

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/training-law-enforcement-about-a-visa-option-for-crime-victims>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

In collaboration with the nonprofit organization [Legal Momentum](#), Vera has begun training law enforcement personnel throughout the United States on use of the U-visa. Together, our National Immigrant Victims Access to Justice Partnership offers technical assistance to police agencies so that they learn more about the application and certification process for this visa, which was designed to make immigrant crime victims more likely to report crimes and cooperate with law enforcement officials.

In September and November, the San Francisco Police Department and Appleton (WI) Police Department hosted our first two trainings. We used our recently developed [U-visa tool kit](#) in both. The project, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, created the tool kit with input from 13 law enforcement agencies. The kit includes background information on the legal authority for the U-visa, a list of FAQs specific to law enforcement, and other useful materials.

More than 50 law enforcement officers attended our trainings this year, and participants typically recognize the U-visas value in serving immigrant victims of crime. However, we also had to address misconceptions that some officers have about the U-visa and their role in the application process. For example, an officers certification of an applicants eligibility is *required* but is not *sufficient* to issue a U-visa. Ultimately, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) determines whether the applicant meets all of the eligibility requirements.

Of course, it wasnt a surprise to encounter confusion. Our project received funding specifically to address misconceptions that many officers have about the U-visa. Although Congress created the U-visa classification 10 years ago, training for law enforcement on its use has been scarce. We look forward to answering questions about the new [tool kit](#) and hearing comments from people working in law enforcement.

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