

**TEXAS CRIME VICTIM LEGAL
ASSISTANCE NETWORK**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

SEPTMEBER 2014

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Introduction

Recovery from victimization is a long and difficult process. From the moment of victimization, a victim is faced with making important, and often life changing, decisions at a time when the only goal a victim has is making it through the next ten minutes. Services provided by victim service professionals and other providers in a wide variety of fields offer victims invaluable guidance navigating through the victim's long road to recovery. Therefore, accessing the right service at the right time is instrumental to a victim's path to recovery.

Services provided to victims come in a variety of forms, from system-based victim dedicated services such as those provided by victim coordinators working with law enforcement and prosecutors to organization-based victim dedicated services such as those provided by rape crisis or domestic violence centers. There is also a broader range of service providers who do not work exclusively with victims but regularly provide services to victims of crime such as governmental and non-governmental agencies dealing with homelessness, the disabled, the elderly, the LGBTQ community, and legal service organizations to name a few. Although these services are available to some degree in many communities, a large number of victims for a variety of reasons do not receive the services they desperately need.

Increasingly, there is more interest from leaders in the victim services field to understand the reasons why victims are not seeking or receiving the services they need. The majority of the research to date has focused on the patterns of help-seeking behavior among domestic violence and sexual assault victims. This research has identified a variety of barriers that explain why so many victims do not seek or receive needed services following their victimization. A few of the identified barriers include fear of reporting the crime, a lack of knowledge about available services, lack of transportation to access services and cultural and language barriers.

Now that the research has started to give a better understanding of the many barriers standing between crime victims and the services that can help them recover, we must now begin to turn our attention to ways in which the barriers can be lessened in the short-term and removed in the long-term. To that end, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) introduced their Vision 21 Initiative as a way to lead the victim services field to transform the way we treat crime victims, by supporting efforts to promote a more holistic victim-centered approach through "substantial, systematic, and sustained collaboration" of service delivery among providers¹. As part of this initiative, OVC has dedicated resources to projects that, through research and evaluation, will provide a variety of models to identify which service delivery practices work best for crime victims.

¹Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, *Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services Final Report*, NCJ 239957, May 2013, http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/vision21/pdfs/Vision21_Report.pdf (last accessed August 31, 2014).

One such OVC project is the Wraparound Victim Legal Assistance Network (WVLAN) demonstration project grant which began in late 2012. This project's goal is to ensure that crime victims receive the wide range of legal services they need to reclaim their lives following victimization through a WVLAN, a collaboration and coordination of services among legal service providers with the support of non-legal service providers. This unprecedented level of collaboration and coordination among service providers is anticipated to give crime victims significantly easier access to legal services by creating a one-stop shop where victims can go to apply for services with any one or all members of the network. The network members cannot guarantee that they will have the resources to serve every need of every victim; however, crime victims will only have to seek legal services from one provider in the network in order to have access to possible services from all members. As an added benefit the network members, through collaboration, will also have a better understanding of what services other members are providing to victims in the community which will reduce duplication of services, allow the re-allocation of scarce resources to fill in service gaps, and potentially address a victim's holistic needs.

OVC chose six sites from around the country, including Lone Star Legal Aid, to demonstrate the way in which this type of WVLAN can be formed and function over a four-year period. The first phase of this project was the research phase in which all grantees developed and conducted a complex needs assessment survey to identify the gaps in legal services within their own targeted service area. The results of this needs assessment research will serve as the guide to develop an implementation plan to bring the WVLAN from idea to reality in phase two of the project- implementation.

This Implementation Plan, guided by the results of the needs assessment survey, presents a road map of how Lone Star Legal Aid will implement the Texas Crime Victim Legal Assistance Network throughout their 72 county Texas region over the next two years. This Implementation Plan provides an overview of the Texas Crime Victim Legal Assistance Network (hereafter referred to as the "Network") approach. This Implementation Plan explores the role of the Network players including staff, members, an leadership (Steering Committee). The Plan also explores the goals enumerated in the Network Logic Model and the major components and accompanying tasks designed to achieve those goals.

Network Project Overview

Network Origin

The Lone Star Legal Aid (LSLA) WVLAN project proposed a network that would serve all of their 72 county service area in Texas which includes the Houston metro area and stretches from the Gulf of Mexico, north to the Texas/Arkansas border, west to Waco, and east to the Texas/Louisiana border. LSLA with the support and guidance of the project's Steering

Committee² initiated work on the Network in late 2012. LSLA secured the assistance of research partners from the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University and the Crime Victims' Institute at Sam Houston State University (the Research Team) to develop a multi-stage needs assessment survey to be conducted across LSLA's 72 county service area in Texas. The needs assessment survey utilized responses from a variety of professionals across disciplines and from victims themselves through a combination of community listening sessions, key informant interviews, and web-based surveys to identify and confirm the gaps in legal services throughout the targeted communities³. The final insights and recommendations derived from the needs assessment survey provide the guiding force behind Network development and this Implementation Plan.

Network Description

The ultimate goal of the Network is to create and sustain a comprehensive, coordinated, collaborative network of free wraparound legal services that holistically address the full range of crime victims' legal needs in connection with their victimization. This goal will be accomplished by focusing on two major areas. The first major focus area will be to provide direct legal services to crime victims. The second major focus area will be to provide support services to victim service providers.

Legal services to crime victims - The Network will provide a full spectrum of civil legal services to crime victims. Network partners will provide direct legal services to crime victims ranging from advice and limited services to representation in court and administrative proceedings. The Network will also use technology to reach a larger population by providing access to a directory of service providers and current legal information regarding victim rights and self-help materials through a dedicated Network website.

Support services for service providers⁴ – The Network will offer service providers tools to help them better serve their victim clients. The Network will provide educational information, trainings, and screening tools to help service providers better identify legal issues. Once the provider has identified a legal issue, the Network service directory will help the provider get

² The Steering Committee includes the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, the Cabrini Center of Catholic Charities, Texas Department of Public Safety Victim Services Program, Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (member starting January 2014), Houston Mayor's Victim Service Office, Lone Star Legal Aid, Poverty Law Section of the State Bar of Texas, Texas Access to Justice Commission (member from November 2012-November 2013), Texas Access to Justice Foundation, Texas Legal Services Center, University of Houston Law Center's Civil Legal Clinic Program, and YMCA International.

³ The full text of the Needs Assessment Study Final Report can be found in Appendix E.

⁴ Service provider refers to both legal and non-legal service providers who work with crime victims exclusively and non-exclusively.

victim clients connected with an appropriate legal resource. The Network will also create a standing committee composed of regional representatives⁵ who will help guide the Network. These representatives will help the Network identify the unique needs of crime victims in that community so that service and educational initiatives can be designed to meet the needs of local victims and the local service providers in the community.

The Network goal will be accomplished by engaging in a variety of activities that leverage the services and expertise of both legal and non-legal providers working together to improve services to crime victims⁶. Network membership will consist of legal service providers, known as Primary Partners, who will be responsible for providing direct legal services to crime victims. Network membership will also extend to include non-legal service providers from a variety of disciplines, known as Associate Partners, who will help identify crime victim clients with potential legal issues and refer them to the appropriate Network Primary Partner for legal assessment.

Network Constraints and Assumptions

This is the first time a collaborative legal network of this complexity has been attempted. There are challenges that the Network will face that are not easily resolved. Chief among these challenges is a demand for service which far outweighs available resources. Given the total population within the targeted 72 county service area⁷, the potential crime victim client population is enormous. According to the Texas Crime Report for 2012, there were 358,821 criminal offenses reported to law enforcement in the targeted region⁸. If we add in the numerous victims who fail to report their victimization to law enforcement, the potential number of crime victims needing services in the 72 county area is staggering⁹. Even taking into consideration the

⁵ Regional representatives will be local service providers and can include legal and non-legal providers.

⁶ See Network Logic Model in Appendix B.

⁷ The estimated total population of the proposed service area is just over 9.6 million as of July 1, 2013 .U.S. Census Bureau, *Annual Estimates of the Resident Population April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2013*, <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF> (last accessed September 12, 2014)

⁸ This figure includes reported incidents of murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny (theft), and motor vehicle theft. Texas Department of Public Safety *The Texas Crime Report for 2012*, Chapter 10 “Crimes by Jurisdiction” http://www.dps.texas.gov/administration/crime_records/pages/crimestatistics.htm (last accessed September 4, 2014)

⁹ The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported among those victims surveyed only 54 % of serious violent crime victims and only 34% of property crimes victims in the U.S. reported their victimization to law enforcement in 2012. See The Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization, 2012*, October 2013 NCJ 243389, <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4781> (last accessed September 4, 2014)

low number of victims who seek any type of services, demand will outweigh current resources in most fields including legal services.¹⁰ It is impossible to provide a full range of services to every victim. However, we believe through collaboration and coordination, it is possible to improve the way in which we provide services to victims. Specifically, we can reduce the time and effort required by victims seeking services. We can also improve communication among service providers with a focus on decreasing duplication of services and facilitating the re-allocation of those resources to better serve victim needs. The idea behind the Network is that we seek to serve the person, not just to provide a particular service.

Resource limitation is a chronic problem for all service providers. The nature of funding for most service agencies is dependent on constant competition for grant funding from public and private sources. This competition for resources is time consuming and can often deter collaboration and coordination among providers who are busy seeking to set themselves apart from the pack and shine brighter to attract funders to their cause(s). However, there is an ever increasing demand for increased collaboration and coordination of services among providers. This increased demand can be seen at the national level with initiatives like OVC's Vision 21 and at the local level as documented in all current county and regional Criminal Justice Plans drafted by local service providers throughout the 72 Network counties. The increased demand for collaboration has started to spark interest among grant funders who hopefully will use their resources to reward collaboration by encouraging service providers to shine brighter by working together to increase the capacity and the quality of services provided to crime victims.

There are also several assumptions that we make in the implementation of this Network. We assume that a substantial number of providers will welcome and seek to become a part of this Network. We assume that the victim experience of seeking and obtaining service within the Network will be improved by the successful implementation of the plan contained in this document. Finally, we assume the Network will be successfully implemented during the demonstration period and will have sufficient resources to continue operation beyond the demonstration period¹¹. The challenges we face are difficult and the assumptions we make are considerable but the potential benefits of the successful implementation of this Network to victims, service providers, and the insights from our lessons learned are unlimited.

Network Project Approach

Network Team

¹⁰ Only 8% of violent crime victims surveyed received assistance from a victim service agency in 2012. See The Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization, 2012*, October 2013 NCJ 243389. <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4781> (last accessed September 4, 2014)

¹¹ The OVC demonstration period concludes on January 31, 2017.

The implementation of this Network will require the time and talent of a number of dedicated professionals. The Network Team will consist of Network staff, Network members, and several additional individuals.

I. Network Staff

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role on Network Staff</u>
Sonia Lopez	LSLA	Network Project Oversight
Jessica Alas	LSLA	Network Project Director
TBD (October 2014)	LSLA	Network Project Staff Attorney
TBD (October 2014)	LSLA	Network Project Paralegal
TBD (February 2016)	LSLA	Network Project Paralegal

As Network implementation gets underway, the demands on the time of current Network dedicated staff will increase beyond the capacity of its current level. As a result, current Network staff will be expanded throughout the implementation process. The expected Network dedicated staff will include the following:

Sonia Lopez, Project Oversight – Ms. Lopez is a Directing Attorney with LSLA and will provide direct supervision and guidance for the Project Director.

Jessica Alas, Project Director - Ms. Alas will provide global management for all Network staff, ensure implementation activities remain on schedule, and provide supervision for direct legal services. She will lead Network outreach activities and oversee content development for the Network website. Ms. Alas will also continue to serve as the Chair of the Steering Committee.

Network Staff Attorney, TBD (Position added October 2014) – The Network staff attorney position duties will initially focus on assisting with building network infrastructure and outreach capacity. Once rollout of the Network begins, the staff attorney will maintain a modest caseload of crime victim clients. This position will help bridge the service gap when compelling victim-clients seek services from LSLA but due to limited resources the local LSLA office is unable to fully assist the victim.

Network Paralegals, TBD (Positions added October 2014 and February 2016) - The Network paralegal position will initially focus on assisting with building network infrastructure and outreach capacity. Once rollout of the Network begins, the paralegal will transition into more case management duties and coordinating applications for Network services. An additional

Network paralegal position will likely be added by February 1, 2016 as implementation continues and the Network service area expands.

II. Network Members

<u>Role in Network</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Primary Network Partners	Legal Service Providers
Associate Network Partners	Non-legal Service Providers
Steering Committee	Representatives from Primary and Associate Network Partners

Network members will fall into two broad categories, Primary Partners and Associate Partners.

Primary Partners – Primary Partners will be those partner organizations and agencies who provide direct legal services. Primary Partners will send and receive crime victim applications for legal services within the Network and provide direct legal services when appropriate and available. Primary Network Partner will be asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding clarifying the reciprocal relationship between all Primary Partners within the Network. Primary Partners will also complete a Network Partner Information Form which will help the Network capture information about the services provided by each partner to maintain and update a directory of service providers.

Associate Partners – Associate Partners will be those partner organizations and agencies who provide non-legal services to crime victims. Associate Partners will include organizations and agencies whose entire clientele is made up of victims¹² and those organizations and agencies whose clientele includes only a portion of crime victims¹³. Associate Partners will refer crime victims with legal issues to the appropriate Network Primary Partner and will also receive non-legal victim referrals for services from the Network Primary Partners where appropriate and available. Associate Partners will not be expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding. However, an *Associate Partner Roles and Responsibility Guide* will be created¹⁴ and Associate Partners will be expected to acknowledge they have read and understand the terms of that Guide.

¹² Examples of Associate Partners whose entire client base is composed of victims include rape crisis centers, domestic violence organization, and Victim Assistant Coordinators in District/County Attorney’s Office.

¹³ Examples of Associate Partners for which victims represent only a portion of their client base include organizations serving children, the elderly, the LGBTQ community, or the homeless.

¹⁴ This guide will be developed with the assistance of the Steering Committee.

Associate Partners will also complete a Network Partner Information Form which will help the Network capture information about the services provided by each partner to maintain and update a directory of service providers.

The Network Steering Committee – The Steering Committee will be composed of representatives from both Primary and Associate Partners. As implementation expands, the Steering Committee composition will include representatives from all over the Network service area. As implementation proceeds, the Committee will provide Network policymaking guidance and help identify and correct the course of implementation when needed. The Steering Committee will meet before the end of 2014 to finalize rules related to Steering Committee service. However, based on discussion at this time, the following protocols are likely to be approved. To promote geographic representation and effectiveness, the Steering Committee will likely not exceed twenty members and each Network Zone¹⁵ will have at least one representative on the Committee¹⁶. The Steering Committee may also include up to five members who represent organizations or agencies which are not direct service providers but can still provide invaluable guidance and governance to the Committee¹⁷. The Network Project Director will continue to serve as the Committee Chair during implementation.

III. Additional Network Support

<u>Role in Network</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Internal Project Evaluation	Public Policy Research Institute – Texas A&M University (Research Team)
Design Network Website	Web Design/Programmer
Network Data Management	LSLA Department of Information Technology

The following additional parties will also play an important role in implementation activities.

¹⁵ The Network covers a 72 county area and for the purposes of implementation will be separated into seven geographic zones with a rollout of the Network into all zones over a 20 month period. The zones are discussed in more detail on pp. 17-20 of this plan.

¹⁶ Network zone representatives will be added to the Committee to coincide with rollout planned in each zone.

¹⁷ Examples of these guidance and governance members include bar associations, organization who provide support services to victim service providers, or organizations whose primary mission is to promote or enhance free legal services and/or crime victim services.

The Research Team - The Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University will continue their work on the project. The Research Team will help create tools with which the Network can internally evaluate its performance to promote best practices on a long-term basis. The Research Team will also continue to collaborate with the OVC demonstration project evaluation team.

Web Designer/Programmer – LSLA will recruit and engage the services of the best qualified individual or agency to assist with the development of the dedicated Network website. The successful candidate will understand the needs of the legal services community and understand the dynamics of broad-based collaboration to ensure the development of a website created to expand and evolve.

Department of Information Technology – The Network will also rely on the expertise of the LSLA Department of Information Technology to support the capture and maintenance of Network data. The Network will also rely on these professionals to work with the Web Designer in the development of the Network website.

Implementation

I. Logic Model

The overarching goal of the Network is to create and sustain a comprehensive, coordinated, collaborative network of free wraparound legal services that holistically address the full range of crime victims' legal needs in connection with their victimization. In order to meet this goal, we must address several gaps in services that have been identified in our service area during the needs assessment study. Based on these identified gaps, the Steering Committee created a Network Logic Model¹⁸ upon which goals the implementation components have been designed to address.

The Network Logic Model identifies the following five implementation goals which are tied to one or more components discussed in the next section:

1. Legal Services Goal - Maximize existing resources and identify new resources to serve the legal needs of crime victims.
2. Membership Goal - Expand the referral network.
3. Leadership Goal - Create a standing committee for the whole network to enhance communication and collaboration among all stakeholders.

¹⁸ The full Network Logic Model can be found in the Appendix B.

4. Education Goal - Educate victim service providers about legal needs of crime victims.
5. Expansion Goal - Address other key non-legal needs of victims in conjunction with their legal needs.

II. Implementation Components

Network implementation goals will be achieved by focusing activities on several major components. Specifically, all implementation tasks will revolve around building Network infrastructure, building Network membership and capacity, staggering rollout of Network services by geographic zones, creating a Network-community interface, and using evaluation to promote effective Network evolution. Each major component will be described in this section. Specific implementation tasks and expected completion dates for each component can be found in a comprehensive Implementation Task Timeline located in Appendix C.

A. Building Network Infrastructure

The success of the Network depends upon the ability of the partners to collaborate and coordinate within the Network so that services are provided to victims as effectively and efficiently as possible. The cornerstone of that collaboration and coordination will be information sharing between partners and the intra-Network victim referral process. The victim services field, in all its forms, turns on the service provider's ability to gain the trust of the victim. Therefore, victim service providers must be constantly vigilant in their treatment of sensitive victim information. The delicate lawyer-client relationship adds another layer of privacy concerns for victim legal service providers. Therefore, a clear policy outlining when and how victim information can be shared within the Network is essential to ensure the reputation of each individual partner while maintaining public confidence as we build the Network's reputation.

Traditionally, the victim services industry relies on the victim actively seeking out services they need from one or more independent providers via time consuming and often challenging application procedures. This Network model shifts the burden of seeking services, in large part, from the victim to the service provider. The victim still must seek services from at least one Network partner in order to take advantage of all Network resources available. Once the victim applies for services with one Network partner, the Network is then responsible for ensuring the victim's needs are met holistically via the Network intra-referral process.

The Network will provide partner access to a Network Application which will include the consent to refer authorization, and a Network Pre-Screening Form. The Network Application provides Primary Partners with most of the basic eligibility based information needed for most grant funded legal programs. The consent to refer authorization in the Network Application, once signed by a victim applicant, gives partners permission to share the information contained within

the Network Application with other partners. This consent will allow the victim applicant to designate whether or not they give permission to partners for their application to be shared with partners for legal services and/or non-legal services. The Network Pre-Screening Form will be used by any partner referring a victim applicant to a Primary Partner for legal services. This referral form will contain only the basic information needed by a Primary Partner to conduct necessary conflict checks which allow attorneys to adhere to the professional ethics rules. The Network Application will be used by partners referring victim applicants to describe the services needed by the victim.

The intra-Network referral process begins with a victim applying for services at any Network partner agency. If that partner agency, following evaluation of the victim's needs, determines that another partner agency offers the service matching the victim's need, the partner will send the referral to the appropriate partner agency. Crime victimization can happen to anyone at any time. Therefore, it is not a stretch of the imagination to say that today's perpetrator can be tomorrow's victim. The intra-Network referral process is designed to safeguard both victim privacy and the partner's ethical duties.

When a referral is sent to a Primary Partner for legal services, there will be a two-step process to accommodate screening for a potential legal conflict. The referring partner must complete the Network Pre-Screening Form and send it to the receiving Primary Partner for evaluation. Once the receiving Primary Partner reviews the form, the partner will send notice to the referring partner whether the referral is accepted or rejected. If the referral is accepted, the referring agency will then forward the completed Network Application to the receiving Primary Partner. If, however, the receiving Primary Partner identifies that the referred applicant presents a conflict for its agency, the referring Primary Partner will be notified and the referring partner is free to refer the applicant to another matching Primary Partner.

When a referral for non-legal services is sent to an Associate Partner, there is only a one-step process. The referring agency must send a completed Network Application to the matching Associate Partner to complete the referral. The victim applicant will be given the contact information for the receiving Associate Partner.

As discussed earlier, resources are limited and Network implementation cannot fully address the lack of resources for legal services to crime victims. Each Network partner will be providing services in accordance with its individual priorities in mind. Therefore, an intra-Network referral to a Primary or Associate Partner cannot guarantee that the victim applicant will receive services. To avoid excessive referrals that cannot be handled by Primary Partners, the Primary Partners will provide information to the Network outlining their case acceptance priorities for the purposes of Network referrals¹⁹. The tracking of Primary Partner priorities will

¹⁹ The information regarding Primary Partner case acceptance priorities will be maintained within the Network website in the partner accessible only part of the Network's website.

help manage the expectations of all partners, particularly the Associate Partners. Although the overarching goal of the Network is to create a collaborative and coordinated Network to holistically address the legal needs of victims, the Network must never oversell itself or it may risk losing legitimacy before implementation is complete. Over time, we believe the Network will expand direct services through the re-allocation of resources currently used on duplicated services. However, this expansion is a long-term process. In the meantime, we must temper Network Partner and crime victim applicant expectations by providing a realistic picture of what the Network Primary Partners can do in the short-term. There will also be other services, not affected by case acceptance priorities, the Network will offer to benefit both crime victims and victim service providers²⁰.

Another important element of the intra-Network referral process will be data tracking²¹. Primary Partners will be asked to track Network referral data throughout the implementation period and send that information to the Network Project Director on a quarterly basis²². Primary Partners will track the number of unique applicants referred to and referred by their agency via the intra-Network referral process²³. They will also track the number of unique legal services they provide to applicants referred via the intra-Network referral process. Primary Partners quarterly reports will provide the information in aggregate numbers.

The main objective for this implementation component is to create a referral system wherein a crime victim will only be required to apply for legal services once and benefit from the services of a diverse group of legal and non-legal service providers.

B. Building Network Membership and Capacity

Again, the success of the Network is wholly dependent on creating a network of providers who are willing to collaborate and coordinate to better serve the legal needs of victims. The first step is to fully explore what Network membership means. Several questions must be addressed. What is a Network member? Who can be a Network member? How does one become

²⁰ Refer to Section B, Building Network Membership and Capacity and Section D, Creating a Network-Community Interface.

²¹ Some of the data tracked will be used to satisfy aggregate reporting requirements to OVC (number of victims served by Network partners and number of legal services provided by Network partners).

²² The first quarter reporting is due on April 15th, the second quarter is due July 15th, the third quarter is due October 15th, and the fourth quarter is due January 15th. The first report will be due on April 15, 2015 (related to pilot project data) and the final report will be due on January 15, 2017.

²³ Primary partners will individually report the number of referrals they send to and receive from both Primary and Associate Partners.

a Network member? Why join the Network? How will the Network recruit members? How will the Network retain members? Who will provide leadership for the Network members?

The Network's overarching goal is to provide free holistic legal services to crime victims. Therefore, the Network members must include those agencies and organizations which together can provide the broadest possible spectrum of free legal services to crime victims seeking to recover from victimization. These legal service providers are called Primary Partners. Primary Partners will provide crime victims direct legal services and refer victim clients to fellow Network partners via the intra-Network referral procedure when appropriate. These providers may include (but are not limited to) some of the following groups legal aid organizations, non-profit organizations with licensed attorneys on staff, pro bono programs operating within local or specialty bar associations, and County and District Attorney Offices who provide assistance with protective orders.

Although the Network's primary focus will be the provision of legal services, non-legal service providers also play a pivotal role in the operation of the Network. These providers, called Associate Partners, will serve as a major referral source in connecting crime victim clients with the Network's Primary Partners for legal services. Additionally, they will also receive referrals from fellow Associate Partners and Primary Partners of victim clients who may be eligible for and benefit from its services. These non-legal service providers include agencies and organizations which provide services solely to crime victims such as rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters and victim assistance offices affiliated with law enforcement and prosecutor's offices. These non-legal service providers also include those agencies and organizations which provide services to both victims and non-victims such as those dealing with issues related to the elderly, the homeless, children, veterans, and the LGBTQ community. They may also include various government offices such as the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, the Texas Attorney General's Consumer Protection Office, or the local F.B.I. Victim Services Office.

Providers serving crime victim clients in any one or more of the Network's 72 county service area can be members²⁴. Providers can become part of the Network by completing a Network Partner Information Form. This form will capture the provider's basic information including service area, eligibility for service requirements, services provided, the name and contact information for an employee to serve as the Network contact for the provider and a fax number or email address that will be used for Network referrals. This form allows us to map the services available in the area and the information the Network needs to verify that the provider is a legitimate agency/organization and provides the services listed on the information sheet. For legal services providers, once the provider information is verified, the Network and the provider's Director or Director's Designee will execute a Network Memorandum of

²⁴ A list of Network covered counties can be found in Appendix A.

Understanding (MOU). This MOU will list out the expectations of both parties regarding the referral process and safeguarding victim privacy. The Primary Partner MOU will also detail the data tracking requirements for the duration of the implementation period. For non-legal service providers, once the provider information is verified, the provider's Director or Director's Designee will submit the acknowledgement attached to the *Associate Partner Role and Responsibility Guide* which provides the Network assurance that the provider understands and accepts the role and responsibility of an Associate Partner within the Network.

Providers will reap three main benefits from joining the Network. First, as a Network partner, they can offer victim clients access to fellow Network partners via the intra-Network referral system which may include legal services and lessen the burden on victims of shopping around for services from multiple providers. Secondly, Network membership benefits the partners by providing access to Network partner trainings and educational materials for its employees. Finally, Network membership will provide better knowledge of other resources available for crime victim clients in and around the community as Network membership expands.

The main objective for this implementation component is to expand the Network to include a diverse range of service providers that build a Network with the capacity to address a plethora of legal and non-legal crime victim needs. Additional details regarding Network membership outreach, expansion and benefits will be provided in the discussion related to rollout of the Network and the creation of the Network-Community Interface.

C. Multi-phased Rollout of Network Services by Geographic Zone

The proposed Network service area includes 72 counties and a total population of nearly ten million. Given a service area that covers approximately 60,000 miles, building a comprehensive network of service providers across such a large and diverse area will take time. Therefore, logistics dictate a series of strategic regional rollouts, rather than one simultaneous launch. There are two main concerns with launching the Network simultaneously in 72 counties, untested Network policies, procedures and protocols and insufficient Network capacity.

The policies, procedures, and protocols contained in this plan are a series of well-intentioned presumptions of what will work for this Network. However, poorly performing policies, procedures, and protocols can inhibit Network performance, particularly those revolving around membership and the intra-Network referral process. The Network's best chance of success depends on the partners' ability to collaborate effectively. Therefore, a short-run test of Network policies, procedures and protocols, prior to the start of a wider Network rollout, is warranted. Through the use of issue specific Network pilot projects designed around the strengths of existing Primary Partners, the Network will have an opportunity to test how well partners work together and how the intra-Network referral protocols function for both Network partners and victim clients. If adjustment to any Network policy, procedure, or protocol is

indicated based on the Network performance during the pilot projects, the Network will have time to make the protocol modifications before major outreach activities begin in preparation for multi-phased Network rollout.

There will be three pilot projects based in or near the greater Houston metro area. Houston and surrounding areas make up the service area for the majority of current Network Primary Partners. Additionally, this portion of the proposed Network service area boasts the largest and most diverse number of both legal and non-legal victim service providers. Launching the pilots in and around Houston will be a great place to test how the Network functions day to day under the stress of high populations of crime victims and service providers working together to serve them.

Following partner preparation²⁵ and targeted outreaches to essential service providers²⁶, the three test pilot projects will launch simultaneously and be observed for approximately three months. The first pilot will focus on victims of human trafficking in four counties Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris and Montgomery Counties. The Human trafficking pilot will build upon alliances that have already begun to coordinate services for trafficking victims in the Harris County area (includes the City of Houston)²⁷. The second pilot will focus on battered immigrant women living in Harris County. This pilot will focus on providing coordinated legal services related to immigration and civil legal needs (notably protective orders and family law)²⁸. The third pilot will be based in the Brazos Valley area (located Northwest of Houston) and will focus on providing Network services in a rural setting.

Following the outcome of the test pilot projects, the Network will have a better understanding of how the Network performs. The next step will be to open the Network beyond the test pilot geographic and subject-matter constraints and build a comprehensive Network that can address the holistic legal service needs of crime victims throughout the entire 72 county service area. To properly build Network diversity and capacity, strategic provider outreach will

²⁵ Existing Primary Partners will have to execute updated MOU and make any internal adjustment to prepare for sending and receiving intra-Network referrals.

²⁶ Essential service providers are those legal service providers in the pilot project service areas who focus on serving victims that fall within the pilot projects demographics.

²⁷ The Houston Trafficking Resource Alliance (HTRA) established in 2004 is a collaboration of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies working together with area social service organizations to identify and assist the victims of human trafficking and to effectively identify, apprehend and prosecute those engaged in trafficking offenses. HTRA also has a Pro Bono Law Group of independent legal service providers who have collaborated to provide legal services to victims of trafficking since early 2013. See <http://www.humantraffickinghouston.org/>

²⁸ Harris County has the largest number of legal and non-legal service providers working to assist domestic violence victims and immigrant victims than any other county in the proposed Network service area.

be instrumental to the successful launch of the Network. With limited resources, Network staff cannot effectively provide coverage throughout a 72 county area simultaneously. However, if the service area is broken down into geographical zones and Network launch staggered by a few months across each zone, the Network staff can focus outreach activities on a rolling basis in each zone to expand membership, map services, and market the Network amongst the providers in each area before formally launching the Network in each zone. If proper outreach efforts are not made into every corner of the proposed Network prior to launch, the Network will not have the capacity to serve crime victims holistically.

The Network Zones

The Network service area will be broken down into seven smaller geographic zones. Each zone will consist of anywhere from eight to twelve counties²⁹. Using this zone approach, Network staff can focus on building Network membership and capacity in one to two zones at a time. Outreach in each zone will be focused to make strategic alliances with several key providers who can serve as guides for more in depth outreach into each zone. Throughout the course of the needs assessment survey research, project staff has made provider contacts throughout the service area and tracked provider interest in the formation of a Network and will utilize this information to begin establishment of the Regional Representatives for the Network Steering Committee. These Regional Representatives will serve to support outreach efforts in their zone and serve to inform the Network Steering Committee of local service gaps and needs.

This multi-phased zone rollout approach will begin in Zone 1 in April 2015 and be completed by August 1, 2016 in Zone 7³⁰. The rollout begins in Harris and surrounding counties due to the fact that some infrastructure will already be in place as a result of the test pilot projects operated in the same area in early 2015. Additionally, the greater Houston area provides the best place to observe and evaluate the collaboration of Network partners due to the high number of service providers operating in the region³¹. Therefore, for purposes of evaluation, making the greater Houston area Zone 1 will maximize the opportunity for both internal and external evaluation.

Outreach activities in each zone will be initiated by Network project staff in the months prior to Network launch in each zone. Network staff will build upon provider contacts made during the needs assessment survey process in each zone. Outreach activities will begin with those providers operating in each zone who currently participate in some sort of formal or

²⁹ A list of counties by zone and accompanying map can be found in Appendix D.

³⁰ The timeline for multi-phased zone rollout can be found in the Implementation Task Timeline located in Appendix C.

³¹ Evaluation of the Network will be addressed in more detail in the final substantive section of this document.

informal collaboration³² with fellow service providers in the hope of benefitting from and building on the collaborative spirit to enhance Network membership and capacity. This strategic outreach will also give Network staff the opportunity to identify those service providers who are in the best position and willing to serve as Regional Representative on the Network Steering Committee.

In such a large service area, local needs and issues can often be overlooked and could leave the Network ineffective in some areas. The Regional Representatives will give communities a way to communicate their concerns among local providers and back to the Network with the goal of improving Network service to that service area. The Regional Representatives will provide invaluable information about local legal service needs and help the Network identify ways to better address the need in that community whether that can be accomplished through providing specific educational programs for local service providers or by addressing legal needs of a particular underserved victim population in their community. Having Regional Representation is integral to making the Network a success. Each region must have a voice within the Network. The quickest way for the Network to die is to lose the support of local providers who are not engaged or invested in the success of the Network due to a belief that the Network is not working to help victims in their service area.

The main objective for this implementation component is to properly prepare for and execute full Network implementation in a way that will provide a diverse and engaged Network membership and broad based capacity to serve the needs of crime victims across the full Network service area before the end of 2016.³³

D. Creating a Network-Community Interface

A common theme running through the community responses to our needs assessment survey was the call for centralization - a centralization of information for victims and victim service providers. The increase availability and use of technology has made it much easier to access a variety of information electronically from our homes, offices, libraries, and even our smart phones via the Internet. According to the United Nations, just over 84% of American used the Internet as of 2013³⁴. The Internet has made accessing information cheaper and easier than

³² Some examples of formal collaboration are county or city based Sexual Assault Resource Teams or Domestic Violence Coalitions.

³³ The full schedule for multi-phased Network rollout can be found in the Implementation Task Timeline located in Appendix C.

³⁴ International Telecommunication Union, *ICT Facts and Figures*, See Percent of Individuals Using the Internet (by country), <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx> (last accessed September 8, 2014).

ever before. Therefore, it is logical to use this popular medium as a way to enhance Network services.

The creation of a Network website will allow the Network a cost effective method of sharing educational materials, membership recruitment information, and an easy to search directory of service providers. The website will be designed to appeal to two groups of users - crime victims and victim service providers.

The dedicated crime victim portal of the website will be used to supplement direct legal services provided by the Network's Primary Partners. The website will be used to connect crime victims with an up-to-date mixture of original and existing victim rights information and legal self-help materials. The website will provide access to a searchable database of crime victim service providers in their community.

The dedicated victim service provider portal of the website will be used to provide easy access to Network member information and Network member forms. The website will also maintain a member restricted area which will contain details regarding referral contact information and Primary Partner case acceptance priority criteria. The service provider portal of the website will include educational materials and trainings to help providers better understand and screen for legal issues facing crime victims. These trainings and other educational information will help providers expand and supplement the current training available from their individual organizations. Additionally, the website will facilitate providers' work with victims by giving them access to a searchable database of victim service providers.

Immediately following OVC approval of this plan, Network staff will interview and hire an appropriate web designer/programmer to begin the design of the Network website. The content of the Network website will be developed and expand throughout the implementation period. The basic web launch will focus on the resource directory and providing Network membership and referral information. Basic website launch will take place in conjunction with outreach and launch in Zone 1³⁵. As the website grows, the informational and educational resource library will expand via contributions from Network staff and Network Partners.

The goal of this implementation component is to create a public portal through which Network services can be accessed by both crime victims seeking service and victim service providers seeking resources to help better serve their victim clients.

E. Using Evaluation to Promote Effective Network Evolution

³⁵ Details on the Network website development schedule can be found in the Implementation Task Timeline located in Appendix C.

This implementation plan is a test-run of how we believe the Network should be implemented. If we are lucky, some of this implementation plan will result in successful policies, procedures and protocols that will become our long-term best practices for serving the holistic legal needs of crime victims as they work to recover from victimization. We want to make sure that we provide the Network with quality control mechanisms to help us improve Network functionality during and after implementation. Therefore, we are committed to creating effective ways to internally evaluate Network functionality from both the perspectives of the victim and victim service provider which will promote positive Network evolution during and after the implementation process.

The Network Staff and Steering Committee will collaborate with the Research Team from the Public Policy Research Institute to continuously evaluate the Network. This evaluation process will begin with the development of satisfaction surveys for both crime victims and victim service providers through which these individuals can share their opinions on how the Network functions. Particularly the surveys will be designed to uncover how well the Network is meeting its overarching goal of holistic legal service for victims.

The satisfaction survey for crime victims will focus on accessibility and services. In particular, the survey will gather information about victim experiences with ease or difficulty of accessing Network services, the number of services they sought and received, and the quality of services. The satisfaction survey for victim service providers will focus on the referral process, communication, and education. This survey will gather information about service providers' experience with the intra-Network referral process, their use of educational tools and satisfaction with educational programs provided by the Network.

The Network staff will work with the Research Team throughout the implementation period to develop additional methods of internal evaluation and achieve the goal of this implementation component which is to promote positive Network evolution through self-inspection.

APPENDICIES