

Partnering to Access Legal Services (PALS):

A Needs Assessment for the Denver Wrap Around Legal Services for Victims of Crime Project

Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.

Principal Investigator (PI)

Tejas Srinivas

Michelle Seulki Lee

Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs)

Traumatic Stress Studies (TSS) Group

University of Denver

June 30, 2014

This project was supported by Grant 2012-VF-GX-K018 awarded to Rocky Mountain Victim Law Center by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Executive Summary

A three-phase Needs Assessment was conducted in the Denver Metro area (2013-2014) to identify the gaps and strengths in legal service needs that arise out of victimization (e.g., domestic violence and sexual assault; child abuse and neglect; elder abuse; human trafficking). Phase 1 involved interviews with 25 representatives from organizations that provide legal services for crime victims or work on crime-victim and related issues in some capacity (e.g., through research, education, or policy). Phase 2 involved 15 focus groups with 88 diverse individuals (including Spanish speakers) exposed to crime or who knew someone well (such as a loved one) exposed to crime. To assure focus groups reflected legal needs across the lifespan, three groups comprised of volunteers who worked closely with child or older adult crime victims. Based on analysis of transcripts from Phases 1 and 2, we developed a survey instrument to assess perceptions of legal needs and barriers to getting legal needs met following crime. In Phase 3, 114 diverse individuals exposed to crime or who knew someone well (such as a loved one) exposed to crime, and 122 professionals working with crime victims, completed the survey.

Drawing on diverse samples of participants across the three phases of study, the findings reveal that crime victims have interconnected and complex legal needs that span civil and criminal systems as well as face a host of barriers to getting their legal needs met. Data from this multi-method assessment converge on four primary problems that reflect inadequate 1) information/knowledge about legal issues; 2) resources and funding; 3) trauma-informed, victim-sensitive, and victim-centered approaches; and 4) system coordination.

Lack on Information/Knowledge. In focus groups, crime victims reported great difficulty accessing information about legal issues as well as problems with inconsistency and/or inaccuracy in information received from service providers. Focus group participants highlighted the urgent need for accessible information about legal terms and procedures. They described difficulty asking for help and seeking services when they did not understand the legal terms and systems in play. Focus group participants emphasized the importance of web-based resources (website, videos available on the Internet) that could be open to victims (regardless of whether they were enrolled in services at a particular agency) and that used accessible language. The sentiments from focus groups about lack of information were clearly supported in the survey data, which revealed that both crime victims and professionals perceived information barriers as serious problems. The survey data revealed particular concerns about the timing of information (e.g., that information given in the aftermath of the crime might be lost/forgotten when needed later), lack of awareness about services, lack of knowledge about crime victim rights, and insufficient legal clinics/workshops/educational opportunities.

Resources and Funding. In both interviews and focus groups, participants – professionals and victims – described the stresses and pressures of accessing and providing legal services in environments of limited resources. There was widespread recognition among participants that low-income legal service providers do not have adequate staffing given the volume of need in the Denver area, and that individual victims do not have the personal resources to seek out private attorneys. Beyond a general recognition of the need for more legal professionals, focus group participants talked about limited resources across service agencies (legal and otherwise) that make it difficult for providers to take adequate time with individuals and for professionals to

get the relevant training they need to help victims effectively interface with legal systems. Focus group participants recognized the importance of training resources for service providers and the value in having adequate staffing and support. Focus groups also illustrated the interaction of larger resource and economic issues with legal service needs. All of these findings were supported in the survey data, in which participants noted significant barriers to getting legal needs met, such as inadequate legal resources (e.g., insufficient availability of guardians ad litem and low-cost attorneys), long waitlists, impediments to accessing services (either physically getting to service locations or lack of technology), and difficulty getting basic needs met.

Trauma-Informed, Victim-Sensitive, and Victim-Centered Approaches. Data from the interviews and focus groups made clear the critical importance of legal services that are trauma-informed, victim-sensitive, and victim-centered. Focus group participants talked about barriers to engaging with the legal system when providers did not understand the impact of trauma and related mental health issues on victims. For example, victims may ask for information multiple times or in multiple formats because cognitive consequences of trauma make the acquisition and retention of information difficult in the aftermath of a crime. Across all three phases of the assessment, both professionals and victims noted that legal professionals often do not appear to know enough about trauma and its consequences, including specific crimes such as domestic violence. Adding to this lack of knowledge, the data revealed the need for victim-centered approaches that take into account the social and psychological consequences of crime. For example, lack of social support, discrimination, and shame may interfere with victims' ability to seek out and effectively use legal services.

Legal and Non-Legal System Coordination. In interviews and focus groups, both professionals and crime victims recognized that legal needs intersect and overlap with many other human and social service needs following crime (e.g., mental health, housing, transportation, financial). Not surprisingly, then, data from all three phases of the assessment pointed to the difficulty victims (and professionals seeking to help victims) have navigating the complex, inter-related legal, human, and social service systems. Across all phases of study, data pointed to the need for continued improvement of coordination across legal and non-legal systems to help victims get their legal needs met. Within the criminal and civil legal systems specifically, several barriers related to system-wide coordination emerged. For example, both focus group and survey data revealed substantial concerns from victims about their overall safety when engaging with the legal system (e.g., during prosecution of an offender, during civil protection order proceedings, or when seeking enforcement of protections orders) as well as concerns about their loved ones (e.g., fears that they would lose their children or loved ones would have their legal status in the United States challenged). Findings also revealed significant concerns with the length of time and complexity of cases in the legal systems. While a Wrap Around Legal Services for Victims of Crime (Wrap Around) project cannot change the pace at which courts work, victims may benefit from practical and realistic information about the length and complexity of proceedings, and cross-trainings may help advocates better inform victims. Also across all phases of data collection, both victims and professionals reported significant concerns related to lack of communication among members of the judiciary (e.g., judges/magistrates not being aware of cases, lack of communication across judicial districts for cases that involve the same victims/offenders).

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction to Needs Assessment	5
Phase 1	6
Participants.....	6
Procedure.....	7
Results.....	9
Discussion.....	22
Phase 2.....	22
Participants.....	22
Procedure.....	23
Results.....	26
Discussion.....	30
Phase 3.....	31
Participants.....	35
Materials.....	36
Results.....	37
Discussion.....	45
Overall Discussion.....	47
References.....	53
Appendix.....	54
List of Tables	Page
Table 1: Phase 1 Interview Guide.....	8
Table 2: Relevant Themes: Gaps, Strengths, Needs, and Recommendations.....	10
Table 3: Phase 2 Focus Group Question Guide.....	24
Table 4: Phase 2 Themes: Gaps and Strengths.....	26
Table 5: Legal Service Need Scales: Cronbach’s Alphas and Descriptive Statistics.....	38
Table 6: Crime Victim Respondent Perceptions of Barriers, from Largest to Smallest.....	39
Table 7: Professional Respondent Perceptions of Barriers, from Largest to Smallest.....	41
Table 8: How Crime Victims Reported Learning about Legal Services.....	43
Table 9: Professionals Preferences for Training by Percentage.....	44

Introduction to Needs Assessment

The first goal of the Needs Assessment was to identify the gaps and strengths in legal service needs that arise out of victimization. For the purposes of this Needs Assessment, victimization includes domestic violence and sexual assault (including immigrant and undocumented victims); child abuse and neglect; elder abuse; and/or human trafficking. To maximize our ability to identify gaps and strengths, this Needs Assessment focused on self-reported victimizations regardless of whether victimizations were reported to law enforcement or other official entities.

The second related goal of the Needs Assessment was to assure that the information gathered would be relevant to the Steering Committee as they move forward to design and implement a detailed plan that includes policies, procedures and protocols for providing victims with necessary legal services and referrals to meet legal needs that arise in connection with victimization. To accomplish that goal, the research team worked closely with the Steering Committee, gathering feedback on measures prior to data collection as well as reporting in regularly on data analyses to assure that Steering Committee perspectives were integrated into the analyses.

This Needs Assessment used mixed qualitative and quantitative methods as well as incorporated crime victim and victim service professionals' (including legal and non-legal professionals') feedback and perspectives. In addition, our procedures focused on reaching both respondents in *and* outside of the legal system (the latter through contact with allied professionals, for example) to ensure that we captured the legal needs of victims not currently receiving any services. By using a combination of focus groups, interviews, and surveys, the Needs Assessment offered an opportunity to identify a range of legal service needs and barriers.

Further, the Needs Assessment incorporated multiple informants in an iterative process that moved from focus groups to survey-based assessments of crime victims and victim service professionals.

Phase 1 Method

Participants

The research team conducted interviews with 25 representatives from organizations that provide legal services for crime victims or work on crime victim and related issues in some capacity (e.g., through research, education, or policy). Representatives were purposefully selected to cover a broad range of organizations in the Denver metropolitan area, including those addressing crime types most commonly served by Steering Group members (i.e., domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and neglect, human trafficking, and older adult abuse).

Participants' descriptions of their missions indicated that the agencies offered: direct services (e.g., social services, advocacy, n=16); direct legal services (n=3); law enforcement (n=2); and mediation services (n=2). Participants characterized the crime victim types served by their organizational missions as follows: domestic violence (n=16), sexual assault (n=11), non-intimate physical assault (n=6), any crime (n=5), child/youth abuse (n=4), stalking (n=3), drunk driving (n=2), trespassing and robbery (n=2), human trafficking (n=2), older adult abuse/neglect/financial exploitation (n=2), and hate crimes (n=1). Finally, organizational missions specified offering services to people characterized as: secondary victims (i.e., friends or family of the victim; n=3), having disabilities (n=2), immigrants (n=2), low income (n=2), mentally ill (n=1), homeless (n=1), and LGBTQ (n=1).

Representatives reported that their organizations served a range of clients on various demographic markers. Organizations served the following specific age groups: primarily adults

(n=8), older adults (n=5), or children/youth (n=4). Areas served by organizations included those that were limited to the City or County of Denver (whether the victim lived in or was victimized in Denver; n=7), Denver plus surrounding areas (e.g., Arapahoe and Jefferson Counties; n=4), and statewide (n=2). Nine organizations served women as the primary client group while six organizations mentioned services specific to men. Organizations served the following in terms of main client ethnic group: ethnic minorities (n=4), the Hispanic/Latino population (n=2), and immigrants and refugees (n=2). In terms of socioeconomic status of clients served by their organization, six organizations served low income/indigent populations as a main client group. In terms of sexual orientation of clients served by their organization, four representatives identified the LGBTQ population as a main client group. Finally, six representatives mentioned that their organizations served all victims of crime who qualified for their services, regardless of client demographics.

In terms of number of years their organization had been in existence, five representatives mentioned that their organization was between 0-9 years-old, six between 10-19 years-old, five between 20-29 years-old, and seven between 30-49 years-old.

Representatives from organizations were recruited by phone and email, either directly through identification by the Principal Investigator and Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) through organization websites or through contacts from Steering Committee members (as well as Steering Committee members and allied professionals themselves). A trained GRA described the purpose of the interview and use of information collected and then scheduled the interview.

Procedure

Interviews were conducted by the Principal Investigator (DePrince) and two graduate research assistants (GRAs). Participating organization representatives completed informed

consent and a consent quiz, used to ensure information was presented clearly. They were informed that the interview would be audio-taped for data analysis purposes. Table 1 details the questions used to help structure the interview; items were adapted from Newmark, Bonderman, Smith, and Liner (2003) as well as newly generated for this project based on the goals of the assessment.

Table 1

Phase 1 Interview Guide

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the name of your organization and/or your organization's victim service program(s)? 2. How long has your victim service program been in existence? What is the primary mission of your victim service program? What is the mission of the organization your program is located within (if applicable)? How prominent a part of the larger organization is your program, in terms of staffing, funding, visibility, etc.? 3. What victim populations does your group serve (for example, by type of crime, victim demographics, and geographic location)? 4. What types of legal services does your program provide, if any? Apart from legal services, what other services does your program provide? 5. What are the typical organizations you collaborate with in providing services for crime victims? 6. Next, we'd like to ask you what you've noticed in your work about crime victims' legal needs in terms of which needs are more or less important; or which are more or less well served. In particular, what have you noticed about the legal needs of crime victims in relation to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the criminal case (e.g., learning the steps involved in the case, filing a police report, learning the current status of the case including the schedule of court proceedings and case disposition, enforcement of victims' rights) b. civil cases (e.g., filing for divorce, child custody, visitation, child support spousal support) c. privacy concerns (e.g., learning rules of confidentiality regarding information shared with private attorneys, criminal justice personnel, community service providers, personal records and history) d. safety issues (e.g., deciding to file/filing a police report, applying for a restraining order/order of protection; applying for stay away or no-trespass orders to be upheld by a housing authority, private landlord, or educational institution; negotiating with employers, housing authorities, and educational institutions to enforce safety measures; remediation of identity theft or fraud) e. bankruptcy, compensation, benefits, and restitution (e.g., learning about and applying for bankruptcy or compensation from state programs and benefits from federal programs, filing a civil lawsuit against the offender or a third party involved in the crime) f. housing (e.g., learning about and applying for/negotiating alternative housing options) g. employment (e.g., learning about various claims and compensation for which crime victims may qualify relating to their employment) |
|--|

- h. immigration status (e.g., learning about and applying for immigration relief based on their crime victim status)
 - i. translation services (e.g., help with translation of legal documents/forms/paperwork, pre-hearing conferences, or in-court proceedings)
 - j. financial assistance, such as government benefits programs
 - k. mental health counseling/support
7. What other legal needs of crime victims have we not yet discussed?
 8. Based on our discussion of various legal needs of crime victims, what legal needs are well met by your organization or typical collaborating organizations? What has helped in providing adequate legal services? Have there been any changes over time that have helped in providing adequate legal services?
 9. What legal needs are not currently well met by your organization or typical collaborating organizations?
 10. What are some of the main barriers to providing adequate legal services to crime victims?
 11. What does your organization need to help you do a better job in providing legal services to crime victims?
 12. Is there anything else you would add in terms of current provision of legal needs to crime victims by various organizations in Denver and the Metro area?
 13. What has your agency done to improve your clients' access to legal services; and how successful would you say those efforts have been? What brought about those changes (e.g., a particular case, reading research, attending a training)?
 14. Finally, how long have you worked at this organization?
 - legal service needs broadly (focus group facilitators will ask about civil legal assistance; enforcement of victims' rights in criminal proceedings; assistance for victims of identity theft and fraud; and immigrant assistance for human trafficking victims and battered immigrant women);
 - legal service needs that were met well (and by what agencies?);
 - legal service needs that *were not met well/missing*;
 - common referral sources for legal service needs (with particular emphasis on allied professionals who help crime victims find legal services);
 - suggestions for how to get the word out to crime victims about available legal services;
 - suggestions for how to coordinate legal services while respecting victims' privacy and confidentiality.

To facilitate participation, interviews were conducted at the University of Denver as well as at organization sites based on participant preference. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. Participants received a \$30 Amazon gift certificate for their participation.

Phase 1 Results

Research assistants transcribed the 25 audiotaped interviews. Two GRAs led the content analysis on these transcripts, using a combined top-down and bottom-up approach. Specifically,

the top-down approach involved identification of relevant themes and sub-themes beforehand, through collaborative discussion with the PI, the larger research team, and the Steering Committee; and the bottom-up approach involved inclusion of additional themes and sub-themes that emerged during the content analysis process as the PI and GRAs considered the data. This combined approach resulted in the identification of two main thematic frameworks, whereby themes were identified and used to structure overall content analysis (see Table 2). In the first thematic framework, themes fell under five main categories that were largely dictated by the interview questions; these categories included characteristics of the organization with which the representative was affiliated, barriers to legal services, legal needs, issues specific to crime type, and issues specific to identity group. In the second thematic framework, themes referred mainly to categories of recommendations for various service providers; the four broad recommendation categories analyzed within each service provider group included collaboration, outreach/awareness, resources, and training. Please see the Table 2 below for a detailed outline of themes within each thematic framework.

Table 2
Relevant Themes: Gaps, Strengths, Needs, and Recommendations

Thematic Framework 1	
Organization Characteristics	Mission
	History
	Client Demographics
Barriers to Legal Services	Distrust of the System/Systemic Bias
	Immigration Status
	Lack of Collaboration
	Lack of Mobility and Access
	Lack of Money
	Lack of Social Support
	Lack of Training/Knowledge
	Lack of Translation Services
	Language/Culture
	Time
	Turnover/Lack of Staffing
Legal Needs	Criminal Gaps

	Criminal Strengths
	Civil Gaps
	Civil Strengths
	Privacy Gaps
	Privacy Strengths
	Safety Gaps
	Safety Strengths
	Bankruptcy, Compensation, and Benefits Gaps
	Bankruptcy, Compensation, and Benefits Strengths
	Housing Gaps
	Housing Strengths
	Employment Gaps
	Employment Strengths
	Immigration Gaps
	Immigration Strengths
	Translation Gaps
	Translation Strengths
	Financial Assistance Gaps
	Financial Assistance Strengths
	Mental Health Gaps
	Mental Health Strengths
Issues Specific to Crime Type	Child Abuse
	Domestic Violence
	Hate Crime
	Human Trafficking
	Identity Theft
	Murder
	Older Adult Abuse and Exploitation
	Other Crimes
	Sexual Assault
Issues Specific to Identity Group	Children
	Deaf
	Disabled
	Immigrants/Refugees
	LGBTQ
	Older Adults
	Indigent
	Ethnic Minorities
Thematic Framework 2	
Law Enforcement	Collaboration
	Outreach/Awareness
	Resources
	Training
System-Based Victim Advocates	Collaboration
	Outreach/Awareness
	Resources

	Training
Community-Based Victim Advocates	Collaboration
	Outreach/Awareness
	Resources
	Training
Criminal Attorneys	Collaboration
	Outreach/Awareness
	Resources
	Training
Civil/Private Attorneys	Collaboration
	Outreach/Awareness
	Resources
	Training
Judges/Magistrates	Collaboration
	Outreach/Awareness
	Resources
	Training
Allied Professionals	Collaboration
	Outreach/Awareness
	Resources
	Training
General Community/System Professionals	Collaboration
	Outreach/Awareness
	Resources
	Training
Law/Policy	

Following identification of the thematic frameworks, GRAs read through transcripts carefully to identify segments of text relevant to each theme category.

Within the first thematic structure, content analysis revealed several barriers to obtaining legal services as well as gaps and strengths in legal services. For ease of understanding, we present results about barriers and issues specific to crime type or identity group within the broad legal need categories to which they belong. Importantly, there was some overlap between gaps and strengths, such that some issues identified as gaps were also identified as strengths. Gaps and strengths are better conceptualized not as mutually exclusive categories, but as overlapping due to differences in opinion among service providers as well as acknowledgment that “gap” issues may be well-heeded at times and by some service providers.

In terms of needs relating to a criminal case, 24 of 25 (96%) professionals described major gaps including lack of knowledge about the criminal justice system; barriers faced by minority groups (e.g., fear of law enforcement, lack of translation services, different cultural views of legal systems); lack of trauma-informed training; criminal charges appearing on the victim's record; lack of resources for preparing to testify in court; victim perceptions of injustice; case outcomes varying by judge or jurisdiction; delays in the process; lack of communication across criminal and civil matters; and lack of consideration for prior victim status among children in the juvenile offender system. Sixteen of 25 (64%) professionals described some strengths relating to criminal case needs, including knowledgeable and dedicated victim advocates; improvements in work with children; emphasis on victim empowerment; improvements in apprehending offenders; and mandated access to interpreters.

In terms of needs relating to a civil case, 23 of 25 (92%) professionals described major gaps including lack of affordable attorneys; lack of victim knowledge about the civil system or civil remedies; saturation of pro bono caseloads; specific complications in domestic violence cases; difficulties obtaining or enforcing parenting or protection orders; lack of communication between different courts as well as different interests of attorneys representing mothers versus children; lack of knowledge about victimization among legal professions; lack of knowledge about civil legal issues among victim service professionals; and difficulties obtaining or enforcing restitution. Ten of 25 (40%) professionals described some strengths relating to civil case needs, including reasonable ease of obtaining minimal protection orders; reasonable ease of obtaining minimal victim compensation; and legal nights at community centers.

In terms of needs relating to privacy, 15 of 25 (60%) professionals described major gaps including lack of victim knowledge and/or confusion around confidentiality; variation in

interpretation of confidentiality rules across agencies; challenges of handling confidentiality in high lethality cases; mandatory reporting issues, particularly for adolescents; and accidental release of confidential information. Fourteen of 25 professionals (56%) described some strengths relating to privacy, including well-maintained confidentiality in certain situations or by certain organizations; awareness and vigilance of confidentiality requirements by Denver organizations; Colorado's Address Confidentiality Program; and community-coordinated response projects (e.g., Triage) that have increased interagency understanding of confidentiality.

In terms of needs relating to safety, 17 of 25 (68%) professionals described major gaps including problems securing and enforcing protection orders; increased vulnerability/susceptibility to revictimization of women and children in domestic violence cases; lack of training for professionals in victim safety needs; lack of awareness about safety needs and available services among victims; safety needs compromised due to difficulties with housing or fraud/identity theft; lack of clarity in policies regarding LGBTQ victims; and difficulties pursuing legal services when safety needs remain unmet. Eleven of 25 (44%) professionals described some strengths relating to safety, including victim advocates and organizations helping with safety planning; responsiveness of third parties (e.g., schools, housing authorities) to protection orders; some responsiveness of law enforcement to protection order violations; awareness among attorneys of safety issues; and interagency collaboration to address victim safety.

In terms of needs relating to bankruptcy, compensation, and benefits, 14 of 25 (56%) professionals described gaps including lack of awareness of needs/resources among victims; lack of legal assistance or advocacy for victims; "hidden" financial costs of victimization (e.g., inability to find work, financial dependence on offender, inability to obtain restitution after

identity theft); lack of resources or training for organizations to address victims' financial needs; and difficulty navigating state/federal systems. Eight of 25 (32%) professionals described some strengths relating to bankruptcy, compensation, and benefits, including availability of training for professionals regarding public benefits issues as well as victim eligibility for financial services; existence of clinics assisting with bankruptcy; and ability to obtain financial services following correct submission of paperwork.

In terms of needs relating to housing, 22 of 25 (88%) professionals described major gaps including lack of affordable housing for victims; lack of adequate representation and/or legal advocacy services around housing; lack of stability due to housing problems; lack of victim understanding of rights in housing issues; and problems in funding and eligibility for housing. Three of 25 (12%) professionals described some strengths relating to housing, including the existence of knowledgeable organizations in Denver and availability of emergency housing through shelters (primarily for women).

In terms of needs relating to employment, 13 of 25 (52%) professionals described major gaps including exploitation of undocumented workers, lack of awareness among legal and victim service providers around protections for employment; lack of services addressing employment-related issues; lack of employment safety/security from offenders; and risk of loss of employment due to victimization. Four of 25 (15%) professionals described some strengths relating to employment, including victim compensation serving as a good resource when victims qualify; certain workplaces offering support to victims; U-visas helping eliminate immigration status as an employment stressor; and ease in finding attorneys dealing with victim compensation.

In terms of needs relating to immigration, 14 of 25 (56%) professionals described major gaps including length of immigration procedures/processes; greater need relative to availability of services; inadequate knowledge/understanding of how immigration issues intersect with domestic violence issues among legal and victim service providers; lack of training/knowledge among legal and victim service providers regarding immigration status implications; lack of available or affordable legal representation/advocacy; language barriers among victims; and victim distrust of the legal system. Six of 25 (24%) professionals described some strengths relating to immigration, including Denver performing better than other metropolitan areas in advocacy for victims regarding immigration status and relief; a recently streamlined process of obtaining U-visas; and increased access to language services.

In terms of needs relating to translation, 15 of 25 (60%) professionals described major gaps including need for translation services in multiple languages; need for competent legal translation; need for more affordable translation services; importance of communicating available services and the rights and benefits of victims (e.g., translation of websites); problems in cultural competence; lack of access to translation services when not mandated by criminal case; lack of knowledge about interpretation with deaf or hard of hearing victims; and lack of emergency translation services at times of immediate need. Eleven of 25 (44%) professionals described some strengths relating to translation, including mandated translation services in criminal cases; greater availability of interpretation/translation for Spanish speakers; and collaboration across agencies to provide translation.

In terms of needs relating to mental health, 24 of 25 (96%) professionals described major gaps including little understanding/awareness of mental health needs among legal professionals; inadequate resources to meet mental health needs; perceived lack of credibility of crime victims

with mental health needs; and lack of advocacy for victims with mental health needs. Eight of 25 (32%) professionals described some strengths relating to mental health, including coverage of counseling costs through victim compensation and other victim-focused programs; reasonable amount of paperwork for obtaining services; and provision of mental health support through various organizations across Denver.

Within the second thematic structure, content analysis revealed several needs relating to specific service provider groups. A majority of professionals indicated outreach/awareness and training needs for law enforcement, resource needs for civil/private attorneys, resource needs for community-based-victim advocates, training needs for judges/magistrates, and outreach/awareness and resource needs for general community and system professionals.

Respondents identified major needs for law enforcement as: improved collaboration with other service providers to ensure greater victim safety and enforcement of protection orders; reaching out to historically vulnerable populations (e.g., LGBTQ, immigrants/refugees, homeless individuals, individuals suffering from mental illness) who may be distrustful of law enforcement; improved notification to victims of case status; increased staffing; improved and increased training relating to cultural sensitivity (e.g., issues specific to LGBTQ, immigrant/refugee, indigent/homeless, disabled populations), trauma-informed responses, and victims' rights.

Major needs identified for system-based victim advocates included improved collaboration with community agencies, as to improve victim preparedness for the court process; better outreach to victims regarding available services, explanation of victims' rights, and explanation of the legal system; increased staffing, as in family court; and improved and increased training in availability of victim resources, victim compensation, housing,

employment, public benefits, law/policy, confidentiality, safety, protection orders, identity theft/fraud, legal process, and cultural competence.

Major needs identified for community-based victim advocates included increased collaboration with community agencies and the criminal and civil legal systems to aid with appropriate victim referrals (as for mental health services), develop wraparound help for victims, and improve quality of trainings on victim-related issues; better outreach to historically vulnerable or underserved victim groups (e.g., LGBTQ, immigrants/refugees) as well as outreach to victims regarding available services and victims' rights; increased staffing of well-trained, ideally bi- or multilingual advocates; and improved and increased training in availability of victim resources, cultural competence, confidentiality, safety, trauma-informed responses, and the legal process.

Major needs identified for criminal attorneys included increased collaboration across victims' cases to reduce the potential for conflicting decisions; better outreach to victims regarding victims' rights and understanding of the legal process, as well as to help overcome some victims' distrust of the criminal justice system; increased staffing; and improved and increased training in trauma-informed responses, cultural competence, and awareness of issues specific to certain victim groups (e.g., LGBTQ, immigrants/refugees, domestic violence victims).

Major needs identified for civil/private attorneys included increased collaboration with community-based agencies to aid with appropriate victim referrals and develop wraparound help for victims; better outreach to historically vulnerable or underserved victim groups (e.g., the indigent, domestic violence victims) as well as outreach to victims regarding victims' rights and understanding of the legal process; better outreach to third parties or allied professionals (e.g., landlords regarding housing issues, medical personnel regarding symptoms that can be legally

relevant); increased staffing within existing non-profit legal service organizations as well as greater presence at community agencies, as though legal clinic nights; improved and increased representation relating to post-decree matters (e.g., custody, visitation), employment, personal injury, property, identity theft, and restitution, as well as for victim groups that have less likelihood of obtaining affordable legal services (e.g., victims who do not meet the strict criteria for legal service organizations due to falling just above the poverty line or due to place of residence, older adults in rural areas, students); and improved and increased training in trauma-informed responses, cultural competence, confidentiality, safety, and awareness of issues specific to certain victim groups (e.g., the indigent, domestic violence victims, sexual assault victims).

Major needs identified for judges/magistrates included increased collaboration with judges/magistrates in other court systems to reduce the potential for conflicting decision or rulings; and improved and increased training regarding victims' rights, cultural competence, trauma-informed responses, and issues specific to certain victim groups (LGBTQ, undocumented immigrants, domestic violence victims).

Major needs identified for allied professionals included increased collaboration with system- and community-based advocates to understand victims' experiences with the legal process; better outreach of the legal system to allied professions in understanding post-crime support (e.g., landlords/housing authorities supporting victims or respecting victims' rights, homeless and domestic violence shelters providing aid to male domestic violence victims, employers respecting victim needs); increased provision of mental health and medical services, as through community agencies hiring additional mental health and medical professionals who are well-trained and ideally bi- or multi-lingual; increased staffing at government agencies (e.g., Department of Human Services, Immigration and Customs) to streamline application processes

for aid; increased availability of shelters/housing for victims; and improved and increased training for various allied professional groups (e.g., landlords/housing authorities, school/campus administrators, mental health and medical professionals, caseworkers, law school students) in victim-related issues.

A subset of needs identified by respondents was not specific to a particular provider category and appeared applicable across community and system professionals. These needs included increased collaboration across community and system representatives and resources, as through a collaborative clearinghouse/one-stop-shop model that would allow for comprehensive screening and service referrals for victims; easier information-sharing among providers within the constraints of confidentiality, as through victims granting permission for release of information; pooling of expert ideas on a particular topic issue; coordination of information on available victim services; and coordination across court systems to reduce the likelihood of conflicting decisions/rulings. Outreach/awareness needs included increasing awareness among victims about the criminal and civil legal systems, involved processes, and differences; and reaching out to historically vulnerable or marginalized victim groups to help reduce existing distrust of the system. Resource needs included greater funding for interpretation/translation services, as through increased staffing of legally-certified interpreters/translators in community and system settings; increased staffing across community and system settings, as of case managers, self-help coordinators, family court victim advocates, and civil attorneys; greater funding of community services for victims, as for mental health evaluations and affordable housing options; greater funding of *pro bono* representation; greater funding for victim-related research; and greater funding for victim compensation. Training needs included improved and increased training regarding victims' rights, victim's compensation, available government

benefits and financial assistance of victims, cultural competence, trauma-informed responses, issues specific to certain victim groups (LGBTQ, undocumented immigrants, domestic violence victims); and institutionalization of such training to ensure consistent and updated knowledge across providers.

Respondents' perceptions of needs related to existing law/policy tended to be specific to particular crime victim groups. For sexual assault victims, participants noted the need for statutes that provide more options to victims in the aftermath (e.g., termination of offender's parental rights when assault results in pregnancy, allowance for violation of rental/leasing contracts without penalty due to safety concerns); greater stringency in protection orders; greater stringency in confidentiality requirements that could help prevent media sources from obtaining victims' private information; and statutes mandating testing for sexually transmitted infections among suspected offenders. For domestic violence victims, needs included modification of outdated federal and state guidelines for collection of domestic violence statistics (e.g., counting fatalities that occur in dating or same-sex relationships as domestic violence-related fatalities); guidelines for stipulations about pet abuse in protection orders; and guidelines for decisions on difficult or gray area cases (e.g., dementia as a mitigating factor in a domestic violence case involving older adults). For human trafficking victims, needs included awareness of statutes that no longer criminalize sex work; and statutes that make it easier for victims to engage with the criminal justice system without fearing the potential for being charged for crime. For undocumented victims, a need was a statute that delays proceedings on immigration-related issues pending decisions in other cases. For LGBTQ victims, a need was guidelines for the application of domestic violence statutes in same-sex cases, particularly due to the existence of outdated statutes; and greater incentive for attorneys to pursue hate crime charges where

relevant, despite the higher threshold for proof. Finally, a broad-based law/policy need was widening the coverage of victim compensation (e.g., compensation covering lost wages due to mental health issues as well as injury, or for appearing in court).

Phase 1 Discussion

Phase 1 engaged professionals with diverse perspectives on the legal needs of crime victims. For example, respondents worked at agencies that served clients from diverse demographic backgrounds (e.g., in terms of age, ethnicity, language, economic status) across both criminal justice and community-based systems. While respondents did identify strengths, their critical reflection on legal service needs resulted in more frequent identification of gaps and needs. Importantly, strengths and gaps were not mutually exclusive. For example, inter-agency collaboration was cited as a strength as well as a gap/need. This likely reflects the complex reality of legal services in a larger metropolitan area where there has been considerable effort invested in collaboration, particularly among key agencies; and there is need for ongoing maintenance as well as deepening/broadening of those collaborative links. Phase 1 also provided initial insight into professionals' perceptions of the barriers victims face in trying to get legal needs met as well as a host of potential solutions to stop gaps and address needs. For example, lack of resources (e.g., financial, attorney), lack of trauma-informed services/knowledge/training, and difficulty of obtaining legal services among historically underserved groups (e.g., LGBTQ, immigrants/refugees) emerged as central themes in this Phase. In turn, respondents identified potential solutions, such as increasing trauma-informed training across professional groups.

Phase 2 Method

Participants

The research team held 15 focus groups of individuals who experienced a crime or knew someone well (such as a loved one) who experienced a crime. To assure focus groups reflected legal needs across the lifespan, three groups comprised volunteers who worked closely with child (n=2) and older adult (n=1) crime victims. The focus groups were organized generally by crime type in order to facilitate discussion of legal service needs among victims with crime experiences in common; however, no exclusion criteria were applied based on crime type, resulting in some heterogeneity within groups as well. The crime types were those most commonly served by Steering Group members, including: domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and neglect, human trafficking, and elder abuse.

Total number of participants was 88 with an average of 5.9 participants per group. Demographic information was available for 43 of the participants. Of those who reported demographic information (n=43), 35 identified as female (81%) and 8 identified as male (9%). Racial background identifications were: 28 White/Caucasian (65%), 7 Black/African-American (16%), 7 Latino/Hispanic (16%), 1 Native American or Alaskan Native (2%), and 3 more than one identification (7%). Age ranged from 18 to 78 years with a mean of 42.5 years.

Focus group participants were recruited via Steering Committee members who made advertising flyers available to clients. In addition, we worked with other agencies outside the Steering Committee to recruit diverse participants. Interested participants contacted the researchers on a confidential phone line; a trained research assistant described the purpose of the focus group and use of information collected.

Procedure

Focus groups were facilitated by the PI (DePrince) and a graduate research assistant or two graduate research assistants. Two of the groups consisted of mono-lingual Spanish speakers

(n=20) and involved the aid of interpreters. Focus group participants completed informed consent and a consent quiz to ensure information was presented clearly. They were informed that the focus group would be audio-taped for data analysis purposes. Participants were asked to discuss the topics detailed in Table 3 (though not limited to these topics).

Table 3

Phase 2 Focus Group Question Guide

Introduction to Focus Group Questions: After a crime, victims and/or their families may need help with all sorts of legal questions and problems. For example, people might need help:

- In the criminal case. For example, people sometimes need help making sure their rights as victims were protected during the prosecution.
- In civil issues. For example, getting help with custody and divorce or suing someone because of damage caused by the crime.
- With privacy issues. For example, figuring out what information professionals would keep private and what information they would share with other professionals.
- With employment or housing issues.
- With safety issues.
- With immigration issues.
- With getting benefits. For example, victim compensation or government benefits.

Question 1: Thinking about the broad range of legal questions or problems possible, like the examples I just gave, what legal questions or problems did you (or your relative) face; and how easy or hard was it for you to find help?

Prompts for querying as needed:

- What legal questions surprised you the most?
- When you needed help or information about legal services, how well did you know where to go, who to talk to?
- What made it easy or hard to figure out where to go and who to talk to?
- How did you find out about legal services available to you? Who referred you to services?

Question 2: What got in the way when you tried to get help with your legal questions or problems?

Prompts for querying as needed:

- How easy or hard is it to understand the differences between legal problems – for example, the differences between criminal and civil legal issues; the difference between a district attorney and a private attorney?
- When people gave you legal help, how well did they present things and talk to you so that you could understand?
- If you needed a translator or interpreter, how easy or hard was it to find a professional to help you?

- How well were you able to read and understand documents you received?
- How comfortable/safe did you feel talking about your problems with legal service providers? What made you feel comfortable or uncomfortable?

Question 3 [if not already addressed in discussion of previous 2 questions]: Were there legal issues that you needed help with, but couldn't get help? Was there anything that you didn't want to ask for help with?

Question 4: What advice would you give to service providers about how to better help crime victims or their relatives learn about legal services?

Prompts for querying as needed:

- What advice would you give for how to explain legal issues to crime victims who might not know a lot about the law?
- When you were being helped, what were some of the things you liked? What did you not like (e.g., way you were treated, timeliness of service, needs met or not met, etc.)?

Question 5 [if not already addressed in discussion of previous question]: What advice would you give to service providers at different agencies about how to work together across agencies to help crime victims while protecting their privacy?

Question 6: What advice would you give to victims or relatives of victims of _____ [child abuse/neglect, domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, homicide] about how to look for and get legal help?

Prompts for querying as needed:

- What questions should they ask?
- Where can they find information to educate themselves?

Question 7: Please think about people who aren't here today – friends, co-workers, family members who have experienced crimes and needed legal services. What do you guess they would say about the things that got in the way of getting legal services they needed after a crime?

Question 8 [if time allows and if not covered previously]: In what ways are agencies in Denver doing a good job addressing crime victims' legal needs?

Question 9: You've helped us so much tonight. We're almost done. We have one more question. What didn't we ask about or what didn't you get to say yet that we should know about to help make legal services better for crime victims?

To facilitate participation, focus groups were held in multiple locations around the Denver area. Research Assistants provided childcare as needed. The focus groups lasted about

1.5 hours. Participants received \$30 for their participation plus \$15 to offset transportation costs to the group.

Phase 2 Results

Research assistants transcribed the 15 audiotaped focus groups. Two GRAs conducted content analysis on these transcripts using a modified version of the approach described in Phase 1. Based on feedback from Steering Committee members, the first thematic framework was modified to include only legal needs, with some categories simplified or removed (see Table 4). The second thematic framework remained the same as in Phase 1 (see Table 2 in previous section). GRAs read through transcripts carefully to identify segments of text relevant to each theme category.

Table 4
Phase 2 Themes: Gaps and Strengths

Legal Needs	Criminal and Civil Gaps
	Criminal and Civil Strengths
	Safety and Privacy Gaps
	Safety and Privacy Strengths
	Financial Assistance Gaps
	Financial Assistance Strengths
	Housing Gaps
	Housing Strengths
	Mental Health Gaps
	Mental Health Strengths

Within the first thematic structure, analyses revealed victim perceptions of several gaps and strengths in legal services. In terms of needs relating to criminal and civil cases, gaps included lack of affordable representation; lengthy and complex legal/court processes; high caseloads and turnover for criminal and civil attorneys; lack of communication/collaboration across legal professionals, courts, and counties; lack of explanation to victims of legal terminology, legal options/choices, and criminal and civil legal processes; perceived lack of achieving justice among victims; difficulty with obtaining protection orders or enforcement of

such orders due to financial cost and judiciary discretion; lack of cultural competence or overt prejudiced/racist attitudes among some criminal and civil attorneys; lack of training regarding issues specific to certain victim groups (e.g., domestic violence victims, elder abuse victims); and lack of consideration of victims' interests or preferences among some criminal and civil attorneys. Some strengths relating to criminal and civil cases included collaboration through community-coordinated response projects (as for domestic violence victims); and resources in the form of pamphlets and videos developed by some community agencies explaining criminal and civil legal processes.

In terms of needs relating to safety and privacy, participants identified several gaps, including failure of protection orders in providing real or even perceived safety for victims (due to unclear stipulations or failure in enforcement); waitlists and lack of needed shelter/housing services; breaches in confidentiality (e.g., leaking of contact information); failure of law enforcement in taking non-physical abuse seriously; lack of tools to ensure victim safety (e.g., GPS monitoring). A strength relating to safety and privacy included the effectiveness of witness protection programs in helping victims find new living situations and compensating victims' moving expenses.

In terms of needs relating to financial assistance, gaps included the negative effects of poverty on custody/parental rights/family court issues; difficulties obtaining or maintaining sufficient housing, clothing, food, food stamps, and other necessities; limited restitution or victim compensation funds; and limited funds for legal costs. A strength relating to financial assistance was the existence of community agencies that help victims apply for food stamps and other government benefits.

In terms of needs relating to housing, gaps included lack of affordable housing, especially without prior employment or references; difficulty obtaining emergency housing; and difficulties with landlords relating to fees for breaking a lease (as when a victim wants to leave due to domestic violence). A strength relating to housing was the existence of community agencies that help victims understand options for housing and find temporary housing.

In terms of needs relating to mental health, gaps included lack of affordable mental health services, particularly for children and older adults; lack of transitional mental health support for victims following case closure; and mental health difficulties interfering with access to or navigation of the legal system. A strength relating to mental health was the existence of community agencies dedicated to providing low cost or free mental health services for victims.

Within the second thematic structure, analyses pointed to several needs relating to specific service provider groups. A majority of focus groups indicated collaboration and training needs for law enforcement; and collaboration, resource, and training needs for general system and community professionals. Given considerable overlap in needs across service provider groups, we will summarize focus group data by category of need, specifying particular service provider groups to whom those needs especially applied.

Major issues within the collaboration category included lack of effective collaboration across community and system professionals, resulting in victims having to retell their stories; lack of communication among system professionals (e.g., prosecuting attorneys handling different cases for the same victim, judges from different counties); a need among victims to access services across multiple agencies; and lack of a central clearinghouse for victims to obtain needed resources.

Major issues within the outreach/awareness category included inaccurate information on legal options given to victims from both community and system personnel; lack of notification regarding case status; lack of preparation for the court process (e.g., not knowing what to expect, being intimidated by the prospect of proceedings); lack of information regarding victim compensation; lack of information regarding the criminal and civil legal systems and differences thereof; and distrust among victims of the criminal justice system.

Major issues within the resources category included lack of a centralized access point with information regarding navigating the legal system, legal terminology, and answers to frequently asked questions by victims; lack of mental health or transitional support; lack of workshops or clinics to help victims with legal questions; lack of adequate funding for community and system agencies and staff; lack of adequate staffing, especially of guardians ad litem; lack of a centralized case management system; lack of healthcare resources; lack of adequate translation/interpretation services in terms of quantity, quality, and accessibility; and lack of adequate support for youth, especially as they age out of the foster care system and try to recontact biological parents.

Major issues within the training category included lack of adequate training for community and system professionals regarding victims' rights, trauma-informed responses, issues specific to certain victim groups (e.g., elder abuse victims, undocumented victims), issues specific to crime type (e.g., domestic violence, sexual assault), confidentiality, and safety; and lack of accountability among community and system professionals for mistakes or incompetence.

Major issues within the law/policy category included victim compensation being contingent on pursuing a case within the legal system, which not all victims would elect to do; foster care and social services policies contributing to mothers' difficulties in staying united or

regaining custody of children; confidentiality requirements contributing to difficulties among community and system professionals working with children; inadequacy of laws relating to elder abuse; and victims' rights appearing to be treated with less seriousness than rights of the accused or criminals.

Phase 2 Discussion

In many ways, the information gathered from focus groups with crime victims was consistent with that collected from professionals. For example, focus group participants mentioned training needs as well as lack of resources. Relative to the professional interviews, however, focus groups emphasized gaps/needs with relatively fewer examples of current strengths. Across focus groups, participants articulated the urgent need for access to information about legal issues and services. An anecdote from one participant captured this sentiment well: following an interpersonal crime, a victim likened her efforts to get accurate information about legal issues to taking a poll. She indicated that she received different answers from different service providers to the same question, so she would then collect these answers and follow the most common response. Similarly, we heard time and again from focus group participants about the urgent need to translate legal jargon and concepts into accessible language. Further, focus groups revealed a great deal about the enormous impact that knowledgeable and well-trained victim advocates can have on victims' lives as well as the need to develop resources that victims can access outside of seeking services at a particular agency (e.g., freely accessible information on the web).

Across groups, participants also provided important context for seeking legal services, demonstrating that legal services are not divorced from the complexity and richness of victims' lives. For example, participants described the effect that poverty and discrimination had on their

ability to access legal services and perceptions of justice. In one anecdote, focus group participants offered the example of how difficult it is to be taken seriously by judges and lawyers when unkempt or with missing teeth, resulting from poverty and lack of access to dental/health care. In another focus group, participants discussed discrimination against their ethnic community that made it more difficult to be safe and access law enforcement services. The focus groups, therefore, generally supporting the findings in Phase 1 in terms of the range and diversity of legal needs, gaps, and barriers, while offering specific examples of the day-to-day challenges victims face in seeking services and justice following crime.

Phase 3 Methods

Participants

A total of 236 participants completed the survey on gaps and strengths in legal services for crime victims. Of this total, 114 participants (48.3%) completed the crime victim version of the survey, and 122 (51.7%) completed the professional version of the survey.

Among participants completing the crime victim version of the survey, 16 (14.0%) completed the survey electronically, and 98 (86.0%) completed the survey in hard copy. In terms of language, 95 (83.3%) of the crime victim surveys were completed in English, and 19 (16.7%) in Spanish. In terms of respondent type, 76 participants (66.7%) completed the survey based on a crime they had directly experienced, 22 (19.3%) completed the survey based on a crime someone else known to them (such as a loved one) had experienced, and 16 (14.0%) completed the survey based on crimes they and someone else known to them had experienced. Participants who completed the survey based on a crime someone else known to them (such as a loved one) had experienced (including those who also completed a survey based on a crime they had directly experienced) reported their relationship to that person as follows: 34.2% spouse/significant

other/partner, 21.1% parent/step parent/guardian, 7.9% grandparent, 5.3% sibling, 13.2% other family member, and 18.4% other (e.g., daughter or son, grandchild, aunt, cousin, caregiver, service provider).

Participants who completed the crime victim survey identified themselves or someone else as having experienced the following crimes (with the opportunity to indicate multiple crime categories): 45.6% domestic violence, 35.1% sexual assault, 10.5% child abuse/neglect, 5.3% older adult abuse/neglect/financial exploitation, 0.9% human trafficking, 2.6% identity theft, 1.8% financial fraud, 4.4% homicide, 7.9% burglary/robbery, 0% labor crime, 6.1% property crime, 5.3% stalking, 9.6% violent crime not covered (e.g., torture, vehicular accident), and 10.5% other (e.g., carjacking, false reporting). Participants reported hearing about the agencies/organizations/people from which/whom they (or someone else) received legal help as follows (with the opportunity to indicate multiple crime categories): 63.2% referral from someone else (such as a service provider, friend, or victim advocate); 15.8% brochures or other written materials, 11.4% community outreach, 5.3% informational letter, 2.6% newspaper ad, 1.8% radio announcement, 0% TV announcement, 14.9% internet search, and 21.9% other (e.g., social services, police department, shelter, church, prior familiarity or work with an organization).

Participants who completed the crime victim survey ranged in age from 18 to 77 years, with a mean age of 39.3 years ($SD = 13.8$). They identified their gender as follows: 16.7% male, 80.7% female. They identified their ethnic/racial backgrounds as follows (with the opportunity to indicate multiple categories): 46.5% White/Caucasian, 10.5% Black/African American, 33.3% Hispanic/Latino, 4.4% other (e.g., Asian, Native American or Alaskan Native), 2.6% multiple groups. Participants identified their sexual orientation as follows: 83.3% heterosexual/straight,

and 12.3% LGBTQ/other. They identified their citizenship status as follows: 76.3% United States citizens, 9.6% undocumented residents, and 11.4% other. Participants reported their highest level of education as follows: 0.9% no schooling, 3.5% 1st-8th grade, 8.8% some high school, 17.5% high school graduate/GED, 21.1% some college, 7.0% associate's (two-year college) degree, 9.6% four-year college degree, 14.0% postgraduate, 14.9% other (trade school, specialized training). Based on participants' reported income and number of people in the household, we calculated that 38.6% of participants were under the poverty line and 37.7% were over the poverty line.

Participants who completed the professional version of the survey reported considerable diversity in terms of type of agency they worked for, mission of the agency, crimes their agency serves, method by which clients learned about their agency, availability of interpreters or bilingual staff, and length of their current position at the agency. In terms of type of agency or work, 11.5% of participants identified working for the City or District Attorney's Office, 5.7% for the police department, 1.6% for probation/corrections, 5.7% for county/state human services, 2.5% for the county attorney, 0.8% for an educational institution, 1.6% for a medical facility, 4.1% as a Colorado Legal Service lawyer, 2.5% as a private lawyer, 6.6% for a private for-profit agency, 45.1% for a private nonprofit agency, 0% for a religious faith community, and 11.5% other. In terms of whether the agency they worked for included serving crime victims in the mission, 87.7% of participants reported that it did, and 10.7% that it did not. In terms of types of crime victims their agency served, 77.0% of participants reported domestic violence victims, 78.7% sexual assault/rape victims, 49.2% immigrant and/or undocumented victims, 67.2% child abuse/neglect victims, 33.6% older adult financial exploitation victims, 46.7% older adult abuse/neglect victims, 50.8% human trafficking victims, 31.1% identity theft victims, 31.1%

financial fraud victims, 61.5% violent crime/assault victims, 34.4% homicide victims, 30.3% burglary victims, 13.1% labor victims, 27.9% property crime victims, 32.0% robbery victims, 46.7% stalking victims, 4.1% violent crime not covered, and 4.9% other. In terms of how they believe clients learn about their agency, 79.5% reported through referrals, 58.2% through brochures or other written materials in other offices, 68.9% through community outreach, 27.9% through informational letter, 8.2% through newspaper ads, 8.2% through radio announcements, 6.6% through TV announcements, 32.8% through walk-in, 63.1% through “word of mouth,” and 33.6% other. In terms of availability of interpreters or bilingual staff, 47.5% of participants reported that their agency has interpreters for all languages needed by clients available, 10.7% that interpreters for some languages are available, and 11.5% that no interpreters or bilingual staff are available. Participants reported the length of time they had been in their current position as follows: 20.5% less than one year, 40.2% one to five years, 38.5% more than five years.

Participants reported that, on average, 18.9 full-time staff, 2.7 part-time staff, and 13.7 volunteers worked with crime victims. Average reported percentages of clients served by participants’ agencies according to gender and sexual orientation were as follows: 37.4% male, 64.4% female, 6.3% transgender, and 15.3% LGBTQ. Average reported percentages of different racial/ethnic groups served by participants’ agencies were as follows: 43.9% White/Caucasian, 27.3% Black or African-American, 13.3% Asian, 10.1% Pacific Islander, 11.4% Native American or Alaskan Native, 37.0% Hispanic/Latino, and 12.1% other ethnicity. Average reported percentages of different developmentally challenged groups served by participants’ agencies were as follows: 15.6% deaf or hard of hearing, and 26.9% physically or cognitively disabled. Average reported percentages of different income groups served by agencies were as follows: 62.1% below the poverty line, and 30.4% modest income. Average reported age groups

served by agencies were as follows: 73.1% adult, 25.8% older adult, and 35.3% children and adolescents. Finally, average reported percentage of fluent English-speaking clients served by participants' agencies was 73.4%.

Materials

A preliminary survey was drafted at the project inception based on assessment goals to illustrate the potential scope of the Phase 3 survey. As planned, those questions were edited, amended, deleted, and/or expanded based on the qualitative data collected in Phases 1 and 2 to produce a final survey that assessed relevant legal needs (e.g., those that are currently well met) in accessible language. A complete draft of the survey instruments were submitted to the Steering Committee for comment; based on those comments, the research team further refined items. The next draft was submitted to the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC); based on comments, further revisions were made. The final survey instruments (see attached) were designed to take 30 minutes.

To assess overall perceptions of legal needs, we included items that reflected the following content areas: housing, civil, translation, knowledge, criminal, bankruptcy, safety, and mental health. Respondents were asked to indicate whether each legal need was very easy, easy, not easy or hard, hard, or very hard to get met. Respondents could also indicate "I didn't need help" or "I don't know". To assess potential barriers to getting legal service needs met, we wrote 52 items. Respondents were asked to indicate whether each barrier was not a problem, small problem, medium problem, big problem, or very big problem. Respondents could also indicate "This does not apply to me" or "I don't know". Items assessing legal needs and barriers were parallel across crime victim and professional surveys to facilitate combining and comparing

those data; professionals were asked to answer based on their perceptions of clients' needs and barriers.

Additional items were administered to either crime victims or professionals. Crime victim surveys, which could be completed by the crime victim her/himself or someone who knew her/him well, also asked respondents for information about demographics, crime exposure, and where they learned about legal services. Professional surveys asked respondents for information about their organizations and preferences for training modes (e.g., webinars).

Through translation services at the Denver Center for Crime Victims (DCCV), the victim survey was translated into multiple languages. At the time of this writing, we have received surveys completed in English and Spanish.

Procedure

The respective surveys were programmed in Qualtrics as well as made available in paper version. Qualtrics allows for anonymous data collection (e.g., by blocking recording of IP addresses), providing an effective way to collect data while managing privacy concerns. The respective survey links (for professionals and crime victims) were made available to Steering Committee and VSN agencies for distribution as part of snowball sampling strategy. Distribution involved two steps. First, Steering Committee and VSN agencies were asked to forward the link to their staff members as well as colleagues/collaborators at other agencies. In addition, they were explicitly asked to send the link to allied professionals (e.g., educators, counselors, government services). The researchers also sent periodic reminders to Steering Committee and VSN agencies to request that they re-distribute the email inviting their staff and colleagues to complete the survey. Towards the end of data collection, Steering Committee members received weekly updates on data collection progress. Second, the Steering Committee and VSN member

agencies were asked to distribute advertisement about the study as well as paper copies of the surveys to crime victims (with self-addressed, stamped envelopes for participants to return surveys). They were also asked to encourage colleagues in their professional networks to do the same.

In addition to recruitment through Steering Committee and VSN agencies, we reached out to allied professionals (e.g., colleagues in government social service offices, education settings) for help distributing the survey link to potential crime victims who are not currently receiving crime-related services through a VSN agency. We made the survey link available through advertisements in printed and email formats as well as disseminated advertising and paper copies of surveys to relevant physical locations (e.g., free law clinic). By reaching out to crime victims through allied professionals and electronic sites outside the crime victim service world, we sought to reach crime victims who may have had the most unmet legal needs – that is, those individuals not connected to VSN or Steering Committee agencies.

Participants had a choice of receiving a \$10 gift certificate to Target (a store that sells a range of goods, including food) by mail; or a \$10 gift certificate to Amazon.com via email. The Target gift certificates were sent by mail to accommodate participants who did not have access to printers to print the gift certificate for use (particularly participants dealing with significant poverty) or credit cards to use online stores. Participants who completed the measure electronically were routed to a separate survey in which they could enter their name and email address to receive the gift certificate. Participants who completed the measure on paper received a separate postcard on which to submit their names and addresses to receive the gift card; we used the postcard to ensure that identifying information was not sent with the survey materials.

Phase 3 Results

Electronic data were closely examined to assess validity of responses (e.g., to minimize invalid data due to bots or careless responses). The PI and GRA independently rated the validity of data based on patterns in responses that were apparently submitted by computer bots and came to consensus for all data included in the following analyses to ensure data validity.

Legal Service Needs

Based on the development of items from Phases 1 and 2, we grouped service need items into nine content areas. As illustrated in Table 5, the nine content areas were organized into internally-consistent scales as demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha values; therefore, we calculated averages for each scale. We compared average scores on each scale to the neutral midpoint on the scale (neither easy nor hard) such that scores significantly higher than 3 reflected beliefs that the service needs were hard to meet; and below 3 reflected beliefs that service needs were easy to meet. For all need areas except mental health, the average response was statistically significantly greater than 3 (the midpoint on the scale). This finding indicates that, on average, respondents rated all legal needs (except mental health) as hard to meet. Mental health was rated as significantly lower than the 3 (the midpoint on the scale); see Phase 3 Discussion for cautions regarding interpretation of this finding.

Table 5

Legal Service Need Scales: Cronbach's Alphas and Descriptive Statistics

Scale	<i>Alpha</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Knowledge	.96	3.24	0.92	3.92***
Criminal	.88	3.24	1.12	3.09**
Civil	.94	3.53	0.94	8.06***
Mental Health	.87	2.79	1.14	-2.59*
Safety	.88	3.17	0.99	2.43*
Housing	.88	3.85	1.01	11.31***
Bankruptcy	.78	3.16	1.05	2.12*
Translation	.89	3.26	0.99	3.09**

Barriers to Legal Services

We next examined each of the 52 barriers by professional and crime victim respondents.

Table 6 presents average ratings of barriers, organized from the largest to smallest barriers collected from crime victim surveys. The dark black line demarcates the 25 barriers with highest average ratings. Gray boxes indicate items that were among the top 25 barriers for both the crime victim and professional surveys.

Table 6.
Crime Victim Respondent Perceptions of Barriers, from Largest to Smallest

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
I didn't have enough money (for example, to hire an attorney or interpreter).	74	3.99	1.33	6.38***
There aren't enough private lawyers who work at low- or no-cost to help crime victims.	73	3.95	1.25	6.48***
When people make mistakes in legal cases, they do not apologize or take responsibility.	73	3.70	1.43	4.17***
Criminal and civil courts don't talk to each other.	48	3.67	1.40	3.29**
The court system takes too long.	88	3.66	1.29	4.78***
I was afraid that my kid(s) would be taken away from me.	85	3.65	1.36	4.39***
I was afraid that the perpetrator would try to get back at me or my loved ones.	82	3.63	1.48	3.88***
There isn't support for child victims who are turning 18.	39	3.62	1.37	2.81**
There aren't enough legal clinics or workshops to help crime victims (for example, self-help clinics in courthouses).	75	3.60	1.33	3.92***
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about the effects of trauma on crime victims.	83	3.53	1.35	3.59**
Judges/magistrates don't talk to each other.	48	3.52	1.46	2.47*
There aren't enough guardians ad litem (GALs) to help child victims.	37	3.41	1.50	1.64
I had to re-tell my story many times.	89	3.38	1.48	2.43*
I didn't qualify for certain services even though I was in need.	79	3.37	1.42	2.30*
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about mental health issues.	73	3.34	1.46	2.01*
Lawyers and advocates do not have enough time to help crime victims.	80	3.29	1.41	1.83^
I didn't know what services were available to help me.	98	3.29	1.35	2.09*
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about domestic violence.	65	3.26	1.45	1.45
I was afraid that I or someone I loved might be deported or have their legal status in the United States affected.	27	3.26	1.58	0.85
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) did not understand how the crime had hurt me emotionally or physically.	83	3.24	1.56	1.41
People gave me lots of information right after the crime, but I couldn't remember or take in everything at that time.	91	3.19	1.43	1.25
I didn't trust the people in the system, such as police, lawyers, and/or judges.	87	3.15	1.63	0.85

I didn't know my rights as a victim.	98	3.13	1.51	0.87
There aren't enough victim advocates to help crime victims.	72	3.10	1.49	0.55
I felt traumatized, alone, ashamed, or embarrassed. These feelings made it hard for me to ask for help with my legal needs.	52	3.08	1.58	0.35
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) didn't have time to get to know me as a person.	74	3.05	1.53	0.30
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) didn't work together across agencies to help with my case.	72	3.03	1.57	0.15
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about victims' rights.	71	3.01	1.41	0.08
I had to go to many different agencies to get legal help.	75	3.00	1.63	0.00
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about services in Denver to help me get my legal needs met	70	2.99	1.46	-0.08
There aren't enough low-cost counseling/mental health services to support crime victims while they go through the legal process.	80	2.96	1.54	-0.22
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about safety issues.	75	2.95	1.36	-0.34
I could not get help on time with my legal needs (for example, I was put on a waitlist to get services).	62	2.94	1.65	-0.31
I did not receive enough social support after the crime.	89	2.93	1.51	-0.42
I couldn't find information online or by phone to help with my legal needs (for example, to tell me who to ask about my legal questions, what different legal terms mean, what to expect in the legal system).	81	2.91	1.34	-0.58
I couldn't get my basic needs met (such as housing, food, medical care), which stopped me from getting my legal needs met.	63	2.89	1.57	-0.56
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about immigration.	30	2.80	1.40	-0.78
Jurisdiction issues (such as the crime occurring in a different country) prevented me from getting legal needs met.	39	2.77	1.60	-0.90
I was afraid that the police would arrest me instead of the offender.	68	2.76	1.65	-1.18
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) did not know where to refer me if they could not help.	77	2.75	1.43	-1.51
A criminal charge on my record got in the way of getting my legal needs met when I was a crime victim.	38	2.74	1.59	-1.02
I was given wrong or bad answers to my legal questions.	71	2.72	1.53	-1.55
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) did not take the crime seriously (for example, police officers said it was a civil case).	79	2.61	1.63	-2.14
My lawyer or advocate focused more on other people's needs than mine.	58	2.57	1.50	-2.19
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) did not believe me.	76	2.55	1.67	-2.34
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) treated me differently because of who I am (for example, because of my mental health, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, disability or other identity).	80	2.55	1.64	-2.46
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) treated me differently because of who I am due to a previous victimization (as a child or adult).	62	2.44	1.61	-2.77
I didn't know that I was a victim of a crime.	61	2.41	1.61	-2.87

I didn't have a way to get to legal offices or court (for example, I didn't have a car or didn't know what bus to take).	57	2.40	1.47	-3.05
I didn't have access to technology I needed to get legal information (such as a telephone, cell phone, computer, Internet).	63	2.30	1.40	-3.96
The offices I needed to go to were not open when I was available (such as after work/school hours).	68	2.28	1.48	-4.00
I needed help from an interpreter or translation service.	28	2.11	1.47	-3.20

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; ^ $p < .10$

Note: Dark black line demarcates the 25 barriers with highest average ratings. Gray boxes indicate items that were among the top 25 barriers for both the crime victim and professional surveys.

Table 7 presents average ratings of barriers, organized from the largest to smallest barriers collected from professional surveys.

Table 7

Professional Respondent Perceptions of Barriers, from Largest to Smallest

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Clients don't have enough money (for example, to hire an attorney or interpreter).	111	3.99	1.32	7.88***
Clients are afraid that their perpetrator will try to get back at them or their loved ones.	110	3.91	1.19	7.99***
There aren't enough private lawyers who work at low- or no-cost to help crime victims.	110	3.87	1.26	7.24***
Clients are afraid that their kid(s) will be taken away from them.	109	3.80	1.23	6.77***
Clients don't trust the people in the system, such as police, lawyers, and/or judges.	110	3.73	1.16	6.55***
People give clients lots of information right after the crime, but clients can't remember or take in everything at that time.	109	3.68	1.22	5.83***
Clients are afraid that they or someone they love might be deported or have their legal status in the United States affected.	108	3.66	1.28	5.35***
Clients cannot get help on time with their legal needs (for example, they are put on a waitlist to get services).	109	3.64	1.29	5.21***
Clients have to re-tell their stories many times.	109	3.62	1.10	5.90***
Clients don't know what services were available to help them.	111	3.60	1.06	6.02***
The court system takes too long.	108	3.60	1.21	5.15***
Clients feel traumatized, alone, ashamed, or embarrassed. These feelings make it hard for them to ask for help with their legal needs.	110	3.56	1.18	4.99***
Clients can't get basic needs met (such as housing, food, medical care), which stops them from getting their legal needs met.	110	3.55	1.24	4.70***
Clients have to go to many different agencies to get legal help.	110	3.51	1.22	4.36***
There aren't enough low-cost counseling/mental health services to support crime victims while they go through the legal process.	110	3.50	1.28	4.11***
Clients don't qualify for certain services even though they have a need for those services.	108	3.49	1.16	4.41***
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about mental health issues.	109	3.49	1.19	4.26***

Clients are afraid that the police will arrest them instead of the offender.	108	3.47	1.16	4.25***
Clients don't know their rights as victims.	109	3.42	1.26	3.49**
There aren't enough legal clinics or workshops to help crime victims (for example, self-help clinics in courthouses).	109	3.37	1.14	3.37**
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about the effects of trauma on crime victims.	111	3.33	1.31	2.68**
Clients don't have access to technology they need to get legal information (such as a telephone, cell phone, computer, Internet).	109	3.29	1.17	2.63*
Clients don't have a way to get to legal offices or court (for example, they don't have cars or don't know what bus to take).	110	3.29	1.24	2.45*
Clients do not receive enough social support after the crime.	110	3.25	1.10	2.44*
There isn't support for child victims who are turning 18.	106	3.24	1.19	2.04*
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) treat clients differently because of who they are (for example, because of their mental health, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, disability or other identity).	107	3.20	1.33	1.53
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) don't work together across agencies to help with clients' cases.	111	3.19	1.21	1.65
Criminal and civil courts don't talk to each other.	101	3.19	1.25	1.51
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about immigration.	107	3.16	1.24	1.33
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) don't have time to get to know clients as individuals.	110	3.15	1.13	1.44
Lawyers and advocates do not have enough time to help crime victims.	109	3.12	1.17	1.07
Clients can't find information online or by phone to help with their legal needs (for example, to tell them who to ask about their legal questions; what different legal terms mean; what to expect in the legal system).	109	3.11	1.19	0.97
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not understand how crimes hurt clients emotionally or physically.	106	3.10	1.24	0.86
The offices clients need to go to are not open when they are available (such as after work/school hours).	108	3.09	1.16	0.83
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not take the crime seriously (for example, police officers said it was a civil case).	105	3.07	1.23	0.55
There aren't enough victim advocates to help crime victims.	108	3.06	1.16	0.58
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about domestic violence.	104	3.03	1.19	0.25
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) did not know where to refer clients if they cannot help them.	110	3.01	1.19	0.08
Clients are given wrong or bad answers to their legal questions.	107	3.00	1.16	0.00
Jurisdiction issues (such as the crime occurring in a different country) prevent clients from getting their legal needs met.	106	2.93	1.18	-0.58
There aren't enough guardians ad litem (GALs) to help child victims.	100	2.91	1.24	-0.73
Judges/magistrates don't talk to each other.	98	2.91	1.24	-0.74
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about services in Denver to help clients get their legal needs met.	110	2.90	1.15	-0.91
Criminal charges on clients' records get in the way of clients getting their legal needs met as crime victims.	107	2.90	1.16	-0.92

Clients need help from an interpreter or translation service.	109	2.89	1.23	-0.93
When people make mistakes in legal cases, they do not apologize or take responsibility.	104	2.87	1.20	-1.14
Clients don't know that they are victims of a crime.	110	2.82	1.12	-1.70
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not believe clients.	108	2.81	1.18	-1.71
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about safety issues.	107	2.79	1.05	-2.02
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) treat clients differently because of a previous victimization (as a child or adult).	107	2.76	1.20	-2.09
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about victims' rights.	108	2.74	1.15	-2.35
Clients' lawyer or advocate focus more on other people's needs than the needs of individual clients.	103	2.46	1.06	-5.18

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; ^ $p < .10$

Note: Dark black line demarcates the 25 barriers with highest average ratings. Gray boxes indicate items that were among the top 25 barriers for both the crime victim and professional surveys.

To guide the Steering Committee, we conducted one-sample t-tests comparing responses to 3. Thus, t-scores flagged as significant indicated barriers that were rated by respondents as significantly greater than a “medium” problem. Follow-up exploratory analyses revealed that perceptions of barriers were generally comparable across demographic groups (e.g., sexual orientation, gender, above/below poverty level, English/Spanish language preference).

Gray boxes indicate items that were among the top 25 highest rated barriers for both the crime victim and professional surveys. As illustrated with the gray boxes, crime victims and professionals shared many perceptions about barriers, though there were points of potentially important divergence as well. For example, crime victims included lack of trauma-informed knowledge (i.e., about domestic violence, about the impact of crime) and limited legal resources (e.g., lawyer/advocate time, availability of guardians ad litem) in the top 25 rated barriers while professionals did not.

Learning about Legal Services

When asked, “How did you hear about the agencies/organizations/people from which you received legal help,” respondents most frequently reported through referrals. See Table 8.

Table 8
How Crime Victims Reported Learning about Legal Services

Source	Percent of respondents
Referral from someone else (such as a service provider, friend, victim advocate)	63
Other	22
Brochures or other written materials	16
Internet Search	16
Community outreach from this agency/organization/person	12
Informational letter from this agency/organization/person	6
Newspaper ads	3
Radio announcements	2
TV announcements	0

Examples of responses for the “Other” category included Denver Public Schools, jail, shelter, social services, the police department, and prior work in the field.

Professional Training Preferences

Professionals were asked to indicate how likely they would be to take advantage of trainings on crime victim legal services through different modalities. Table 9 describes their responses, with the total percentage of people responding “very likely” or “very likely (have done so before and will do so again)” in the far right column.

Table 9
Professionals Preferences for Training by Percentage

	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely (have done so before and will do so again)	I have done so before, but won't again	"Very likely" options combined
Drawing on experience working with victims	3	13	26	56	3	82
Consulting with coworkers	1	12	32	52	4	84

Drawing on personal experience	10	13	25	50	2	75
Drawing on experience working with other service providers	3	12	32	50	4	82
Accessing web resources as needed	1	13	30	43	2	73
Attend formal workshop/class offered locally	2	23	33	42		75
Cross-training locally	2	13	33	41	2	74
Training via webinar	6	28	26	36	3	62
Reading academic resources (e.g., journal articles), if easily accessible	7	42	21	28	1	49
Training via conference all	24	31	22	23	1	45
Attend formal workshop/class offered regionally/nationally	28	38	15	20		35
Attending regional/national conferences focused on research findings	32	28	19	19	1	38
Attending regional/national conferences focused on policy/practice	32	32	18	17		35

Phase 3 Discussion

Items for the Phase 3 survey were developed based on interview and focus group data collected in Phases 1 and 2. This procedure ensured that we tapped the scope of legal service needs, gaps, and concerns expressed by both professionals and crime victims using their words and phrasing. While we could have taken many approaches to the Needs Assessment, we elected to develop a comprehensive survey based on what we learned in Phases 1 and 2 that included items to assess eight domains relevant to legal needs and services (knowledge about legal issues, criminal justice, civil, mental health, safety, bankruptcy, housing, and translation) as well as 52

potential barriers. This approach allowed us to collect detailed data from participants on their perceptions of legal service needs and barriers.

Confirming the critiques of legal services noted in Phases 1 and 2, professional and crime victim participants reported, on average, that seven of the eight legal service need domains assessed represented categories of need with which crime victims faced significant difficulty in receiving adequate help. This indicates that both professionals and crime victims perceived overall difficulty in navigating legal services— whether criminal, civil, or related to issues such as translation— in the aftermath of crime. The data do not point to a single need that should be prioritized above others (e.g., criminal over civil); rather, they are consistent with the Wrap Around approach that suggests that legal needs are interconnected and complex. Nevertheless, given that the focus groups emphasized the intersection of mental health and legal service needs, it was surprising that the two mental health items were rated, on average, in a way that suggested mental health needs were not difficult to meet. In hindsight, a limitation of the items should be taken into consideration in interpreting this finding. The two mental health items included: Getting mental health services after a crime (such as counseling); and Working with professionals who are knowledgeable and advocate for mental health needs. We suspect that the latter item (which appeared after the former on the survey) may have led respondents to think about professionals in mental health settings rather than more broadly, including in legal settings. The barrier data suggested that victims do indeed see a lack of trauma-informed responses and understanding of the impact of crime as barriers to getting legal service needs met.

Turning to the barrier data, we examined the items that were rated, on average, as the biggest problems. Professionals and crime victims rated many items similarly, as indicated by the overlap in items that appear in the top 25 lists for each group of respondents. For example,

financial resources clearly emerged as a top concern for both groups. However, crime victims included lack of trauma-informed knowledge (i.e., about domestic violence, about the impact of crime) and limited legal resources (e.g., lawyer/advocate time, availability of guardians ad litem) in the top 25 rated barriers while professionals did not.

Overall Discussion

Drawing on diverse samples of participants across three phases of study, the findings reveal interconnected and complex legal needs faced by crime victims that span civil and criminal systems as well as a host of barriers to effective legal service use. Data from this multi-method assessment converge on four primary problems that reflect inadequate 1) information/knowledge about legal issues; 2) resources and funding; 3) trauma-informed, victim-sensitive, and victim-centered approaches; and 4) system coordination.

Lack on Information/Knowledge.

In focus groups, crime victims reported great difficulty accessing information about legal issues as well as problems with inconsistency and/or inaccuracy in information received from service providers. Focus groups participants highlighted the urgent need for accessible information about legal terms and procedures. They described difficulty asking for help and seeking services when they did not understand the legal terms and systems in play. Focus group participants emphasized the importance of web-based resources (website, videos available on the Internet) that could be open to victims (regardless of whether they were enrolled in services at a particular agency) and that used accessible language. The sentiments from focus groups about lack of information were clearly supported in the survey data, which revealed that both crime victims and professionals perceived information barriers as serious problems. The survey data revealed particular concerns about the timing of information (e.g., that information given in the

aftermath of the crime might be lost/forgotten when needed later), lack of awareness about services, lack of knowledge about crime victim rights, and insufficient legal clinics/workshops/educational opportunities.

Resources and Funding.

In both interviews and focus groups, participants described the stresses and pressures of seeking out/providing legal services in an environment of limited resources. There was widespread recognition among professionals and victims that low-income legal service providers do not have adequate staffing given the volume of need in the Denver area; and that individual victims do not have the personal resources to seek out private attorneys. Beyond a general recognition of the need for more legal professionals, focus group participants talked about limited resources across service agencies (legal and otherwise) that make it difficult for providers to take adequate time with individuals and for professionals to get the relevant training they need to help victims effectively interface with legal systems. Focus groups participants recognized the importance of training resources for service providers and the value in having adequate staffing and support. Focus groups also illustrated the interaction of larger resource and economic issue with legal service needs. All of these findings were supported in the survey data, in which participants noted significant barriers to getting legal needs met, such as inadequate legal resources (e.g., insufficient availability of guardians ad litem and low-cost attorneys), long waitlists, impediments to accessing services (either physically getting to service locations or lack of technology), and difficulty getting basic needs met.

Trauma-Informed, Victim-Sensitive, and Victim-Centered Approaches.

Data from the interviews and focus groups made clear the critical importance of legal services that are trauma-informed, victim-sensitive, and victim-centered. Focus group

participants talked about barriers to engaging with the legal system when providers did not understand the impact of trauma and related mental health issues on victims. For example, victims may ask for information multiple times or in multiple formats because cognitive consequences of trauma make the acquisition and retention of information difficult in the aftermath of a crime. Across all three phases of the assessment, both professionals and victims noted that legal professionals often do not appear to know enough about trauma and its consequences, including specific crimes such as domestic violence. Adding to this lack of knowledge, the data revealed the need for victim-centered approaches that take into account the social and psychological consequences of crime. For example, lack of social support, discrimination, and shame may interfere with victims' ability to seek out and effectively use legal services.

Legal and Non-Legal System Coordination.

In interviews and focus groups, both professionals and crime victims recognized that legal needs intersect and overlap with many other human and social service needs following crime (e.g., mental health, housing, transportation, financial). Not surprisingly, then, data from all three phases of the assessment pointed to the difficulty victims (and professionals seeking to help victims) have navigating the complex, inter-related legal, human, and social service systems. Across all phases of study, data pointed to the need for continued improvement of coordination across legal and non-legal systems to help victims get their legal needs met. Within the criminal and civil legal systems specifically, several barriers related to system-wide coordination emerged. For example, both focus group and survey data revealed substantial concerns from victims about their overall safety when engaging with the legal system (e.g., during prosecution of an offender, during civil protection order proceedings, or when seeking

enforcement of protection orders) as well as concerns about their loved ones (e.g., fears that they would lose their children or loved ones would have their legal status in the United States challenged). Findings also revealed significant concerns with the length of time and complexity of cases in the legal systems. While a Wrap Around project cannot change the pace at which courts work, victims may benefit from practical and realistic information about the length and complexity of proceedings, and cross-trainings may help advocates better inform victims. Additionally, across all phases of data collection, both victims and professionals reported significant concerns related to lack of communication among members of the judiciary (e.g., judges/magistrates not being aware of cases, lack of communication across judicial districts for cases that involve the same victims/offenders).

Strengths and Limitations of Needs Assessment Approach

Several methodological strengths and limitations should be considered in interpreting the findings from this Needs Assessment. An overall strength of the approach to this Needs Assessment was the flow from Phase 1 interviews with professionals to Phase 2 focus groups with crime victims to Phase 3 surveys of both professionals and crime victims. In Phase 1, we were able to target interview invitations to ensure the inclusion of broad perspectives— from criminal- and community-based respondents serving in agencies that varied in size and structure as well as clients served. Based on findings in Phase 1, we incorporated crime victim voices into the Needs Assessment in Phase 2 through focus groups. Cognizant of the importance of including legal needs for minors (who were not included in the research methods due to the need for parental consent, which was beyond the scope of this project) as well as older adults, we conducted three focus groups with volunteers who worked with child and older adult victims. The focus groups complemented and extended what was learned from professionals. For

example, the urgent need for accessible educational materials about legal services (including terms, processes, etc.) and the importance of trauma-informed legal services emerged more clearly in the focus group data than professional interviews. Given potential response characteristics of people willing to participate in interviews/focus groups, the Phase 3 survey approach allowed us to assess the generalizability of findings from Phase 1 and 2 to a larger sample. Another important strength of the Needs Assessment was the partnership between the research team and the Steering Committee, allowing for a thorough assessment and interpretation of findings that took into account the realities of practice/policy.

While the Needs Assessment reached a diverse sample of respondents, demand characteristics of the focus group and survey methods should be weighed in generalizing the findings. Focus group methods require that participants are willing to talk about issues publicly, which can mean that the sample comprises people at a particular stage of coping with the crime (e.g., further out from the crime) or with strong viewpoints that they would like to share publicly (e.g., dissatisfaction with their own experiences). Unfortunately, we cannot know how the degree to which the sample matches (or not) the larger population of crime victims in the Denver area; however, these concerns are tempered by the inclusion of the Phase 3 survey approach that did not have the demand characteristics of the focus group method. While Phase 3 did include a diverse sample of professional and crime victim participants (including mono-lingual Spanish speaking participants), there were limitations to the sample that should be considered. The survey was very comprehensive, requiring about 30 minutes of time; thus, we may have lost potential participants who were not willing to complete such a measure. Further, while we did receive surveys back in English and Spanish, we did not receive any surveys back in other languages (e.g., French, Amharic); thus, findings may not be generalizable to individuals seeking

legal services in languages other than English and Spanish.

References

Newmark, L., Bonderman, J., Smith, B., & Liner, B. (2003). *The National Evaluation of State VOCA Assistance and Compensation Programs: Trends and Strategies for the Future*. Report to the National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Grant Number NIJ-98-VF-GX-0016.

Appendix

1. Phase 3 Survey for Crime Victims
2. Phase 3 Survey for Professionals

Phase 3**Survey for Crime Victims**

1. Are you filling out this survey based on a crime (or crimes) you directly experienced or based on the experiences of someone else (such as a loved one)?

Self

Someone else

2. If you are filling out this survey based on what you know of someone else's experiences following a crime, what is your relationship to that person? I am his/her:

Spouse/Significant Other/Partner

Parent/step parent/guardian

Grandparent

Sibling

Other family member; please specify: _____

Other; please specify: _____

3. What was the crime? Many people have experienced more than one crime. If you have experienced more than one crime, please pick one to think about while filling out this survey.

Domestic violence

Sexual assault

Child abuse/neglect

Older adult abuse/neglect/financial exploitation

Human trafficking

Identity theft

- Financial fraud
- Homicide
- Burglary/Robbery
- Labor crime
- Property crime
- Stalking
- A violent crime not covered above
- Other; please specify: _____

4. Next you will see a list of things people sometimes need help with following crimes. Please tell us how easy or hard it was to get help with these things by circling one of the choices below.

- If you did not need help with some of the things listed (for example, because it did not apply to you or because you already knew how to do things yourself), pick “I didn’t need help”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what suing someone means) or don’t know if you needed help with those things, please pick “I don’t know”.

Knowledge								
Learning what happens in a criminal case	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know	
Learning the difference between “civil” and “criminal” cases	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know	
Learning about suing the person who made the crime happen because of my injuries or loss	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know	
Learning what to do when I go to court (for example, what to say or what to wear)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know	
Learning what information attorneys, advocates, and service providers can share about me with each other when working on my case	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know	
Learning what information about my mental health, medical history, and education can be shared in court	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know	

- If you did not need help with some of the things listed (for example, because it did not apply to you or because you already knew how to do things yourself), pick “I didn’t need help”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what suing someone means) or don’t know if you needed help with those things, please pick “I don’t know”.

Learning the differences between police, private attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, advocates, and service providers in what their jobs are and how they can help.	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Learning about different kinds of restraining orders (for example, temporary and permanent protection orders)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Learning about the legal terms people used in talking about my case	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Learning who to contact for different kinds of legal questions (for example, when to call a victim advocate, private attorney, prosecuting attorney)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Learning where to go for different kinds of legal information (online websites, self-help centers at courthouses, legal clinics/workshops).	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Learning about whether I qualify for immigration relief (U-visa, T-visa, visa under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA); asylum status)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Learning what to do when I am ordered to go to court (also called a subpoena)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Criminal							

- If you did not need help with some of the things listed (for example, because it did not apply to you or because you already knew how to do things yourself), pick “I didn’t need help”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what suing someone means) or don’t know if you needed help with those things, please pick “I don’t know”.

Getting updates on a criminal case (such as court dates; finding out if the case was open or closed, finding out if the police arrested anyone)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Making sure my rights as a crime victim are protected (for example, my right to be heard at specific stages in the criminal justice process and to be told about critical stages in the criminal justice process)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Civil							
Filing for things in family court (such as divorce, child custody, visitation, child support, or spousal support)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Applying for a restraining order (also called a protection order)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Managing child custody/visitation when there is a restraining order	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Filing a civil lawsuit against the offender (or someone else involved in the crime) because of my injuries/losses	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know
Getting the offender (or someone else involved in the crime) to pay if a court ordered them to pay me for my injuries/loss	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn’t need help.	I don’t know

- If you did not need help with some of the things listed (for example, because it did not apply to you or because you already knew how to do things yourself), pick “I didn’t need help”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what suing someone means) or don’t know if you needed help with those things, please pick “I don’t know”.

Getting help with my workproblems related to the crime, such as not being paid (or paid less) or not being able to take time off that I should be able to take	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Filing lawsuit for discrimination (for example, based on my sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Mental Health							
Getting mental health services after a crime (such as counseling)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Working with professionals who are knowledgeable and advocate for mental health needs.	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Law Enforcement							
Contacting the police to report a crime	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Getting the police to enforce a restraining order	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Safety							

- If you did not need help with some of the things listed (for example, because it did not apply to you or because you already knew how to do things yourself), pick “I didn’t need help”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what suing someone means) or don’t know if you needed help with those things, please pick “I don’t know”.

Getting my work, school, or housing authority to protect my safety, such as following restraining orders	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Replacing stolen identification (such as driver's license)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Changing my identity	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Signing up for a program to help me get a mailing address that is not my home to keep my home address private (also called an address confidentiality program)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Paying for things I need to stay safe because of the crime (such as a new lock for my door)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Housing							
Finding and applying for affordable housing	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Applying for public housing, federally-funded housing vouchers (as through Section 8), or public assistance with rent payments	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know

- If you did not need help with some of the things listed (for example, because it did not apply to you or because you already knew how to do things yourself), pick “I didn’t need help”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what suing someone means) or don’t know if you needed help with those things, please pick “I don’t know”.

Applying to transfer to another housing facility, end a lease, or change my lease because of a crime	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Finding and entering an emergency shelter after a crime	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Bankruptcy, Compensation, Benefits							
Applying for victim compensation for lost money from work, therapy costs, and/or other costs from the crime	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Applying for benefits from state and federal programs to get my basic needs met (such as welfare, food stamps, disability, healthcare)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Applying for bankruptcy	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Translation/Interpretation							
Translation of legal documents/forms/paperwork from English to another language	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know

- If you did not need help with some of the things listed (for example, because it did not apply to you or because you already knew how to do things yourself), pick “I didn’t need help”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what suing someone means) or don’t know if you needed help with those things, please pick “I don’t know”.

Interpretation of pre-hearing conferences from English to another language	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Interpretation of in-court proceedings from English to another language	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Interpreters who understand my culture	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know
Immediate interpretation or translation in emergency situations	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	I didn't need help.	I don't know

8. For different people, different things can get in the way of getting legal help after a crime. Please read the statements below and tell us how much of a problem these things were for you.

- If something does not apply to you or your case, please pick “This does not apply to me”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what a private lawyer or guardian ad litem is) or don’t know if these things got in the way, please pick “I don’t know”.

I couldn’t find information online or by phone to help with my legal needs (for example, to tell me who to ask about my legal questions; what different legal terms mean; what to expect in the legal system).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
There aren’t enough private lawyers who work at low- or no-cost to help crime victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
There aren’t enough low-cost counseling/mental health services to support crime victims while they go through the legal process.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
My lawyer or advocate focused more on other people’s needs than mine.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
There aren’t enough guardians ad litem (GALs) to help child victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
There aren’t enough victim advocates to help crime victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know

- If something does not apply to you or your case, please pick “This does not apply to me”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what a private lawyer or guardian ad litem is) or don’t know if these things got in the way, please pick “I don’t know”.

There aren’t enough legal clinics or workshops to help crime victims (for example, self-help clinics in courthouses).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
There isn’t support for child victims who are turning 18.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
Lawyers and advocates do not have enough time to help crime victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
The court system takes too long.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
Judges/magistrates don’t talk to each other.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
Criminal and civil courts don’t talk to each other.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) didn’t work together across agencies to help with my case.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about domestic violence.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don’t know

- If something does not apply to you or your case, please pick “This does not apply to me”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what a private lawyer or guardian ad litem is) or don’t know if these things got in the way, please pick “I don’t know”.

People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about services in Denver to help me get my legal needs met.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about immigration.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about victims' rights.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about mental health issues.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about the effects of trauma on crime victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about safety issues.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
When people make mistakes in legal cases, they do not apologize or take responsibility.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know

- If something does not apply to you or your case, please pick “This does not apply to me”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what a private lawyer or guardian ad litem is) or don’t know if these things got in the way, please pick “I don’t know”.

I had to re-tell my story many times.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
People gave me lots of information right after the crime, but I couldn't remember or take in everything at that time.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I did not receive enough social support after the crime.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I had to go to many different agencies to get legal help.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I was given wrong or bad answers to my legal questions.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I didn't have enough money (for example, to hire an attorney or interpreter).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I was afraid that I or someone I loved might be deported or have their legal status in the United States affected.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I was afraid that the perpetrator would try to get back at me or my loved ones.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know

- If something does not apply to you or your case, please pick “This does not apply to me”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what a private lawyer or guardian ad litem is) or don’t know if these things got in the way, please pick “I don’t know”.

I was afraid that the police would arrest me instead of the offender.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I was afraid that my kid(s) would be taken away from me.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem.	Big problem.	Very big problem.	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I felt traumatized, alone, ashamed, or embarrassed. These feelings made it hard for me to ask for help with my legal needs.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I didn't know what services were available to help me.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I didn't qualify for certain services even though I was in need.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I could not get help on time with my legal needs (for example, I was put on a waitlist to get services).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I didn't know my rights as a victim.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I didn't trust the people in the system, such as police, lawyers, and/or judges.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know

- If something does not apply to you or your case, please pick “This does not apply to me”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what a private lawyer or guardian ad litem is) or don’t know if these things got in the way, please pick “I don’t know”.

I needed help from an interpreter or translation service.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I didn't have a way to get to legal offices or court (for example, I didn't have a car or didn't know what bus to take).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I didn't have access to technology I needed to get legal information (such as a telephone, cell phone, computer, Internet).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I couldn't get my basic needs met (such as housing, food, medical care), which stopped me from getting my legal needs met.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
A criminal charge on my record got in the way of getting my legal needs met when I was a crime victim.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
Jurisdiction issues (such as the crime occurring in a different country) prevented me from getting legal needs met.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
I didn't know that I was a victim of a crime.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) treated me differently because of who I am (for example, because of my mental health, race,	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know

- If something does not apply to you or your case, please pick “This does not apply to me”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what a private lawyer or guardian ad litem is) or don’t know if these things got in the way, please pick “I don’t know”.

ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, disability or other identity).								
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) treated me differently because of who I am due to a previous victimization (as a child or adult)	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know	
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) did not take the crime seriously (for example, police officers said it was a civil case)	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know	
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) did not know where to refer me if they could not help.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know	
The offices I needed to go to were not open when I was available (such as after work/school hours).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know	
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) did not understand how the crime had hurt me emotionally or physically.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know	
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) did not believe me.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know	
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) didn't have time to get to know me as a person.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know	

- If something does not apply to you or your case, please pick “This does not apply to me”.
- If you don’t know about some of the things listed (for example, you don’t know what a private lawyer or guardian ad litem is) or don’t know if these things got in the way, please pick “I don’t know”.

Other; please specify: _____	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem	This does not apply to me	I don't know
------------------------------	------------------	------------------	-------------------	----------------	---------------------	---------------------------------	-----------------

9. What else do you want us to know about your legal needs following crime? Please add any other comments/questions in the space below:

In this last section of the survey, we will ask some questions about your background to understand more about the people who filled out this survey.

10. How old are you? _____

11. How many people are currently living in your household including yourself? _____

12. What is the annual gross (before taxes) income for your entire household? \$_____

13. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- No schooling
- 1st-8th grade
- Some high school

- High school graduate/GED
- Some college
- Associate's (2-year college) degree
- Four-year college degree
- Postgraduate
- Other (trade school, specialized training): please specify_____

14. Which of the following categories best describes your racial/ethnic background? Please check all that apply to you.

- White/Caucasian
- Black or African-American
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Hispanic/Latino
- Other - please specify: _____

15. How would you describe your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Other (please specify): _____

16. How would you describe your sexual orientation? Please check all that apply to you.

- Heterosexual/Straight
- Lesbian/Gay
- Bisexual
- Other (please specify): _____

17. What best describes your citizenship status? Please check all that apply to you.

- US citizen by birth
- US citizen by naturalization
- Legal permanent resident
- Immigrant visa holder
- Non-immigrant visa holder
- Refugee
- Asylum-seeker
- Undocumented resident
- Other (please specify): _____

18. What was the name of the agency that referred you to this study?

Phase 3: Survey for Professionals

1. Which of the following best describes the agency for which you work:
 - City or District Attorney's office
 - Police Department
 - Probation/Corrections
 - County/State Human Services
 - County Attorney
 - Educational institution
 - Medical facility
 - Colorado Legal Service lawyer
 - Private lawyer
 - Private for-profit agency
 - Private nonprofit agency
 - Religious faith community
 - Other _____

2. How long have you been in your current position?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-5 years
 - More than 5 years

3. Does your agency's mission include serving crime victims?
 - Yes
 - No

4. What types of crime victims does your agency serve (regardless of whether victim service is part of your mission)? Please check all that apply.
 - Domestic violence
 - Sexual assault/rape
 - Immigrant and/or undocumented
 - Child abuse/neglect
 - Older adult financial exploitation
 - Older adult abuse/neglect
 - Human trafficking
 - Identity theft
 - Financial fraud
 - Violent crime/assault
 - Homicide
 - Burglary
 - Labor

- Property crime
- Robbery
- Stalking
- A violent crime not covered above
- Other; please specify: _____

5. To the best of your knowledge, how do clients learn about your agency/organization? Please check all that apply.

- Referrals
- Brochures or other written materials in (other) offices
- Community outreach
- Informational letter
- Newspaper ads
- Radio announcements
- TV announcements
- Walk-in
- "Word of mouth"
- Other; please specify: _____

6. Approximately what percentage of your clients are:

- Gender
 - Females: ____%
 - Males: ____%
 - Transgender: ____%
- Sexual Orientation
 - LGBTQ: ____%
- Ethnicity
 - White/Caucasian: ____%
 - Black or African-American: ____%
 - Asian: ____%
 - Pacific Islander: ____%
 - Native American or Alaskan Native: ____%
 - Hispanic/Latino: ____%
 - Other - please specify: _____
- Deaf or hard of hearing: ____%
- Physically or cognitively disabled: ____%
- Poverty
 - Below the poverty line (Make < \$15,000 for single person or <\$29,000 for family of 4) : ____%
 - Modest income (Make between \$15,000-\$50,000 for single person or Between \$29,000 and \$92,000 for family of 4): ____%
- Age:

- Adult: ____%
- Older Adult (over age 60): ____%
- Children and Adolescents: ____%
- Language:
 - Fluent in English: ____%

7. Approximately how many of your agency's staff work with crime victims?

Number of Full-time: _____

Number of Part-time staff: _____

Number of Volunteers: _____

8. Are interpreters or bilingual staff available for crime victims who speak languages other than English? Please check all that apply.

Interpreters for all languages

Interpreters for some languages; please specify: _____

Bilingual staff for the following languages: _____

No

9. **Kinds of Help Needed.** Next you will see a list of things people sometimes need help with following crimes. Please tell us how easy or hard it is for clients you serve to get help with these things by agencies in and around Denver. Please circle an option below. If clients you serve do not need help with any of the things listed, pick “Clients don’t need help with this”.

Knowledge						
Learning what happens in a criminal case	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help with this
Learning the difference between “civil” and “criminal” cases	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help with this
Learning about suing the person who made the crime happen because of client injuries or loss	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help with this
Learning what to do when they as clients go to court (for example, what to say or what to wear)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help with this
Learning what information attorneys, advocates, and service providers can share with each other when working on clients’ cases	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help with this
Learning what client information on mental health, medical history, and education can be shared in court	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help with this
Learning the differences between police, private attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, advocates, and service providers in what their jobs are and how they can help	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help with this
Learning about different kinds of restraining orders (for example, temporary and permanent protection orders)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help with this
Learning about the legal terms people use in talking about client cases	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help with this
Learning who to contact for different kinds of legal questions (for example, when to call a victim advocate, private attorney, prosecuting attorney)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help with this
Learning where to go for different kinds of legal information (online	very easy	easy	not easy	hard	very hard	Clients don’t need help

websites, self-help centers at courthouses, legal clinics/workshops)			or hard				with this
Learning about whether they as clients qualify for immigration relief (U-visa, T-visa, visa under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA); asylum status)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard		Clients don't need help with this
Learning what to do when they as clients are ordered to go to court (also called a subpoena)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard		Clients don't need help with this
Criminal							
Getting updates on a criminal case (such as court dates; finding out if the case was open or closed, finding out if the police arrested anyone)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard		Clients don't need help with this
Making sure their rights as a crime victim are protected (for example, right to be heard at specific stages in the criminal justice process and to be told about critical stages in the criminal justice process)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard		Clients don't need help with this
Civil							
Filing for things in family court (such as divorce, child custody, visitation, child support, or spousal support)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard		Clients don't need help with this
Applying for a restraining order (also called a protection order)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard		Clients don't need help with this
Managing child custody/visitation when there is a restraining order	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard		Clients don't need help with this
Filing a civil lawsuit against the offender (or someone else involved in the crime) because of client injuries/losses	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard		Clients don't need help with this
Getting the offender (or someone else involved in the crime) to pay if a court ordered them to pay the client for his/her injuries/loss	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard		Clients don't need help with this
Getting help with work for problems related to the crime, such as not being paid (or paid less) or not being able to take time off that they as clients should be able to take	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard		Clients don't need help with this

Filing lawsuit for discrimination (for example, based on clients' sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Mental Health						
Getting mental health services after a crime (such as counseling)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Working with professionals who are knowledgeable and advocate for mental health needs.	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Law Enforcement						
Contacting the police to report a crime	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Getting the police to enforce a restraining order	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Safety						
Getting clients' work, school, or housing authority to protect their safety, such as following restraining orders	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Replacing stolen identification (such as driver's license)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Changing their identity	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Signing up for a program to help them as clients get a mailing address that is not their home to keep their home address private (also called an address confidentiality program)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Paying for things they as clients need to stay safe because of the crime (such as a new lock for their door)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Housing						
Finding and applying for affordable housing	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this

Applying for public housing, federally-funded housing vouchers (as through Section 8), or public assistance with rent payments	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Applying to transfer to another housing facility, end a lease, or change their lease because of a crime	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Finding and entering an emergency shelter after a crime	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Bankruptcy, Compensation, Benefits						
Applying for victim compensation for lost money from work, therapy costs, and/or other costs from the crime	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Applying for benefits from state and federal programs to get their basic needs met (such as welfare, food stamps, disability, healthcare)	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Applying for bankruptcy	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Translation/Interpretation						
Translation of legal documents/forms/paperwork from English to another language	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Interpretation of pre-hearing conferences from English to another language	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Interpretation of in-court proceedings from English to another language	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Interpreters who understand each clients' own culture	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this
Immediate interpretation or translation in emergency situations	very easy	easy	not easy or hard	hard	very hard	Clients don't need help with this

10. What legal service/assistance did your clients need that were not listed above?

11. How much of a barrier/challenge do the following present in terms of providing critical legal services to clients?

	Not at all				Very much
Lack of adequate staff/personnel	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of adequate infrastructure (e.g., space)	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of adequate training for professionals	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of formal rules/regulations/in-house procedures to address legal concerns or make appropriate referrals	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of knowledge about victims' rights	1	2	3	4	5
Language	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of adequate referral sources	1	2	3	4	5
Other; please specify: _____	1	2	3	4	5

12. Things that get in the way of getting the legal help clients need. Among clients you serve, how much of a problem are the following things for clients trying to get their legal needs met. Please read the statements below and tell us how much you agree with these statements – from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Clients can't find information online or by phone to help with their legal needs (for example, to tell them who to ask about their legal questions; what different legal terms mean; what to expect in the legal system).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
There aren't enough private lawyers who work at low- or no-cost to help crime victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
There aren't enough low-cost counseling/mental health services to support crime victims while they go through the legal process.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients' lawyer or advocate focused more on other people's needs than the needs of individual clients.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
There aren't enough guardians ad litem (GALs) to help child victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
There aren't enough victim advocates to help crime victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
There aren't enough legal clinics or workshops to help crime victims (for example, self-help clinics in courthouses).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
There isn't support for child victims who are turning 18.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem

Lawyers and advocates do not have enough time to help crime victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
The court system takes too long.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Judges/magistrates don't talk to each other.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Criminal and civil courts don't talk to each other.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) don't work together across agencies to help with clients' cases.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about domestic violence.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about services in Denver to help clients get their legal needs met.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about immigration.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about victims' rights.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about mental health issues.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about the effects of trauma on crime victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem

People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know enough about safety issues.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
When people make mistakes in legal cases, they do not apologize or take responsibility.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients have to re-tell their stories many times.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People give clients lots of information right after the crime, but clients can't remember or take in everything at that time.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients do not receive enough social support after the crime.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients have to go to many different agencies to get legal help.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients are given wrong or bad answers to their legal questions.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients don't have enough money (for example, to hire an attorney or interpreter).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients are afraid that they or someone they love might be deported or have their legal status in the United States affected.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients are afraid that their perpetrator will try to get back at them or their loved ones.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients are afraid that the police will arrest them instead of the offender.	Not a	Small	Medium	Big	Very big

	problem	problem	problem	problem	problem
Clients are afraid that their kid(s) will be taken away from them.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem.	Big problem.	Very big problem.
Clients feel traumatized, alone, ashamed, or embarrassed. These feelings make it hard for them to ask for help with their legal needs.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients don't know what services were available to help them.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients don't qualify for certain services even though they have a need for those services.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients cannot get help on time with their legal needs (for example, they are put on a waitlist to get services).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients don't know their rights as victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients don't trust the people in the system, such as police, lawyers, and/or judges.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients need help from an interpreter or translation service.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients don't have a way to get to legal offices or court (for example, they don't have cars or don't know what bus to take).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem

Clients don't have access to technology they need to get legal information (such as a telephone, cell phone, computer, Internet).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients can't get basic needs met (such as housing, food, medical care), which stops them from getting their legal needs met.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Criminal charges on clients' records get in the way of clients getting their legal needs met as crime victims.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Jurisdiction issues (such as the crime occurring in a different country) prevents clients from getting their legal needs met.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Clients don't know that they are victims of a crime.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) treat clients differently because of who they are (for example, because of their mental health, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, disability or other identity).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) treat clients differently because of a previous victimization (as a child or adult)	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not take the crime seriously (for example, police officers said it was a civil case)	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not know where to refer clients if they cannot help them.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
The offices clients need to go to are not open when they are available (such as after work/school hours).	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not understand	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem

how crimes hurt clients emotionally or physically.	problem	problem	problem	problem	problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) do not believe clients.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
People (such as police, victim advocates, lawyers, judges) don't have time to get to know clients as individuals.	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem
Other; please specify: _____	Not a problem	Small problem	Medium problem	Big problem	Very big problem

13. We're interested in how professionals prefer to access training on legal issues related to crime victims. How likely would you be to learn about the legal needs of crime victims by:

Attending formal workshop(s)/class(es) offered locally	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.
Attending formal workshop(s)/class(es) offered regionally or nationally	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.
Reading academic resources (such as research articles), if they were easily accessible	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.
Attending regional/national conferences	Not	Somewhat	Very	Very likely because I	I have done so before,

that focus on research findings	at all likely	likely	likely	have done so before and plan to do so again.	though I do not plan to do so again.
Attending regional/national conferences that focus on policy/practice	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.
Participating in trainings via webinars	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.
Accessing web resources as needed	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.
Participating in trainings via conference call	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.
Consulting with co-workers	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.
Cross-training with other professionals locally	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.
Drawing on personal experience	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.
Drawing on direct experience working with	Not	Somewhat	Very	Very likely because I	I have done so before,

victims	at all likely	likely	likely	have done so before and plan to do so again.	though I do not plan to do so again.
Drawing on direct experience working with other service providers	Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely	Very likely because I have done so before and plan to do so again.	I have done so before, though I do not plan to do so again.

14. Please list the agencies/organizations or individuals you collaborate with most often in terms of sending or receiving referrals for legal services.
15. What do you/your agency/organization need to help you do a better job either directly providing legal services or referring crime victims to appropriate services?
16. Please let us know if you have other comments/questions in the space below: