

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/a-new-vision-for-victims-of-crime>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Recently, in a [seminal speech](#) delivered to the American Bar Association, Attorney General Eric Holder called for sweeping criminal justice and victim services reform. In his address, Attorney General Holder expressed the need to better allocate resources to keep pace with continuing threats of violence, for fresh solutions in assisting victims of crime and empowering survivors, and in these challenging economic times, for better coordination of the systems that both hold violent criminals accountable and those that support victims. General Holder's comments on services for victims and survivors of crimes were echoed in the recently released [Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services Report](#) from the [Office for Victims of Crime](#), which he cited in his speech.

[The Center on Victimization and Safety](#) (CVS) at the Vera Institute of Justice is pleased to have contributed to Vision 21, a strategic planning initiative aimed at expanding the vision and impact of services for crime victims. CVS completed an analysis of enduring challenges for crime victims, which focused on barriers and issues related to domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, elder abuse, victimization in Indian Country, victimization of young African American males, and victimization of people with disabilities.

The Vision 21 final report details challenges to the integration of research into victim services, the tremendous need for crime victims to have access to legal assistance, and the impact of advances in technology, globalization, and changing demographics on the victim assistance field. The report also outlines recommendations for building on three decades of progress for victims, including building a body of evidence-based knowledge on victimization, victim services, and emerging trends.

As Attorney General Holder noted, Vision 21 also includes recommendations to ensure the field is fully equipped to meet the demands of the 21st century; currently in the United States the demand for services to support victims of crime often outpaces availability. During the last [national census of domestic violence services](#), domestic violence programs across the country *documented over 10,000 unmet requests for services in a single day simply because programs did not have the resources to provide the services. A few weeks ago, [Rose Brooks Center](#), a domestic violence program in Kansas City, Missouri, posted an urgent request for an air mattress to be able to move a survivor into her own home, thereby creating an available bed for another domestic violence survivor since every other shelter in the greater Kansas City area was already full.*

This is just one example, among many, of the need, hope, and promise that both Attorney General Holder and the Vision 21 report describes: To imagine a day, when not one victim, woman, man, or child in need is turned away. As Attorney General Holder stated, This is our opportunity to define this time, our time, as one of progress and innovation.

This post is part of a series in which Vera experts respond to Attorney General Eric Holder's recent address to the American Bar Association calling for comprehensive criminal justice reform. Share your thoughts in the comments section below and search for the hashtag #VeraResponds on [Twitter](#) to join the conversation.

Photo: Rose Brooks Shelter, Board noting all domestic violence shelter beds in the Kansas City area full.

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