



Qualitative Measures of Victim Satisfaction with the Cook County Criminal Justice System

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A Process and Impact Evaluation of the Cook County State's Attorney's Victim/Witness Assistance Program

Research Questions

- Does the program reach all those in need?
- Does the program provide the services needed by crime victims?
- Is the program effective in helping victims recover both psychologically and materially?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a prosecutors office providing victim services?
- Is the program effective at encouraging further participation by the victim in the criminal justice system?

Data Collection Methods

- Examination of case records
- Site visits
- Observations of program staff at work
- Surveys of assistant state's attorneys
- Interviews with program staff and administrators
- Survey of victims of felony crimes that occurred in Cook County and whose cases were prosecuted by the CCSAO**

The Victim Survey

- Telephone survey
- Sample: 5,109 adult felony crime victims in nine crime categories (sexual assault, stalking, battery, robbery, residential burglary, homicide, fraud, vehicle felonies and arson)
- Problems that arose during administration of survey reduced sample to approximately 2,100 adult felony crime victims
- Final response rate 23.9% (another interesting, but different story)

The Respondents

- 27 sexual assault victims
- 22 stalking victims
- 48 battery victims
- 62 robbery victims
- 97 residential burglary victims
- 65 homicide “victims”
- 67 fraud victims
- 92 vehicle felony victims
- 13 arson victims

“I know what victims want. They want their offenders arrested, prosecuted and incarcerated.”

Statement made by a prosecutor during a meeting about problems that arose during the administration of the victim survey.



Quantitative Measures of Victim Satisfaction

Victim Satisfaction with “Outcome of the Case” by Type of Crime

	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>(FG)</u>	<u>(PG)</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>
Sexual Assault victims	55%	59%	27%	41%
Stalking victims	41%	8%	67%	50%
Battery victims	40%	54%	26%	56%
Robbery victims	69%	54%	27%	24%
Burglary victims	65%	29%	45%	35%
Homicide victims	51%	64%	27%	48%
Fraud victims	54%	27%	42%	43%
Vehicle Felonies victims	54%	43%	37%	43%
Arson victims	31%	40%	30%	62%



Qualitative Measures of Victim Satisfaction

Themes in the Data: Satisfaction

- Satisfaction with the plea
- Satisfaction with sentence
 - Fairness of sentence
 - Length of sentence
 - Type of sentence
- Satisfaction with expediency of the case
- Satisfaction with material outcome
- Satisfaction with information being shared with victim
- Satisfaction that victim didn't have to participate
- Satisfaction with the CJS
 - Satisfaction with the prosecutor's office
 - Satisfaction with the police

Themes in the Data: Dissatisfaction

- Dissatisfaction with the plea
- Dissatisfaction with the verdict
- Dissatisfaction with sentence
 - Length of sentence
- Dissatisfaction with material outcome
- Dissatisfaction with the lack of information
- Dissatisfaction with the CJS
 - Dissatisfaction with the prosecutor's office
 - Dissatisfaction with the police
 - Dissatisfaction with the judge

Why were you satisfied with the “outcome of the case?”

“Because they gave him two years probation and the offender apologized” (Battery victim)

“I got my money right back, I had no problems, they were polite” (Robbery victim)

“He was given a punishment that was reasonable and I got the vehicle back with little damage.” (Vehicle Felony victim)

“Justice was served. The man pled guilty and was put in jail along with community service. He was on drugs.” (Burglary victim)

“Because I think that in my case, he got the right punishment. He got counseling, that’s what he needs.” (Stalking victim)

“Because the fellow deserved the sentence he received, and now he works for me part-time” (Fraud victim)

“Because I could go down there and meet with the attorney who had the case and he would tell me what the young man said that committed the crime. The attorney would also ask me how I felt. Another attorney wasn’t so available. I liked the first attorney better because he explained things to me.” (Homicide victim)

Why were you dissatisfied with the “outcome of the case?”

“The police ignored the priest’s statement about the threat. My eldest daughter is having emotional problems and my son is in therapy. The system does not work. Victim compensation was denied. My husband was a city worker who was killed on the job. My family should have been given all that we are entitled to, in spite of the fact that I have insurance.” (Homicide victim)

“Because the sentence the offender was given was too harsh.” (Homicide victim)

“The lack of information. You don’t know what to ask, and you aren’t aware of any of the options or how the case is going.” (Homicide victim)

“I would rather have gotten my stuff back” (Robbery victim)

“Because it wasn’t a payback. I was responsible for the car and the offender did not pay me back”
(Vehicle felony victim)

“Because when I called the police, they acted like it wasn’t very serious. It was very serious to me.”
(Burglary victim)

So What?

- These data let us know that what victims want is often inconsistent with what criminal justice system personnel think they want.
- These data suggest that what victims are looking for from the criminal justice system varies by type of crime.
- These data let us know that what victims are looking for from the criminal and juvenile justice systems are not always what the criminal justice system can currently deliver.
- These data lend insight into other justice approaches that are more victim centered, such as restorative justice strategies.
- These data lend insight into how the performance of the criminal justice system might be measured from a victim's perspective.