</sup> victims, the search for those responsible may continue for a lifetime. Although the project's federal grant ended in September 2005, NOVA continues to serve families with information, support and counseling through private funding and anticipates some continuation of program services for another twelve to eighteen months until appropriate transitions and referrals can be achieved.

#### SECTION I: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND SELF ASSESSMENT

## **VOICES**

One of the first things we recognized was the need to find a program that could hit the ground running.

Carol Lavery, PCCD Office of Victims' Services

Cooperation would be our strength.

Mary Achilles, Former PA Victim Advocate

The capacity to work as a team, bringing all the different relevant perspectives and contacts together, created a synergy that was critical to our efforts.

Pat Walsh, Marketing Consultant, The Walsh Group

As an organization, we were honored to be asked to help in this way but I had many many sleepless nights wondering how we would manage to stretch ourselves and our resources to meet the challenges that lay ahead.

Barbara Clark, NOVA Executive Director

## **PROGRAM EXPERIENCES**

Founded in 1974, Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA) provides a range of services to victims of crime in Bucks County including 24-hour crisis intervention, individual and group counseling, court accompaniment and advocacy, assistance with crime victims' compensation, and case management. On September 11, 2001, NOVA had a staff of 36 full and part-time employees, a budget of \$1.7 million and an annual caseload of approximately 3,500 victims and their significant others. The agency had experienced steady growth in the 1990s and had undertaken a number of special initiatives, including a six-year foundation funded undertaking to promote personal safety training for people with disabilities, the establishment of a county-wide Violence Prevention Task Force to coordinate efforts to reduce violence in our homes and communities, and the formation of local crisis response teams to assist victims and communities to deal with incidents of mass violence.

In the days after the terrorist attacks, NOVA helped the County establish and coordinate a hotline for area residents to obtain support and information. Everyone

seemed to know that as a bedroom community to NYC, Bucks County would suffer losses. The NOVA staff was also convinced that the agency would need to reach out to those victims and their families. As the days passed, NOVA was approached by the state Office of Mental Health to take statewide hotline calls on the Bucks County system through call forwarding; the agency ultimately declined as it still did not have a full picture of what would be required to help local victims. The national crisis response organization called to have our local teams placed on standby; the agency would send three local teams to help staff the Family Assistance Center at Liberty Park, N.J. NOVA completed a survey distributed by PCCD on local efforts to determine what was in place around the state and to help them respond to the federal request that Pennsylvania establish services for the Flight 93 families. Within 10 days of the attacks, NOVA was asked to start a program that would eventually serve more than 1,300 people, span more than four years and bring national attention (or perhaps notoriety) to the organization.

It is fair to say that staff had little time to assess readiness or capability. It was an emotional time and many were seeking meaningful ways to help. Since the agency was already involved in coordinating the hotline, deploying teams to Liberty Park, NJ and reaching out to local victims, it was surely possible to extend efforts to the forty Flight 93 families and those Pennsylvania residents involved in the Pentagon and World Trade Center attacks. Other victim services organizations would no doubt be willing to "loan" staff to help the agency get started and PCCD assured the agency that funding would not be delayed. How could NOVA refuse?

While some of the assumptions that drove the decision to accept the challenge did not work out, NOVA did have some critical pieces in place that helped the agency meet the challenges. These are summarized below as a checklist for both agencies and funders; many of these factors are discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of this document.

#### Board

- Does the board agree to support the undertaking, both as it relates to mission and as it may affect other planned activities?
- Will they get involved in helping to ensure oversight of contributions and help to problem-solve other policies?

#### Personnel

- Does the agency have sufficient staffing to maintain existing services, while diverting resources for hiring and training new personnel?
- Has staffing been stable? Is there longevity? Is there good morale and teamwork? Are any key personnel planning personal or medical leaves? Will staff forego vacations, if necessary?
- Is there consensus to take on the challenge? If there is resistance, is it substantial or coming from critical players? Are staff members willing to do what is necessary, including overtime?
- Are there technology, marketing, legal and other professionals in the community and individuals familiar with the organization and victim services who can step in quickly to provide leadership, technical expertise or serve victims?
- Do you have the personnel or consultant resources to help staff deal with vicarious trauma and perceived inequities in job duties or prestige?

## **Finances**

- Is cash flow strong? Do you have a line of credit? How long can you afford to significantly increase your payroll and other expenses and will your cash take you to that first grant check?
- Do you have an automated accounting system and strong grants management personnel?
- Do you have strong internal controls and policies in place for contributions?
- Has your agency had any problems with past audits (plan to be under close scrutiny from victims, reporters, and the public)? Have you ever had problems managing a grant and meeting requirements and, if so, have they been corrected?

## Space, Equipment and Supplies

- Do you have realistic plans about housing the program? Is space in your building or community at a premium? Can you negotiate month-to-month leases in your area until the contract is signed?
- Are your computers, photocopy machines, office supplies and other equipment sufficient to handle the program start-up needs until you can shop for estimates and secure needed supplies and equipment?

## Community Contacts

- Do you have positive relationships with emergency management, law enforcement, government officials, other service providers and the media? Is your organization perceived as a strong collaborator or team player?
- Do you know people who can open doors for you and help you cut through red tape with these systems?
- Are there resources in your community to help you with marketing, public relations and the media? Does the community generally respect the organization?

## Program Development

• Do you have experience in program development? Is there flexibility to change the way you do things to accommodate the needs of a particular group of victims?

- Do you have written service standards, policies and procedures?
- Do you have a computerized database and established client record-keeping system? What kind of management information reports do you receive regularly? Can you track a separate program?
- Can you adapt your evaluation tools quickly and incorporate client feedback early on?

It would not be true to say that NOVA considered all of these factors but, in retrospect, while it would not have changed the agency's decision, it would have given the staff and management more food for thought and would have helped us to better focus our attention and efforts during program start-up. At times, staff had to improvise or take precious time to solve a preventable problem.

## **FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Good leadership requires a fair assessment of organizational capacity. Do not let emotions cloud sound judgment. Be honest with yourself, the staff and the funder, who may in turn find ways to help strengthen those areas that need it.
- Understand that your program will be under close scrutiny and every blemish will be exposed. It is not fair to anyone, including the victims you want to serve, to have serious public relations problems divert attention from the mission.
- Seek help from those with experience. NOVA found the program serving the victims of the Oklahoma bombing to be quite helpful and got many ideas from the other states involved with September 11<sup>th</sup>. When other issues arose, PCCD was always there to help.
- Understand upfront that you will not make everyone happy all of the time and help staff to understand the same. The victims of such incidents of mass violence are going through an incredibly public and prolonged grief and those closest to them often get the brunt of their anger. This includes you and your staff.

## SECTION II: INITIAL RESPONSE AND OUTREACH

## **VOICES**

If we could not find the people, we decided that we needed to find those they trusted.

Karen Model, NOVA Project Director

Outreach needs to be ongoing, because people's needs are different and we all proceed at different paces. I did not fall apart until a year later!

Program Client

We were barraged by the media and inundated with offers of help from family, neighbors, church groups and others in those first few weeks. It was hard to sort out what was real and what we needed. Who was NOVA? How did we know they were legitimate?

Program Client

#### PROGRAM EXPERIENCES

#### Who Are the Victims?

Beginning a few days after the events of September 11, 2001, the staff at NOVA, with the help of obituaries and contacts in the area, had identified and begun serving some of those directly affected by the attacks from Bucks and the surrounding counties, all of which are bedroom communities for the many commuters who work in New York City. Additionally, as the *single* victim services organization for the criminal disaster in Pennsylvania, NOVA initiated early contact with the families of the victims of United Flight 93. These families, whose names were made available by the airlines, came from different parts of the country and the world. So began the challenge of developing a meaningful program for a diverse group of individuals, many of whom would qualify for one type of service or program and not for another.

Although NOVA had a caseload from the very first day, the agency clearly recognized the need to initiate a massive, effective and efficient outreach campaign in order to identify those eligible and in need of services. While the names of those on

Flight 93 were provided to NOVA, one of the major barriers the organization confronted was the inability to get a list of the Pennsylvania victims and survivors of the attacks in New York and Virginia. Even as lists were being developed based on information from a variety of sources and official registration procedures, this information was not available to NOVA, necessitating the expenditure of thousands of dollars and many months in casting as wide a net as possible to ensure that all victims became aware of the resources and services available to them. The list of victims, while available in New York to the American Red Cross, could not be shared with NOVA as confidentiality policies did not allow it. Therefore, as services began for those initially identified, efforts on public awareness of the services available along with efforts at identifying and locating victims became a major focus.

Thinking that perhaps the internet was an effective medium (being available 24/7 was an important consideration), a website was set up within three days of project start-up. While this yielded some clients and became a critical means of communicating time sensitive materials to those on the caseload, it was probably more effective as a means of establishing credibility and enabling volunteers and funders to find NOVA. More effective outreach activities included press releases, regular advertisements in the papers, outreach to area legislators, networking with churches, non-profits and relief organizations, and public service announcements on television and radio, utilizing the donated time of Broadway and Hollywood personalities to publicize the program.

The fact that NOVA was attempting to reach victims residing in bedroom communities to New York City meant that the public transportation systems were an important avenue for outreach efforts. As these efforts, which included flyers and signs on buses and trains, started to produce results, it was evident that this needed to continue for much longer than the first few weeks or months. However, competition for donated space became an issue as television and radio stations set limits on donated space, further increasing outreach expenses.

Beginning with broad general outreach, NOVA continued 'targeted outreach,' not believing that the program had reached everyone simply because staff were busy. If staff couldn't find the people, staff tried to find those they trusted. This is one of the advantages of a community agency familiar with the local geography and demographics.

NOVA also gave a consistent message which contributed to the organization's credibility as the reliable source of information. Additionally, although many had no prior experience with NOVA's services, once they reached a staff member, the victims emphatically reported that NOVA's flexibility was very appealing. Some of the reasons for NOVA's appeal and credibility will become evident in the next section of this chapter.

Finally, outreach in different forms was driven by the varied and sometimes changing eligibility requirements of the different programs. Some government and relief programs restricted eligibility to spouses, parents and children while other programs included grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings. Same sex partners, divorced spouses, and step-relationships were other nuances that had to be addressed. Where was the survivor when the attacks occurred and what did they see? Were there medically treated injuries? Could first responders or clean-up workers receive benefits? What about all those who lost jobs? NOVA maintained frequent contact with the different programs to understand eligibility and ensure that as many individuals as possible who might benefit from services were identified.

#### **Initial Contacts**

Establishing itself as a legitimate organization with credibility was a task that the NOVA staff approached with a great deal of sensitivity and respect for individuals' privacy and ability to make choices, factors that came from the many years of victim service experience. Publicizing the Governor's support by lending his picture and contacts to the effort was critical in establishing credibility. Staff, upon identifying victims, gave them the service information, referred them to their website and encouraged them to 'check the program out' before calling. Some families, with great relief upon being contacted, immediately launched into their situations and needs while others called back at a later date. The public service announcements, aired in conjunction with the launch of the website, also identified the organization and its services.

Based on NOVA's many years of experience in the victim services field as well as a deep understanding of the impact of trauma, the staff paid attention to innumerable

details that ultimately served to enhance interactions with victims. Recognizing that many family members did not want to leave their home in the initial weeks, the case managers always ensured that appointments were made in advance for home visits; that it was at a time convenient for the families; and that a support person could be present when the family desired it. When the need to travel to the Pier 94 and Liberty Park Family Assistance Centers arose, centers established to help centralize information dissemination and relief efforts, staff arranged for transportation and provided support and accompaniment. Pier 94 in New York was established through the Mayor's office and Liberty Park in New Jersey was established through the Attorney General's Office. The family assistance centers were staffed with non-profit and government agencies so that victims could access the most available resources in a centralized location. Travel to ground Zero for site visits and memorial services where clients would receive an urn and a flag were among the services provided. Advocates provided support to victims as one or all of these services were accessed.

In addition to the crisis support provided by the program staff, much of the early assistance involved filing enormous amounts of paperwork. Attention to details like locating a copying service nearby, and ahead of time, served the staff well. They made sure that they did not file or take the chance of losing any original documents.

## **Establishing Credibility**

This was very important in every effort NOVA made, from contacting families to establishing itself as the credible source of information. Not only did families have many people who came in and out of their lives during the first several months, they had no way of verifying the legitimacy of the people who contacted them at this very vulnerable time in their lives.

The credibility of the website was linked to the credibility of the organization. The consultant's belief was that "websites are a verifier." While they don't create trust, they verify it. In order to establish the credibility of the site as an official source of information and as Pennsylvania's headquarters for the same, every fact was double and triple checked. The site was and continues to be updated regularly as information becomes available and as the eligibility rules for victims change, as indeed they did at the

federal and state levels and with many of the relief organizations.

The prominent display of the Governor's support for the services as well as the public service announcements linking the two added to the positive public perception of the organization. The media also played an important role in establishing the credibility of the organization, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter VI.

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- As an organization prepares to serve victims of a mass criminal disaster, staff should be prepared to expend significant initial resources in identifying victims unless interorganizational policies for the sharing of client information change. The process of identification may need to continue over a period of months and even years and will need to involve a variety of activities. Establishing standing relationships with diverse media to advertise hotline numbers, victim assistance services and other information will increase the effectiveness of these efforts.
- If funding permits, utilize marketing, public relations, media and website consultants. They have both expertise and contacts which are critical.
- Victim service organizations should lay the groundwork for a collaborative response by developing ongoing relationships with other community agencies and disaster preparedness organizations both locally and at the state level These relationships can assist the process of identification of clients and help in establishing credibility when others working with families recognize and support the work of the victim service organization.
- Be prepared to take an active, creative approach to reaching victims. Depending upon the nature and location of the disaster, victim identification will need a proactive approach and potentially unconventional efforts. By all means, enlist the funding organization to assist in promoting credibility by utilizing pictures and endorsements of government officials.
- Flexibility is essential. Be prepared to change outreach procedures and develop tools as you proceed. This is a typical part of disaster response.

## **SECTION III: SERVICES**

## **VOICES**

Swiftness of decision making determines timeliness of services.

Mary Achilles, Former PA Victim Advocate

For a while, a family may have many caseworkers--from an airline, from an employer, from a federal agency...and they all have time limits on their involvement. But victim services is there for the long haul!

Susan Bizon, NOVA Project Coordinator

Think globally when planning, so that services can be tailored to meet the needs of families while conforming to funding requirements.

Lori Sywensky, PCCD Office of Victims' Services

It is important to know that there are people who genuinely care, for whom it is not just a job.

Program Client

## **PROGRAM EXPERIENCES**

#### **Overview of Guidelines**

During a mass criminal disaster, saving lives and ensuring citizens safety are the preeminent considerations. Subsequently, the response shifts to treating the effects of violence as well as the variety of immediate, short and long term need for services. As planning for services commenced for September 11<sup>th</sup> victims, the importance of experienced staff with an understanding of the needs of victims in the aftermath of a criminal disaster was underscored for NOVA. While disaster and community specific issues will be identified over time, the need to regain some control over one's situation through information begins immediately. Many victims emphasized how critical this was from the beginning and as events unfolded over the ensuing months and years.

Even as NOVA considered the needs of the victims and the services that would most appropriately match them, it was important to keep in mind the restrictions and guidelines associated with the funding (See Federal Register, Part III, DOJ, OVC: Guidelines for the Anti-terrorism and Emergency Assistance Program for Terrorism and

Mass Violence Crimes: Notice; January 2002). In the case of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the federal guidelines changed over time as legislation and regulations were established and interpreted. Services permitted under the initial response were not necessarily covered under subsequent grants, thus requiring Pennsylvania and NOVA to fund some activities separately.

Within days of the attacks, the Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime made funds available to states directly affected by the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. These funds could be provided through an augmentation process to agencies and organizations that met Victim of Crime Act eligibility criteria; specifically, public agencies and private nonprofit organizations that provided services to victims of crime and used volunteers in their operations. Under guidelines for the Crime Victim Compensation Program, the Crime Victim Assistance Program and the Anti-terrorism and Emergency Assistance Program for Victims of Terrorism and Mass Violence Program, funding recipients were able to use grants to assist victims with:

- **Crisis Response**: To provide resources to help victims rebuild adaptive capacities, decrease stressors, and reduce symptoms of trauma immediately following the terrorism or mass violence event.
- **Consequence Management**: To provide supplemental resources to help victims adapt to the trauma event and restore victims' sense of equilibrium.
- Crime Victim Compensation: To provide supplemental funding to a state crime victim compensation program that reimburses victims for out-of-pocket expenses related to their victimization in cases of terrorism or mass violence occurring within the United States. Grant funds may be used to pay claims to victims for costs that include, but are not limited to, medical and mental health counseling, funeral and burial costs, and lost wages.

Although supplemental awards to state and nonprofit organizations that came from funds made available under the Department of Defense Appropriations Act were governed by VOCA's general requirements, the scope of assistance was limited to "counseling." OVC identified four types of "counseling" for which these funds could be used:

• **Crisis Counseling**: The application of individual and group treatment procedures which are designed to ease the mental and emotional crisis and their subsequent

psychological and behavioral conditions resulting from a major disaster or its aftermath.

- **Crisis Intervention**: Counseling a victim to examine the impact of the terrorism incident on the victim, identifying needs resulting from the crime, developing a plan of services and resources required to respond to the victim's needs, and assisting the victim in implementing the plan.
- Mental Health Counseling and Care: The assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of an individual's mental and emotional functioning by a person or under the supervision of a person who meets state standards to provide these services.
- **Peer Support**: Creating opportunities for victims to meet other crime victims to provide self-help, information, and peer and social support.

The following presents the types of specific services that the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program provided to victims and families and some of NOVA's experiences with them.

#### Hotline

Recognizing the immediate need for a central information source as well as a supportive response to the traumatizing events experienced by victims and their loved ones, one of NOVA's first services was a national 1-800 number for Pennsylvania's victims of September 11<sup>th</sup> to utilize. Due to the fact that NOVA was providing services to not only residents in state, but also those whose family members died on Flight 93, there was a need for the hotline to be utilized by people from various parts of the country. The hotline was staffed by the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program staff during business hours, and after business hours, it was transferred to an answering service. The staff rotated after-hours coverage for any calls that were of a crisis nature. To facilitate communication, the program utilized beepers for emergency situations and cell phones so staff could not only be contacted by the office but could call clients wherever they were in Pennsylvania or surrounding states.

#### **Crisis Intervention**

The first grant that was approved covered funding for crisis response and the establishment of a hotline. This was at the stage where there was some latitude, and

therefore covered all the activities that went into the intensive outreach efforts required for identifying the victims, establishing a separate hotline, maintaining contact with the private organizations and state counterparts in New York, staying current about information and resources as they were developed daily, and collaborating with the other disaster response organizations serving the clients, to mention a few. Initially, services were limited to family members of the deceased and direct victims of the terrorist attacks. Eventually the program was able to expand services to include first responders and employees who lost their jobs.

Crisis response also involved helping victims and families with the ongoing issues experienced in the ensuing years. Anniversary events, attendance at memorials, media documentaries, and the recovery of remains were all events that could trigger a crisis reaction from clients. Therefore, the staff not only had to ensure coverage for the hotline, but had to have procedures in place whereby they could be available for clients when crises arose in the months and years that followed.

## **Case Management**

Case management was a primary activity of the staff of the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program. In addition to crisis response, the staff continually assessed client needs and helped individuals establish a plan to meet those needs and concerns. For some, financial support, educational opportunities and job training were primary concerns while for others, childcare and housing may have been issues. For almost all of the victims, emotional well-being was an issue. With the varied needs, staff helped to identify and link clients to resources or directly created programs to address victim concerns.

As direct financial assistance programs became available for the victims of September 11<sup>th</sup>, staff not only notified and assessed victims for eligibility but also assisted clients with completing documentation and submitting applications. As noted above, some of the victims were dealing with employment concerns, including eligibility for workman's compensation, securing social security disability or job retraining. In these instances, staff assisted them with not only completing applications, but in advocating on behalf of their clients with governmental and private entities. As relationships were built with clients and further needs identified, staff would assist in

helping clients deal with housing issues, college tuition payments, mental health needs and admission to drug and alcohol programs.

## **Support Groups**

As the immediate needs of the victims were addressed, the staff providing services began organizing support groups in the communities. The first support group was formed by the sixth week after the disaster. Consulting with the staff at the victim assistance program in Oklahoma City, which had prior experience in dealing with a mass terroristic homicide, NOVA learned that one of the biggest issues identified was the need for support groups. This was found to be an effective way to address the emotional and psychological needs of victims who wanted to talk with others who would understand the impact on their lives. Upon making inquiries, the victims in Bucks County echoed these needs to the NOVA staff. In collaboration with the local United Way organization as well as an area hospital that donated a quiet and secluded space, NOVA began the first support group in Bucks County in early November, 2001. This was the first time that families had gathered as a group and it was poignant coming just before the first major family holiday after the attacks. "This will be the saddest Thanksgiving ever," said one of the members of the group. NOVA was careful to recognize that the group would be well served by a team of two counselors and therefore brought in an additional counselor with experience in the treatment of trauma to help co-facilitate the group.

This group was so successful and so clearly met an immediate need for families that NOVA established groups in both Monroe and Philadelphia Counties in collaboration with Red Cross and the Southeastern Pennsylvania United Way. Four years later, all of the three groups continue to meet.

## Victims' Compensation and Other Financial Assistance

The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> have lead to many lessons including the difficulty in addressing the needs of victims who live in a different state from the one in which the criminal event took place. As mentioned earlier, many victims at the World Trade Center lived in Pennsylvania while most of the passengers on Flight 93 came from other states (and a few other countries). Even some of the victims of the Pentagon attack had

families in Pennsylvania. Understanding that crime victims' compensation is governed by the state in which the crime took place and coordinating with all of the states involved was no small matter, requiring enormous information gathering and coordination. PCCD assisted NOVA in identifying individuals in New York responsible for the Pennsylvania victims making the exchange of information much more productive. It was also possible to get the additional names of victims who had registered in New York, facilitating outreach efforts. As crime victims' compensation became available in states where the clients resided through legislative action (i.e., California, Massachusetts, and New Jersey), the staff assisted clients with filing claims through the appropriate state entities.

Victims who chose to visit the Family Assistance Centers in New York or New Jersey were required to obtain a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) number before they could access needed assistance programs at the sites. This number is given to victims of disasters after a brief application process and serves as a type of "verifier" for other philanthropic organizations as well as for FEMA. Because New York and New Jersey were declared disaster areas, victims who resided within those states had no difficulty obtaining a number and accessing needed financial assistance and other services, including FEMA's own programs, such as mortgage assistance. However, as Pennsylvania did not seek a disaster designation, Pennsylvania's victims initially had difficulty obtaining a FEMA number until NOVA's September 11<sup>th</sup> staff worked through the issue with authorities. This problem caused victims both confusion and frustration and, in some cases, a delay in accessing needed services.

The task of tracking philanthropic and other financial assistance programs for victims required constant monitoring. NOVA staff undertook daily internet searches to identify resources and to inquire about the registration and eligibility requirements for each. For a period of time, one staff member devoted all her time to this responsibility. NOVA contacted clients either through mass mailings, when appropriate, or through individual phone calls when the registration deadlines were short or the eligibility limited. Over time, the staff developed a checklist of funds and paperwork requirements to ensure that applications were submitted in a timely fashion.

Despite these efforts, pitfalls remained. As often happens with incidents that lead to large outpourings of charitable dollars, a wide variety of organizations established

funds. Each group had its own eligibility requirements and that necessitated a careful review of a variety of factors, such as the victim's employment situation, family and financial status, residence, ethnic background or number and ages of children, to name a few. Some were one-time only funds and others, such as those developed in cooperation with the Red Cross or the United Way, were gifts for a year, with payments made every three months. When victims got together for support groups, they would often compare notes and could not understand why one person received a certain amount or type of support while another received a different amount or nothing at all. This can and did lead to some serious difficulties that NOVA had to address while still being sensitive to the confidentiality of the individuals involved.

As noted earlier, staff worked with clients to apply for workman's compensation funding and social security disability benefits. In addition, particularly during the early months of the project, staff worked with clients on issues related to payment of mortgages and rent. The staff contacted mortgage companies to ensure them that their clients would be receiving various funds but might need time to pay their mortgages or rent until the funding began. Staff worked with FEMA on mortgage and rental issues because their funding was available to anyone affected by September 11<sup>th</sup> (not only families but also the injured victims and relief workers). The National and Pennsylvania Boards of Realtors, recognizing that families who lost wage earners may not be able to maintain their homes by continuing to make mortgage payments, made assistance available to those who qualified, and staff worked closely with clients on applying for these funds.

#### Memorials

As NOVA became more successful in making the September 11<sup>th</sup> program well known across the state over the first six months, other organizations started contacting NOVA about events such as memorials, services, and family events. NOVA organized group trips to the events and provided accompaniment and crisis intervention to victims and families during the events. Assisting families with learning about and attending memorial services or other family events was not explicitly detailed in the services covered by the federal grant but is an example of the importance of adapting to the

requests and wishes identified by victims as events unfold. In this instance, it was extremely important for families to be supported through the events associated with the disaster such as memorials services, the distribution of symbolic urns, visits to the sites of the disaster and numerous other events organized by community groups to honor the deceased and their families. Recognizing the importance of support in the form of accompaniment and assistance with the logistics of the events, NOVA supplemented funding with other sources, such as state and foundation grants, to make these activities possible.

## **Other Family Events**

NOVA assisted in the families' participation at information forums and private family meetings, most of which were at the local level. They held workshops on a variety of topics including financial assistance programs and legal resources available. These included information sessions with Special Master Kenneth Feinberg that would help victims understand the federal victims' compensation program and the implications in making application. Staff organized meetings with community groups that had set up programs for specific populations, such as the United Way, and informational forums on career and educational opportunities, such as Career Link. Staff facilitated linkages and meetings for families with volunteer financial planners to assist them in looking at long-term issues related to changes in incomes.

NOVA, in collaboration with the American Red Cross, organized 'Health and Wellness' events in Bucks, Philadelphia and Monroe Counties at which families had access to numerous stress reduction and alternative therapy resources. This was yet another opportunity for families to get direct support and alternatives for coping and to connect with other family members who were dealing with similar losses.

#### Advocacy

While individual and systems advocacy are always a part of victim services, it was especially critical for this program. From the earliest days, Pennsylvania victims were often forgotten. The lack of recognition left many area victims scrambling for tickets to WTC memorial services. The distribution of symbolic urns to families who lost

loved ones in NYC nearly omitted Pennsylvanians from the count. The initial response from Special Master Feinberg to Pennsylvania's invitation to hold an information session on the federal compensation program was that there were no Pennsylvania victims. At least one major charitable foundation established to aid WTC victims with funds from rock musician concerts restricted distribution to New York's victims of September 11<sup>th</sup>. The issue with the FEMA numbers described previously was yet another example of the problems encountered by Pennsylvania victims. Many of these problems were exacerbated for the Flight 93 families, who were in many cases even more isolated and disconnected.

Program staff was called upon to advocate at the highest levels to eliminate the obstacles faced by Pennsylvania's victims. In some cases, staff was successful in changing views and systems while in others, barriers remained. It would be fair to say that advocacy was a part of almost all activities and the service numbers do not do it justice.

On a final note about services, the terrorist attacks were both a challenge and a call to action for those people responsible for the development and provision of services. In planning and implementing services for the victims of the events of that day, it was critical that services and programs be framed holistically, addressing the multi-faceted dimensions of recovery from traumatic events. It was also critical to be comfortable with the important role that advocacy played in getting things done.

#### FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Be prepared to complement federal funding with other sources in order to meet the unexpected or ineligible but important service needs that may arise in the aftermath of a disaster.
- While confidentiality is critical to victim services, it was often a barrier to effective service delivery. Efforts need to continue to try and resolve this issue across agency lines to ensure that victims receive all the information and services to which they are entitled. Releases may be a possible solution if a more centralized database cannot be achieved.
- Early on, it is important to designate someone centrally (local, state or national level, but central) to be responsible for determining what financial assistance programs are available, how they may be accessed and any eligibility requirements. This will expedite

the coordination as well as dissemination of information to all of those involved in assisting victims. Such a central clearinghouse would help to avoid multiple organizations from undertaking the same work.

- Begin developing collaborative relationships with other organizations serving victims before a crisis occurs. This will help to avoid the issues of territoriality that sometimes arise, may facilitate more sharing of information, cut down on duplication of effort, and reduce victim confusion over helper roles.
- Start working with victim service counterparts in other states as early as possible. Do this in collaboration with your state agency, which can assist in identifying key staff and opening doors that might otherwise remain shut.
- If the event affects a large number of residents, attempt to get the Governor's support to secure a FEMA disaster designation. This will enable residents to apply for FEMA-sponsored assistance programs and services.
- Be flexible and think creatively. Home visits were not a normal part of NOVA's services but because this worked for the families, many of whom felt vulnerable in the public eye, it made sense. It also allowed for them to share with their case managers those parts of their lives most intimately linked to their loved ones.
- Consider social and cultural differences when developing programs. Be sensitive to the different ways that culture affects such issues as grieving, reaching out for help, sharing personal information or making decisions.

## **SECTION IV: STAFFING**

## **VOICES**

I valued the case managers for their compassion and total willingness to "be there" for us for the long haul.

Program Client

I think that I probably underestimated the impact that this grant would have on the workload of current staff. While funding was not the issue, it was hard to segregate all of the little tasks. Should we have hired a part-time bookkeeper for the grant? Probably. But where do you draw the line? The secretary who handles grant filing, agency staff schedules, and purchasing had extra work as well with the additional staff and contracts. While we hired a secretary for the project, some functions were integrated into other positions and it made no sense to keep them separate. But then you have to ask, "How much is too much?"

Barbara Clark, NOVA Executive Director

It is critical to have a person heading up the program who is able to work with politicians, clients, social service providers, government officials...a person who can cut through red tape and yet not alienate those in a position to open doors. The person has to have initiative, tact, perseverance and a strong sense of purpose to be effective.

Karen Kern, NOVA Board President

#### **PROGRAM EXPERIENCES**

#### **Direct Services Personnel**

Very early in the project, NOVA made the decision to hire three case managers on a "temporary" 3-12 month basis as the State received approval for the first grant. While the total caseload was not known at that point, the agency did know that at a minimum, the program would be dealing with the families of 40 victims on Flight 93 as well as those Pennsylvania victims and families affected by the attacks in NYC and Virginia, many of whom were slowly being identified by media outlets throughout the state. The agency expected outreach and crisis counseling to be intensive during this period. Once the total universe of people affected was identified, the managers felt that the agency could either increase or decrease staffing accordingly.

During start-up, the agency tried to contract with area victim service agencies for

trained advocates on a temporary basis but these efforts were unsuccessful for a variety of reasons, including the almost routine understaffing in victim services as caseloads grow and funding does not keep pace. Two of NOVA's current staff members applied for the positions and after considerable internal discussion about the effects this might have on NOVA's ongoing court program, which had a Coordinator and three advocates, the employees transferred into the program. Concurrently, NOVA placed advertisements in area papers to fill the remaining September 11<sup>th</sup> position as well as those agency positions vacated by the newly transferred advocates. The background and experience of the advocates served the project well, as NOVA did not need to devote time to training and the advocates understood and were able to address the crisis needs of the victims immediately upon contact. They also understood how to advocate with systems, which was especially critical in the initial phases of the project.

At its highest staffing, the program employed four Case Managers, a Coordinator who also maintained a caseload, a Project Director and an Administrative Assistant. Caseloads fluctuated depending on the needs of families but all families were assigned to a primary case manager. Through attrition, NOVA was able to adjust to the changing needs of victims and families but had to lay off three employees (two Case Managers and one Administrative Assistant) at the expiration of the federal grant. NOVA will use using private funding for at least 18 months to support one position to provide case management to those families who need continued assistance beyond the termination of public support. The agency also will need to adapt should any legal proceedings emerge, as some families may need support and assistance to attend trials or sentencing hearings.

#### **Management, Administrative and Financial Personnel**

NOVA hired a Project Director within a month of receiving the grant approval. An attorney by profession, the Project Director had been affiliated with NOVA, knew its programs and was interested in public service work. She initially supervised the case managers and provided advocacy and outreach with other systems. Her position evolved over time and her day-to-day supervisory responsibilities were transferred to a newly created Coordinator position filled by one of the experienced Case Managers. She helped develop paperwork systems, train and supervise staff, and ensure quality services and

manageable caseloads.

A part-time Secretary was initially assigned to the project and the fiscal and grants management was assumed by the agency's Director of Finance and Administration. Eventually, as other programs grew, the agency hired a part-time Bookkeeper, but, with integrated functions, the agency allocated these personnel expenses across all grants. Similarly, as the September 11<sup>th</sup> project matured and the agency brought the website updates in-house, the program hired a full time Administrative Assistant to handle routine secretarial duties, website maintenance and internet resource development. This latter function was important as so many philanthropic programs were developed for September 11<sup>th</sup> victims and no one agency or entity served as a clearinghouse. Hence, staff found themselves needing to do their own search for programs that might meet the unique needs of a particular victim or family.

As NOVA chose to integrate the program into agency operations, the Executive Director, Associate Director, Office Manager, Statistical Clerk, Receptionist and others picked up additional program related duties.

## **Volunteer Support**

NOVA utilized a limited number of volunteers who staff knew had worked with victims in crisis to help with such issues as transportation, accompaniment to family assistance centers and support at memorial events. While the agency had many offers of assistance from community members and volunteers, staff did not feel at the time that it wanted to put its energies into the training and management of volunteers and found other resources for them to pursue. Had NOVA had more difficulty staffing the project, management may have made a different decision although training and confidentiality would have been issues to address. Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, the state and local emergency management programs have trained crisis responders, who may serve as a source of volunteers for defined functions.

#### **Consultants**

Although covered in other sections, such as Technology and Media Relations, consultants can play an important role in any project of this nature. Beyond helping to

address such needs as website design, media outreach, and brochure development, NOVA utilized a counseling consultant to debrief staff during the first 18 months of the project. Accompanying victims to memorials, family assistance centers, and Ground Zero as well as making frequent home visits all had its toll on the Case Managers. Similar to the consultant NOVA utilizes for its counselors and other direct services workers, NOVA provided staff with the opportunity to address their own feelings and reduce the likelihood of vicarious trauma and burnout.

NOVA also contracted with consultants, found through networking with local victim services and mental health organizations, to run support groups for victims. With the geographic spread, it would have been very difficult to hire counselors on staff to serve the clients. While many were able to access private therapists through such funding as victims' compensation, health insurance, the Red Cross and other funders, NOVA was in the best position to help form groups where clusters of victims lived.

## **Equity Issues**

Early in the project, as money became available, issues of space, supplies such as beepers and mobile telephones, and pay needed to be addressed. While it would have enhanced recruitment, the agency felt strongly that it needed to create a salary range and working conditions that were comparable to other similar positions in the agency. As managers, it became critical to analyze needs carefully and maintain equity. The response to September 11<sup>th</sup> was the same within the organization as it was outside – everyone wanted to know what they could do to help. For those working with the County's victims of homicide and rape, it was critical that the agency recognize the importance of all work.

As the initial crisis passed, NOVA needed to address the feelings that eventually developed among many in the field, including staff and clients, that September 11<sup>th</sup> victims were somehow more special than other victims of crime. Faced with huge financial awards, philanthropic contributions and public sympathy, it was important to provide opportunities for the entire staff to discuss these equity issues openly and honestly.

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- As an organization ramps up the project, seek to hire at least one or two experienced Case Managers, even if just temporarily, who can hit the ground running. If the resources are unavailable internally, contact other social service providers who may have advocates, victim service professionals or case managers (i.e., Catholic Social Services, Family Services, other area victim service providers, etc.) available to hire or "borrow." While you can concurrently advertise and put together a training for new employees once some basic services are in place, a totally inexperienced staff will have difficulty meeting the initial start-up demands which are emotionally intense and require an understanding of victim response, crisis needs and systems intervention.
- Be prepared for offers of help and be clear about what role volunteers can play in the project. NOVA had volunteers help to drive victims to counseling, and other victim services colleagues scoured the newspapers for information on victims to help NOVA with outreach. However, because of confidentiality and management issues, the agency referred many to other organizations who had specific tasks for volunteers, such as food collections for those displaced by the events.
- The case management model is one that seems to work well for victims and their families. Many people come into and go out of victims' lives during the first several months, including crisis responders, employer benefits personnel, Red Cross and other family assistance workers, and representatives from law enforcement. An assigned case manager from victim services, who knows the situation and can help families assess needs and access services over the long haul, is important.
- Be sure to have someone on staff or consider hiring a consultant who understands program development and can create or adapt existing policies, procedures, documentation standards and the like into the program's operations. These internal, organizational functions like daily activity logs, client records, statistical forms and the like are critical and may not receive the attention they need during project start-up, when staff are operating in the crisis mode. However, it will save time, money and staff sanity when that first report is due if you have these in place.
- Be cognizant of the needs of all staff in the organization and pay special attention to equity issues. The program may be funded for several years and you will have to live with the early decisions.
- *Don't feel you have to reinvent the wheel adapt what is available.*
- As the program may be time-limited, it is advisable to discuss increasing the unemployment contributions during the life of the project with the organization's carrier. This may help reduce or eliminate the agency's liability should it have to lay off staff when all funding terminates.

## SECTION V: DOCUMENTATION AND REPORTING

## **VOICES**

We know that everybody needs their paperwork, but for Pete's sake, figure out how to get it together instead of harassing us.

Program Client

The fact they were able to do home visits was awesome. It made my life so much easier because I didn't have to cart around every piece of paper everyone wanted!

Program Client

All of the relief and entitlement programs seemed to have similar paperwork needs but different forms. It made it difficult for clients as well as the case managers to sort through it all.

Susan Bizon, NOVA Project Coordinator

## **PROGRAM EXPERIENCES**

#### **General Documentation and Data System**

"If it isn't documented, it didn't happen" is the well known adage of social services programs. However, in the midst of a crisis situation such as September 11<sup>th</sup>, when an agency is concentrating on quickly developing and providing services, one may be an inclined to consider documentation of cases a lower priority than service provision. As NOVA learned, however, documentation is essential from the earliest inception of a program. Funders will want accurate information from the moment services are provided. Yet, because many of the funders are uncertain initially as to what data they will want from programs, it is also important that the documentation procedures be structured in such a way that they can be easily adjusted to meet funder demands.

Documentation of program services generally includes client forms and files, the gathering and reporting of statistics, progress reports to funders, and obtaining client feedback and input into the evaluation of the program. NOVA had the advantage of providing services for over 25 years for a number of funding sources and treated the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program as another project. The agency adapted its client record forms (intake, progress notes and other similar forms) and incorporated the program's statistics, with some minor modifications in types of services provided, into its overall database system. In this way, the agency did not have to develop a completely new system of

documentation and data collection when the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program began. On the other hand, the program did present some challenges in the realm of documentation and statistics that are worthy of note.

#### **Client Files/Forms**

As much as possible, NOVA utilized forms and procedures for documentation that were utilized by the other services in the agency. The NOVA initial intake forms, with all the demographic and case information data, were modified slightly to encompass terrorism as a crime, and specific coding for services was added to the regular NOVA database for documentation and tracking purposes.

Client files were maintained in color coded folders that specified the status of the client and the location of the incident (i.e., injured victims from the World Trade Centers, rescue workers, family members of deceased, etc.). In this way, it was easy for staff to quickly identify which client base would be eligible for which funding source (for example, some funding was only available to injured workers, so their files could be quickly selected for notification purposes). Because the program was initially located in separate quarters from the agency, the client files were located in locked cabinets within the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> department for easy access to client information rather than in the central record room for NOVA. With all of the varied documentation needed by clients to access relief and other funds, the project maintained copies of all pertinent paperwork for financial benefits in these files. This practice helped to relieve some of the anxiety the clients experienced during this very emotional time and eliminated the necessity to repeatedly produce documents.

In order to organize the number of financial opportunities available to September 11<sup>th</sup> clients and monitor the status of applications, the project maintained check lists of the various financial assistance sources available to clients, along with eligibility requirements. These lists were maintained in the client file and when an application was submitted, it was checked off and documented. If the funds were then received by the client, the amount would be documented on the list along with the date of distribution. This helped clients and advocates keep track of funds they had received and which ones were still outstanding.

Monthly case reviews were held to update all staff on cases, including the status of financial assistance applications and other issues which clients may have experienced. Documentation within the case files was important to help other staff understand the status of the case when the advocate assigned was not in the office and the client contacted the program regarding a need.

## Reports

Reports were required by the federal and state funding sources every six months. These reports included a written account of activities, financial reports and statistics. The tracking of the data for the statistics was provided by the activity logs advocates would complete daily. The time spent with each client and a code describing the type of service would be documented and turned in at the end of the week. This data was then entered into the NOVA database system of client activity. It is important to note that although the majority of the information requested by the funders remained the same, there were instances where either different or increased information was requested, and report forms would need to be altered. Therefore flexibility of reporting the data was important.

It became clear early on in the project that the client data from the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program would need to have a report separate from other NOVA client activities. Because of the notoriety of the event, NOVA would often get phone calls from funders, the media, and other collaborative organizations such as the Red Cross, asking for updated client statistics. Having a separate report for the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program allowed easy access to specific client and programmatic numbers. In addition, some of the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program activities would greatly inflate NOVA's total agency statistics, such as during the first anniversary event activities, when NOVA staff provided crisis counseling and support to hundreds of family members.

#### **Evaluation/Client Feedback**

As with other programs and services at NOVA, the agency gathered information from the clients of the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program about program operations and services. This information would help strengthen program operations, identify areas that needed development and enable the agency to respond to funders requests for outputs and

outcomes. NOVA handled the need to evaluate the program in a couple of different ways.

While NOVA obtained informal feedback from clients during the first year, a more formalized procedure for obtaining client satisfaction and input was put into place the second year and subsequent years. The volume of work was certainly a factor the first year and staff felt that clients had an overwhelming amount of paperwork to complete for benefits. The idea of adding to the burden was not a high priority. Both written surveys and focus groups were used. Feedback from the evaluations indicated general satisfaction with services. Some provided helpful suggestions for future initiatives, which have been incorporated in places in this document. When input was sought on specific issues, NOVA would generally distribute surveys. One example was when the staff attempted to determine if there was a preferred method of group communication, such as newsletters, phone calls, or email notices. The feedback helped to guide staff in circulating general information.

## **FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- When selecting an agency to develop a program on short notice, it is advantageous to look to an organization that has a history of providing services for a number of different funders. Because of the intensity of work required for start-up, it certainly helps to have documentation procedures and an automated database system in place to facilitate the collection and reporting of data. The modification of existing forms and programs is less cumbersome than the creation of a new system and will help to prevent the loss of information in the early phase of operations. The use of an existing, if modified, system will reduce the learning curve for staff.
- Whatever form of data collection is used, it must remain flexible to meet the changing demands of funders requests for data and information. As was noted in the previous chapter, documentation and data collection require attention early in the process. If staff are too consumed with crisis response, consider bringing in a consultant or hiring someone specifically to set up or adapt paperwork systems.
- A procedure for obtaining client satisfaction and feedback should be developed early in the development of the program and should be implemented at a minimum of annually. However, to maximize the return rate, the program should be sensitive to the status of other paperwork demands on clients.

## SECTION VI: MEDIA RELATIONS

## **VOICES**

NOVA's big initial focus on public awareness was very instrumental in their effectiveness.

Lori Sywensky, PCCD Office of Victims' Services

Reporters always wanted a "victim." We would get literally dozens of requests, particularly in advance of a memorial event or in response to some breaking news, to produce a victim for comment.

Susan Bizon, NOVA Project Coordinator

## **PROGRAM EXPERIENCES**

The media's cooperation is critical at various stages in the aftermath of a disaster. The value of establishing and maintaining good relationships with the media was emphasized as we looked to them for publicizing our program, while simultaneously turning them away in the service of assisting our clients to maintain a modicum of privacy.

## **Outreach to Victims/Families**

The initial concentration of efforts in identifying victims was carried out through the website, television, radio and print media. The website carried information about services; however, the availability of services needed to be promoted in every way possible to ensure that the process of identification was as productive as possible. Coupled with this was the urgency to reach as many victims as possible before they hit their deadlines for registration and therefore eligibility for financial assistance and services. Regular public service announcements, over a period of time, across various demographics, were an important part of the strategy to reach out to victims as well as those who might know of them.

Competing with the media to be the reliable source of information was an issue that NOVA faced at various stages of the agency's outreach efforts. It was very hard to

even get airtime to inform people about where they should call for information and assistance related to victims' compensation and counseling services. In the Southeastern Pennsylvania media market, advertising costs were prohibitive and yet public service opportunities were curtailed as media outlets faced a steep decline in advertising revenues in the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>. However, in the months after the attacks, NOVA was able to take advantage of the outpouring of generosity by utilizing the donated assistance of celebrity figures. Celebrities can be very instrumental in getting the public's attention as the actor Kevin Bacon and Broadway star Andrea McArdle were, in assisting NOVA with public service announcements highlighting the services the program offered. Public relations consultants can be helpful in identifying these public figures for programs.

## **Management of Media Inquiries**

Every aspect of victims' lives was ripe for publicity and reporters were looking for personal stories over the ensuing weeks and months. In keeping with the families' requests as well as the philosophy and privacy policies of the organization, the staff often served as the conduit for communication between the families and the media. Over time, staff established a relationship with reporters, who sent the requests for information to NOVA; NOVA, in turn, contacted the families and supported their choices to respond or not, thereby protecting their privacy during these difficult times.

Depending on the nature of the disaster, the media attention may continue over a long period of time and take many different forms. The intense initial focus was on human interest stories with reporters contacting the organization for families to interview about specific topics, special events and memorials. Sometimes when the focus was on a particular company, newspapers were looking for families with direct ties to that particular company.

Both immediately and after the passage of time, producers of films and documentaries evinced interest and again, the task of serving as a buffer for families became an important support and advocacy activity. The Discovery Channel, for example, wanted to contact families for a documentary, *The Flight That Fought Back*.

NOVA informed the families who then made a choice about their participation in its production. NOVA supported them through these activities including attendance at previews and a showing of the final film. Universal Studios, which was making a film about September 11<sup>th</sup>, asked if NOVA could pass information along to the families. NOVA again made the information known to the families with instructions about whom to contact if they were interested. Some of the families were interested and chose to participate while others wanted nothing to do with any publicity. Agencies need to be prepared for the various angles of stories, films and documentaries and match those with their knowledge of victims' choices, interests and desires.

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is very important for the designated agency to develop a relationship with the media to help promote the program and serve as a liaison between victims and the media. Anything that the state or others can do to establish the agency as the "official" site for assistance, enhancing credibility with the media and clients, can only help.
- If funding permits, consider hiring a media consultant who can help to get your message out and determine the best use of limited dollars. Advertising is expensive and may not be the best method for reaching victims or their families.
- As with all victims, some may want to participate in media events or stories while others would prefer to remain anonymous. Give them the information and let them make the choice whether to initiate contact.
- Assist families by having policies in place and resource materials available for both staff and clients regarding communications with the media.
- Despite the best of intentions, do not rely on past relationships with the media to work on your behalf in a crisis. Breaking news may trump past goodwill so learn to be firm but cordial and be clear about priorities.

#### SECTION VII: TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS

## **VOICES**

It was the synergy between the experience we had and the culture of credibility that NOVA had established over the years that made it possible. We simply built on it.

Pat Walsh, Marketing Consultant, The Walsh Group

It would be really helpful to have a computerized system of benefits available.

Program Client

NOVA was sort of like our 'seeing eye dog'- they kept an eye on things for us and handled us very gently with no judgment.

Program Client

## **PROGRAM EXPERIENCES**

## **Technology Capacity**

Regardless of the scale of the disaster, the necessary tasks of data collection, coordination, distribution and maintenance and the changing information needs over time, make the selection of an organization with technological capacity a critical component. NOVA had a networked client and statistical database management system, computerized accounting, its own website and telephone capacity. All staff members were at least familiar with basic computer operations and software programs necessary for efficiencies in communication and data management. All of these were critical to the efficient and timely start-up of the project, the management of clients and resources, and the reporting necessary for the program.

NOVA used its client data system for maintaining basic demographic and family information about clients as well as for tracking the types and amount of service provided. This allowed the agency to identify aggregate information for reports (and reporters) as well as individual information about particular clients. All were critical to ongoing operations. For instance, when a new scholarship program was established for the children of WTC victims under the age of 18, the staff could quickly identify who might be eligible. When funders wanted to know how many injured, family members of the deceased, unemployed or witnesses were in the program, this information was readily

available. Although the type of information maintained was a work in progress at some points, the fact that the agency had a computerized system greatly reduced the amount of time it took to help clients and respond to requests for data.

NOVA utilized cell phones to ensure communication on the road, which was frequent, a 24 hour toll free number for clients to access NOVA from around the country, and a telephone system with voice message capability to ensure that Case Managers could receive relevant information and reduce time spent in "telephone tag." Fax and photocopy machines were also essential to program operations.

#### Website

Using quick innovation, partnering with those with the expertise and maximizing volunteer and corporate involvement, NOVA identified the need for a website and began planning for it as an ongoing source of information and support. The PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program started with the recognition of the need to initiate a massive, effective and efficient outreach campaign. Understanding that the internet was a very effective medium because of its availability 24 hours a day, seven days a week, a website was set up within a couple of days of project start-up with the most important information about the program, services and events presented initially. The site grew over time as new information and resources became available. It was a form of general communication with victims (and potential clients), alerting them of services, events and resources, as well as a means of establishing the credibility of the organization.

#### **Personal Communications with Clients**

Once clients began to be identified, the staff and consultants gave considerable thought about on-going communication. Although it was initially felt by some that email, chat rooms for victim families, and other similar forms of communication would be needed, particularly given the geographic distance of many victims from NOVA or each other, in fact, technology played only a small role in interactions with and between clients. Security of such communications was a primary concern as was the varying technology capabilities of the victims and their families. In the end, staff utilized the

website primarily for disseminating information and followed the individual client's desires for communication. Many wanted information mailed to them while others preferred email. These methods allowed them to respond at their own pace to less critical information. Home visits and telephone calls were the primary means by which staff communicated urgent information or responded to the crises of individual clients.

#### **Resource Identification and Dissemination**

It was very important to keep families informed about events, funds and resources as they developed. As noted above, NOVA found the website to be a particularly helpful and inexpensive way of getting this information out quickly. Similarly, NOVA found the internet to be a source of information about the myriad of programs, financial and otherwise, that were being established in the philanthropic community to aid victims. Several months after project start-up, when some stability in outreach and the caseload was achieved, a staff person was hired to manage the website and conduct internet research on new resources, verifying the material and disseminating the information electronically to program clients. While it may initially seem like a somewhat ancillary task, it really hit home when one of the victims discovered a corporate program whose deadline had passed that had provided funds to victim families. As will be discussed in a later chapter, no central clearinghouse existed for resources and project staff had to be aggressive about getting information about the less prominent charitable efforts.

As noted above, the capacity of some clients to access the internet was limited and so the staff also developed a newsletter that went out three to four times a year to reinforce information and highlight different events and programs services. While a more expensive undertaking with writing, set-up, printing and postage costs, the project wanted to ensure that all victims received the same information.

#### FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

• Selecting an organization with an efficient computerized case record system may seem like an archaic recommendation, particularly to those in other industries and sectors. The majority of non-profits are under-funded with regard to their own institutional needs. The reality is that victim service agencies function with huge variations in telephone systems, computer hardware and networks, and skills to operate the same. Some have

staff with training and skills in client information systems, billing, database management and web based technology; others employ consultants. While September 11<sup>th</sup> may have taxed even the technological capacity of large national relief organizations (for example, the Salvation Army's capacity to write large numbers of checks quickly on their Dot Matrix printers), the chronic infrastructure problems of the non-profit world become exacerbated during a crisis. If building capacity means creating the backbone of service delivery, NOVA made it clear that successful social service delivery and disaster relief are very much dependent on long-term investments in capacity, particularly in the area of technology.

- The vast number of philanthropic undertakings by civic, corporate, and charitable organizations to aid victims in the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> was both a blessing and a curse for the program. It became a full-time job to track philanthropic efforts and ensure that project clients received the information and forms they needed to apply. It would be extremely helpful in the future if a central clearinghouse were established to register this type of information so that case managers and others could identify potential programs for clients in an efficient and comprehensive way.
- As technology is always evolving, programs should seek input from experts about how such advances might be utilized to improve the management and security of communications and data and efficiency in the dissemination of information.

### SECTION VIII: ORGANIZATIONAL LINKAGES AND RESOURCES

## **VOICES**

Pennsylvania was, in some instances, a forgotten state, in others an afterthought.

Program Client

Having governmental agencies put up roadblocks is very painful.

Program Client

## **PROGRAM EXPERIENCES**

In order to fully meet the needs of victims after an event such as the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, it is imperative for a program to outreach to and connect with various governmental agencies and other nonprofit organizations. These linkages can provide a program with expeditious means by which to learn about victim services and financial benefit programs, advocate for clients, collaborate on service provision and maximize resources. In providing services to Pennsylvania's victims, NOVA found that the connections developed with government officials and service providers were extremely important in dealing with confusions regarding benefit programs, cutting through red tape, getting the attention of officials, when necessary, and coordinating case management efforts.

#### Government

After the attacks, the government developed a variety of resources and financial benefit programs for victims and their families. In order to keep abreast of the various benefits and help to ensure the inclusion of residents in eligibility requirements, NOVA looked to the PA Commission on Crime & Delinquency (PCCD) to advocate with governmental contacts on their behalf. This connection with PCCD provided the local program with not only the support needed to implement the program, but also with credibility when issues or obstacles arose. The State Office of the Victim Advocate helped to identify and contact victims and opened doors in New Jersey through contacts the office had previously established.

In addition, the NOVA staff reached out to local elected officials to not only alert them to the program and the services available to victims, but also to network with them on behalf of clients and their needs. For example, one local group of County Commissioners began planning events soon after the September 11th attacks, addressing the needs of those community residents who lost loved ones. However, the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program staff were able to inform them about the other victims in their community, such as the injured victims and injured rescue workers which helped the Commissioners plan an event that was more inclusive. The staff worked with a Pennsylvania senator to advocate for the needs of state victims in federal decision-making regarding trial sites and informational sessions for victims on the federal compensation program.

Outreach was also necessary with local government departments. In the case of the Flight 93 crash in Somerset, it was necessary for staff to interface with the County Coroner surrounding issues of site remains. The Somerset site became designated as a national park, and as such, staff needed to interact with the National Park Service regarding memorial issues, visitations by victim's families and other similar matters.

## **Employers and Other Affected Companies**

The needs of victims are served in many different ways and working with the employers of those affected is an important one to address. NOVA found that many of the clients needed verification of employment for a variety of funding sources including workman's compensation and disability payments. Some of the corporations had headquarters in other parts of the country and therefore obtaining these verifications was relatively easy as their records had not been destroyed. However, the process was complicated for those employers who lost all their records in the buildings that were destroyed and these clients required follow-up documentation in order to receive a letter verifying the victim's employment with the company. All of this required working in coordination with numerous employers and their Human Resources department staff.

One unexpected request for services a year or so into the program came from a group of airline employees who were losing their jobs due to the economic effects of curtailed airline travel after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. As a result, the PA September

11<sup>th</sup> Program staff provided informational forums for one airline at the Philadelphia Airport on financial assistance available to secondary victims of the September 11th attacks and provided crisis intervention for employees who were having difficulty coping.

#### Law Enforcement

Several times, program staff were placed in a position of serving in a liaison capacity to law enforcement and relationships with the local police departments as well as with the Pennsylvania State Police, the FBI and others proved beneficial. In the weeks following the attacks, families were asked to bring DNA samples to New York to help with the identification of remains. This request required some assistance from local law enforcement officials and staff had the contacts in place to arrange for the necessary help. In another situation, local law enforcement agencies were asked to conduct notification of the next of kin when remains were identified. Because of NOVA's linkages with local departments, staff were able to provide support during these notifications.

In yet another example, the FBI requested assistance in helping to prepare and support families of Flight 93 for the playing of the airplane's black box recording. The staff clearly understood their role from their prior accompaniment experience and worked closely with the FBI to minimize the trauma to the families.

#### **Other Service Providers**

At the earliest opportunity, NOVA needed to identify victim services counterparts in other states as well as service providers such as the American Red Cross to secure help for clients, delineate an understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, coordinate efforts, and minimize the potential for duplicating services. Shortly after the Family Assistance Centers closed, Safe Horizons in New York City became a critical link in helping NOVA and its clients navigate the various programs available only through New York. Safe Horizons, the largest victim service program in the nation, became a clearinghouse and application center for numerous benefit programs. With difficulty in staffing for the large numbers seeking assistance, Safe Horizons would often close their September 11<sup>th</sup> offices at midday, leaving many in line to return another day. For victims from Pennsylvania, this obviously did not work. NOVA was able to negotiate a

system in which NOVA staff would help victims complete the applications and then work with a Safe Horizons liaison on the faxing, delivery and processing of materials. This greatly reduced the stress clients had in having to leave their home communities to apply for and receive entitled benefits.

Program staff connected with other assistance and service organizations. The following are some of the service providers with whom NOVA worked most closely:

- Crime Victims Compensation The staff worked closely with the assigned compensation staff in Pennsylvania and New York and maintained contact with those in California and New Jersey when supplemental assistance was available. Given the complexity of the different programs and benefits and the new legislation passed to offer additional coverage to some victims from certain states, the staff and, ultimately the victims, benefited from the close relationships they were able to establish with these programs.
- Federal Crime Victims Compensation Fund When the fund was created and Special Master Kenneth Feinberg was appointed, the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program staff worked with the Feinberg Group, LLP to ensure that Pennsylvania residents were provided information sessions within the state. Two informational meetings were scheduled in the Philadelphia area and clients were provided transportation to these meetings from the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> program. From June 24-28, 2002, the Feinberg Group set up a Temporary Claims Assistance site in the Philadelphia area for victims to file their claim locally. The program staff provided accompaniment and support to victims, as requested, when filing their claim.
- American Red Cross (ARC) The staff worked with both the local as well as the National ARC chapters. The National ARC was key in coordinating relief services for victims and for the distribution of funds to assist families.
- United Way In each of the counties in Pennsylvania with victims from the September 11th attacks, the local United Way organizations sought help from the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program regarding the availability and distribution of funds.

- In addition, the PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program staff worked with them in order to find services for clients who had unmet needs.
- Law Enforcement It was critical for the program staff to connect with the police departments where a deceased victim had resided. The FBI would contact local law enforcement whenever bodily remains were discovered at the World Trade Center, expecting the local police to inform the victim's family. It was imperative that the police notified the program staff prior to contacting the family so that they could either accompany the police on the notification visit, or provide telephone support to the families.
- Salvation Army The program staff found this organization to be helpful in assisting with food and clothing to victims and families.
- School Systems From time to time, local schools would contact the program staff in order to find out how to donate money the school had raised for victims or to ask for assistance with students whose family member had died or had been injured in the attacks. The program was also a resource for information to help teachers deal with the questions posed by children about the attacks.
- Substance Abuse Providers It became important for program staff to research and connect with various county drug and alcohol programs. As time went by, substance abuse became an issue for some clients in their grieving process, and referrals were needed.
- Mental Health Providers Similar to the drug and alcohol providers, the events
  of September 11<sup>th</sup> served to either exacerbate or initiate mental health concerns
  for some clients. Linkages with the local mental health providers were important
  during the life of the program.
- Colleges, Vocational Schools, Employment Agencies The PA September 11<sup>th</sup> Program staff would contact local colleges and vocational schools to identify opportunities for clients to obtain vocational guidance and training. For some of the injured workers unable to return to their chosen work profession, other career choices needed to be explored. In other instances, the main bread winner of the family may have died leaving the spouse to seek employment or vocational training.

Workman's Compensation Offices, Social Security Offices – as stated in more
depth in another chapter, the program staff were often required to network with
and advocate on behalf of clients with local workman's compensation and social
security offices around issues regarding compensation payments and disability
eligibility.

### **FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is important to secure support for planning at the highest possible level of State government (e.g., the Governor's Office or at the Cabinet level) to help ensure that roles are clear and that organizations have the capacity to respond in a coordinated fashion. Whenever possible, organizations should attempt to create a single point of entry into assistance programs or adopt the case management model to help clients sort through the myriad of programs that may be available. One common complaint of clients was the complicated and often repetitious nature of application processes and the difficulty they had in sorting things out.
- Most victim service agencies already have some relationships with the criminal justice system in their counties. At the local level, relationships with county government can be very helpful in coordinating both with the emergency management systems as well as in notifying the local authorities of the needs of the residents they serve. Most disaster responses begin and end locally even though national organizations such as the American Red Cross, FEMA, the National Organization of Victim Assistance and, in the case of air disasters, the airlines may have a presence along the way, depending on the scale of the disaster. This is not to minimize the resources and contributions of these national organizations but to underscore the fact that the victim services professionals at the local level can continue to serve families over the long term.
- Other organizations that agencies may want to consider partnering with, as appropriate to the situation and/or needs of the clients include agencies providing services to special populations such as the elderly, people with disabilities, non-English speaking residents along with hospital systems, public health departments, daycare and Head Start organizations, and emergency management when victims or their families live overseas.
- It is important to work closely with the Consulate of the Country where your victims may reside. They will be able to find local resources and provide interpreter services.

### SECTION IX: THE MANAGEMENT OF PHILANTHROPIC DONATIONS

## **VOICES**

Expect to be overwhelmed with gifts. Be prepared for everything from dolls to quilts.

Susan Bizon, NOVA Project Coordinator

The vast outpouring of support for the victims of September 11<sup>th</sup> was unprecedented and truly demonstrated the caring and concern of people from around the world. However, the management and distribution of these charitable funds posed many issues for the organizations entrusted with these funds, including NOVA.

Barbara Clark, NOVA Executive Director

## **PROGRAM EXPERIENCES**

It is important to be prepared for a large public response in the form of donations and volunteerism following an event such as September 11<sup>th</sup>. While the outpouring of public support reached record levels following the attacks, the recent natural disasters such as the tsunami in Southeast Asia in 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005 have demonstrated that such support can and will be repeated.

As the NOVA staff found, generosity took many different forms. From the expected and simple to the most creative and esoteric, people started calling NOVA within days of program start-up wanting to donate gifts for families or time through volunteerism. The agency realized that it would be essential to have policies in place that would guide staff in the distribution of such gifts or in the utilization of volunteers.

Following usual agency policy, volunteers wanting to work with victims of the program would have to complete the agency's mandatory 40+ hour training before they would receive a volunteer assignment. While such assignments were limited, NOVA did utilize volunteers from its existing pool to help with such activities as transportation to counseling groups, accompaniment to the Family Assistance Centers and support at memorial services. For those individuals who did not want to wait to take the training, NOVA made referrals to organizations in NYC that were seeking help with such activities as food distribution and shelter work for those displaced or involved in rescue and clean-up work at the WTC site.

Donated items, such as quilts, dolls, stuffed animals, musical recordings and cards made by children, often came unannounced with very specific instructions about who should receive the items. After discussing these contributions with families, NOVA screened the items for appropriateness, notified victims who could "opt in or out" and then sent them to the people for whom they were intended as appropriate. Again, as this was the first time NOVA was undertaking such an effort, it was initially overwhelming to be responsible for storing and distributing gifts for people all over the country. Except for donations to the victims of Flight 93, which continue to be received, most of the gifts gradually tapered off after two years.

The direct donation of cash by individuals or organizations probably posed the greatest challenge for NOVA and certainly required serious consideration and discussion. NOVA found itself in the position of being at the receiving end of a range of cash donations from \$25 to \$175,000. While those donors providing general operating or program support were not difficult, those who wanted to support victims directly created the need for a policy. The Board and management felt that the most important factor in deciding how to proceed was the effect the distribution of funds would have on the role of the Case Manager. NOVA staff had very intimate knowledge of the personal financial circumstances of victims and viewed their role as advocates for their clients in obtaining all available funds and services. Should NOVA take on the role of distributing funds, the relationship might change. As important, the financial needs of victims varied significantly and it might have posed additional conflicts for NOVA staff to serve as the distributor of financial assistance to some victims who may have appeared less needy than others. Finally, as was discussed earlier, the issue of equity with other victims of crime served by NOVA helped to shape the policy.

With these issues in mind, when a company or group wanted to donate money for individual victims, the agency alerted the victims who met the company's criteria (i.e., Flight 93 families, families in Bucks County, families with children) and either put them in touch with the donor or obtained a release to provide the relevant information to the donor. When an unsolicited check of significant value arrived unannounced, it was returned with these stipulations. Smaller contributions, with the approval of the donor, were put into an emergency fund that families could access for heat, shelter, food and

other similar needs when no other resources were available.

It was important to establish suitable documentation of all of the above and to ensure a paper trail for the auditors. At least one formal complaint was lodged against NOVA for "raising funds" for September 11<sup>th</sup> victims and not distributing them. While unfounded, this perceived offense resulted in significant work and could have caused the stoppage of all federal and state funding to the agency. Independent auditors, policies, procedures and good documentation are all critical to protect the organization's mission to serve.

#### FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clear thought needs to be given to whether the case management agency should be put in the position of facilitating direct donations to victims. Perhaps a central clearinghouse or foundation in the state could be take on the role of collecting donations (monetary and non-monetary) for victims and coordinating with the designated agency to facilitate application and distribution of the same. At the least, the designated agency needs to establish policies early in the process and communicate them clearly to clients and donors.
- Consider a budget for postage and mass mailing and do not minimize the amount of staff time needed to facilitate distribution of donated items, such as quilts, videos, stuffed animals and the like.
- As much as time permits, help direct volunteer efforts by letting groups know what victims need most. Although this may be challenging during program start-up, it will pay dividends down the road. People want to know that they have helped and made a difference in someone's life.

### SECTION X: REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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## **RESOURCES**

## AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION

866-606-0626

www.abanet.org/legalservices/public.html

Provides free legal services for low-income individuals who prior to, or because of the disaster, are unable to secure adequate legal services.

#### APA - AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

800-964-2000

www.apa.org

The APA Referral line will connect family members to the APA information and referral center in Kansas. This organization will link family members to the referral service specific to the state in which they live. The referral service is free.

#### ARC – AMERICAN RED CROSS

1-866-GET-INFO (866-438-4636)

www.redcross.org

NATIONWIDE COMPASSION AND SUPPORT HOTLINE: Trained American Red Cross operators staff the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide callers with immediate access to national and community-based resources, from instant grief counseling to how the tragedies should be explained to children. According to the Red Cross, "this one phone number is the equivalent of one-stop-shopping for information and support because the Red Cross has virtually combined all the various credible sources of information and referral resources into one information bank." Callers to the new hotline are finding help with the following:

- Information for families still seeking missing persons
- Answers to the basic questions relating to the terrorist attacks
- Guidance regarding safety and security issues
- Instantaneous links to emergency health, mental health, or law enforcement services in the home jurisdiction of the caller
- Brief supportive counseling addressing the emotional, spiritual, and physical health concerns
- How to answer questions from children
- Referrals to more than 1,000 Red Cross chapters nationwide for follow-up through local counseling resources
- Literature through the mail and services that may assist in meeting the expressed need
- Promotion of understanding on cultural and religious differences
- How to help the relief efforts

## CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (CMHS), SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (SAMHSA)

240-276-1310 1-800-789-2647 www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs

## **COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

877-969-0010

www.compassionatefriends.org

Assists families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and also provides information to help others be supportive. It is a national, non-profit self-help support organization that offers friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Services are free.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

800-331-0075

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/vfa

This agency supports victim service programs across the country and crime victim compensation programs in every state. They provide referrals for short-term counseling. Contact information for State Crime Victim Assistance and Compensation Programs and information on all funded assistance and compensation programs can be found online. Funded in part by OVC, the National Association of VOCA Administrators provides information about crime victim assistance at www.navaa.org. The National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards provides information about crime victim compensation programs at www.navvcb.org. OVC provides state contact information for crime victim assistance and compensation programs at www.ovc.gov/help/links.htm.

## **Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center (OVCRC)**

800-627-6872

www.ncjrs.org

# Office for Victims of Crime, Training and Technical Assistance Center (OVCTTAC)

866-682-8822

866-682-8880 TTY

www.ovcttac.org

# FBI – FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, VICTIM WITNESS ASSISTANCE

202-278-2000

The FBI notifies victims of their rights as a Federal Crime Victim and provides information on the FBI's criminal investigation through the Victim Notification System, if the victim chooses to be notified.

#### FEMA – FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

800-525-0321

www.fema.gov

FEMA may be able to assist families who, after applying for assistance through other agencies and still have unmet needs, with financial assistance, to cover funeral costs, lost wages, counseling, loss of support, and mortgage/rental expenses. If injured, victims may be eligible for financial assistance for any uncovered or uninsured medical assistance.

#### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR CRIME VICTIMS

800-233-2339

The Victims Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP) helps victims and their families ease the financial burdens they may face as a result of a crime. Although compensation will not erase the fact that the crime has occurred, it can help victims to begin the healing and recovery process.

#### THE FOUNDATION CENTER

800-424-9836

www.fdncenter.org

Founded in 1956, the Center is the nation's leading authority on philanthropy and is dedicated to serving grant seekers, grant makers, researchers, policymakers, the media and the general public. After the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, they had a section dedicated to funding sources for victims of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

#### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

202-408-8600

www.socialworkers.org

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF VOCA ADMINISTRATORS

www.navaa.org

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION BOARDS

www.nacvb.org

## NATIONAL CENTER FOR POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDERS

802-296-6300

www.ncptsd.org

#### NATIONAL CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

800-FYI-CALL

(800-394-2255)

www.ncvc.org

Information and referral line for individuals in need of counseling and other emergency assistance. Maintains a nationwide listing of counseling providers. Caller may ask for referrals requiring no fees.

#### NATIONAL CHILD TRAUMATIC STRESS NETWORK

www.nctsnet.org

#### NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR VICTIM ASSISTANCE

(800)-TRY-NOVA

www.try-nova.org

Coordinates national crisis response teams to assist communities with incidents of mass violence; provides information and referral for victims and professionals

## NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTERS

301-890-2119

www.nvoad.org

NVOAD coordinates planning efforts by many voluntary organizations responding to disaster. Member organizations provide more effective and less duplication in service by getting together before disasters strike. Once disasters occur, NVOAD or an affiliated state VOAD encourages members and other voluntary agencies to convene on site. This cooperative effort has proven to be the most effective way for a wide variety of volunteers and organizations to work together in a crisis.

## NETWORK OF VICTIM ASSISTANCE, Bucks County, PA

215-343-6543

www.novabucks.org

## PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

(800) 692-7292

www.pccd.state.pa.us

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency promotes a collaborative approach to enhance the quality of justice through guidance, leadership and resources by empowering citizens and communities and influencing state policy. The Office of Victims' Services administers rights and services to victims of crime in Pennsylvania, administers the Victims Compensation Assistance Program, and provides a statewide education effort to victim service professionals and outreach to the public. It provides support for the Victims' Services Advisory Committee and its numerous subcommittees.

#### PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

www.pema.state.pa.us

The mission of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency is to coordinate state agency response, including the Office of the State Fire Commissioner and Office of Homeland Security, to support county and local governments in the areas of civil defense, disaster mitigation and preparedness, planning, and response to and recovery from man-made or natural disasters. The Bureau of Recovery and Mitigation oversees the Commonwealth's disaster assistance programs. For information on specific programs,

contact the following program managers:

**Individual Assistance** (717) 651-2163

**Public Assistance** (717) 651-2256

**Hazard Mitigation** (717) 651-2145

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Office of Emergency Preparedness 800-USA-NDMS National Disaster Medical System www.ndms.dhhs.gov