

EXTEND YOUR REACH THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

The power of partnerships launched the crime victims' rights movement and the achievements we celebrate every year. Families of murdered children, survivors of human trafficking, and victims of sexual assault, drunk driving, domestic violence, and other crimes mobilized at the grassroots level joined forces to demand justice for victims of crime. The National Campaign for Victims' Rights, founded by these partners, led to President Ronald Reagan's reforms on behalf of crime victims, his declaration of the first National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), and the creation of the Victims of Crime Act and Crime Victims Fund, whose anniversary we celebrate during this time. Through our partnerships and community building, we have made history.

NCVRW offers an opportunity to renew and strengthen our partnerships, and to highlight the collaborative approaches that are integral to reaching all populations and connecting all victims with services. Through partnerships, organizations more effectively mobilize their experience, skills, messages, resources, and stakeholders to help plan a powerful NCVRW strategy. Partnerships with other organizations and allied professionals can dramatically boost the impact of your campaign.

Once your organization decides to participate in NCVRW events, identify potential partners within your community. Contact them right away, and explore ways to partner for NCVRW. Ask businesses, civic organizations, faith communities, professional associations, and other partners to lend their skills, resources, and staff time to your NCVRW campaign. By joining forces, you will create a memorable campaign in your community and lay the foundation for future partnerships.

Step 1: Decide What You Are Looking for in a Partnership

Partnerships are valuable opportunities to support the professional development of organizations and individuals in your network, as well as to find creative solutions to challenging problems and goals in your community. When building partnerships, consider the following:

- What skills does your organization have that you can share with others?
- What is your area of expertise and who could benefit from learning more about it?
- What expertise or skills is your organization missing?
- Who in your organization can play a leadership role in building this partnership?
- How will this effort contribute to or expand access and equitable services to victims of crime?

Step 2: Identify Potential Partners

It is important to recognize that, in addition to other victim service organizations, every business, sports team, community group, and law enforcement agency has the potential to be a valuable partner in raising awareness about NCVRW or other events. Some partnerships, like multidisciplinary teams, require ongoing interaction and collaboration throughout the year, while others serve as a resource or consultant for one another if they are unsure how to proceed in a particular situation. When building a new partnership, consider what will be helpful for the community, beneficial for the staff involved, and sustainable in the future. Here are a few suggestions on ways to create hope in your community now and in the future:

- **Expand your network.** Partnering with organizations that work with specific communities is an opportunity to learn about other cultures, understand the barriers faced by victims, implement trauma-informed practices, and improve the cultural sensitivity of your organization.
- **Build a multidisciplinary response team.** Multidisciplinary response teams often focus on victims of a particular type of crime, such as victims of sexual assault, victims with disabilities, or victims of child abuse. Team activities can include, but are not limited to, cooperative responses to emergency calls, meetings between partners to discuss recent cases, and joint decisions in the interests of children, older adults, and adults with cognitive disabilities.

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- **Provide education about victims' rights and options.** NCVRW is an opportunity to educate your local community about the rights of crime victims. Hosting an information fair, fundraiser, school assembly, or other community event is a great way to build partnerships, increase the visibility of local victim service providers, and support greater understanding of victims' rights and options following a crime.
- **Raise awareness.** Local community centers and businesses often have space available for hanging posters, collecting donation items, and hosting events. These partnerships are important for developing lasting community engagement.

Step 3: Build Partnerships

Building a partnership takes patience, collaboration, communication, and organization. Each partner must be responsive and engaged in the partnership-building process. In addition, partners should work together to ensure that they all achieve their goals in a way that is victim-centered, culturally sensitive, and trauma-informed. Here are some things to consider:

- **Think about the people you serve:** Consider the services your organization provides to victims, as well as your organization's role and reputation in the community. How can they benefit from this partnership? How can your organization grow and learn as a result of this partnership?
- **Facilitate trust and respect between partners:** Building trust and respect between partners is essential to ensuring the partnership is productive, both partners are invested in the project, and transitions among staff members are smooth. During meetings, facilitate a space in which individuals can ask questions, raise concerns, and share ideas. Communication between each party must be reliable and consistent.

COMMUNITY PARTNER IDEAS

Allied Professionals

- Law Enforcement Professionals
- Prosecutors
- Institutional and Community Corrections Professionals
- Healthcare Professionals
- Mental Health Professionals

Art and Cultural Organizations, Businesses, and Corporations

- Business and Professional Associations
- Fitness Clubs
- Grocery Stores and Restaurants
- Salons and Spas
- Visitors' and Convention Bureaus

Civic Organizations

Colleges and Universities

Faith Communities

Government Agencies and Officials

- Agencies Serving Older Adults and People With Disabilities
- Community Liaison Offices
- Consumer Protection Agencies
- Libraries
- Public Officials
- Schools

Military Installations

Tribal Authorities

Victim Service Agencies

Workforce Training/Job-Search Centers

Youth-Serving Organizations



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- **Establish clear expectations for the partnership:** Have a candid conversation at the beginning of the partnership about what each partner hopes to gain from the collaboration. Partnerships should be mutually beneficial, with responsibilities clearly delineated and shared among all parties. It is also important at the start of the partnership to define a common vision and a set of goals.
- **Engage in careful management of the partnership:** In many partnerships, designating a leader can support effective communication and help the team stay on schedule. However, this leader is not solely responsible for the outcome of the partnership. Set ground rules and establish protocols. Provide formal and informal communication with the public and the media as appropriate and necessary.

- **Be strategic in implementing and evaluating partnership goals:** Have a strategy for your partnership. Strong and lasting partnerships are built on a foundation of shared values and interests. For each project you work on together, establish a timeline and plan for how you will implement and complete the project. It is also important to discuss how you will evaluate and measure the project's success.

Building partnerships takes time and energy. However, strategic partnerships can have a lasting impact on a community, your organization, and the victims you serve. Use this NCVRW to motivate, strengthen, and launch partnerships in your community.

