

VICTIM SERVICES IN MISSOULA, MT



12/10/2021

Montana Board of Crime Control State and
Tribal Victim Liaison Project

Data collected from a roundtable discussion with victim service providers who support Missoula, Missoula County, and the surrounding areas.

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MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL STATE AND TRIBAL VICTIM LIAISON PROJECT

PARTICIPANTS

Thanks to the courteousness of YWCA Missoula, service providers representing many facets of victim services came together to discuss victim services, gaps in the system, and solutions for those gaps. Those participating in the roundtable includes:

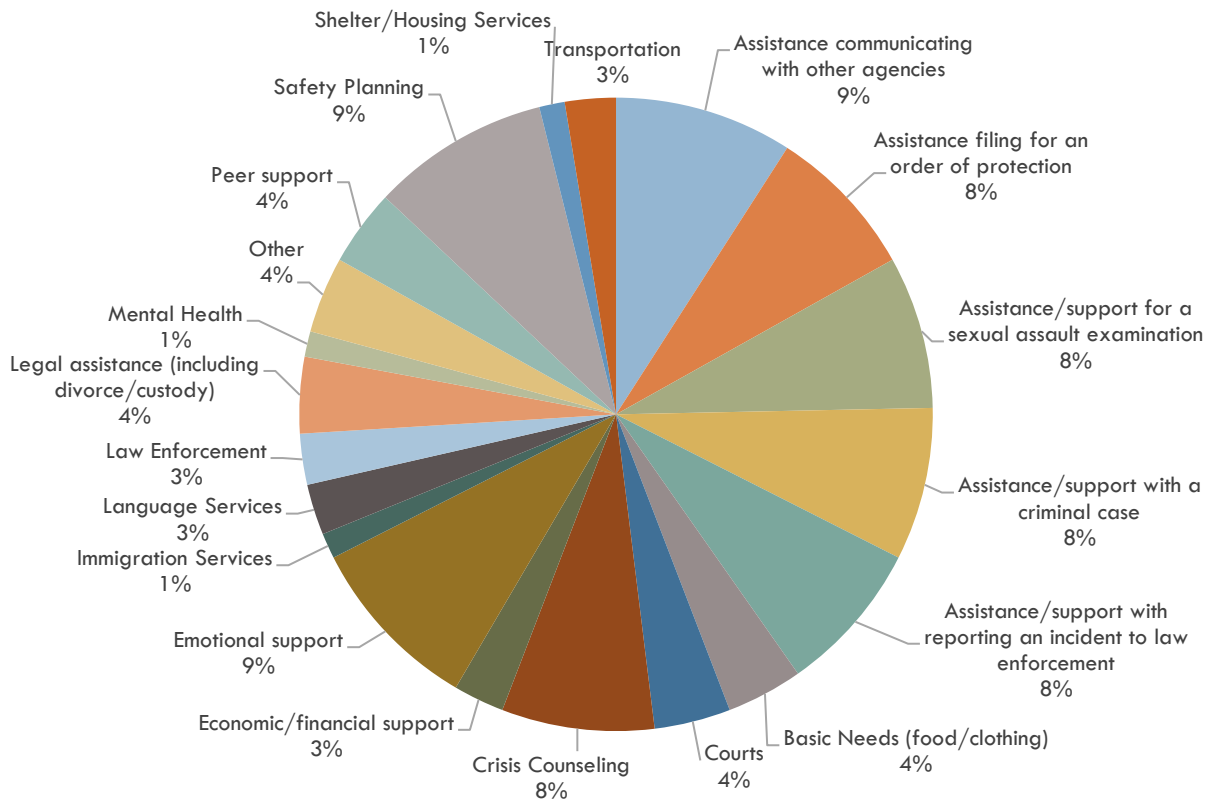
- Montana Department of Corrections Victim Services
- YWCA Missoula
- University of Montana Sexual Assault Resource Center (SARC)
- Missoula City Attorney's Office
- Adult Protective Services - Missoula
- FBI
- CASA of Missoula County
- Montana Legal Services Association
- Missoula County Community Justice Department

Services Represented

Those who were able to participate, filled out a short survey addressing the services they provide to the Missoula, Missoula County, or the surrounding areas. Of the nine agencies who participated, the below data set represents the myriad of services they provide.

<i>Assistance communicating with other agencies</i>	7
<i>Assistance filing for an order of protection</i>	6
<i>Assistance/support for a sexual assault examination</i>	6
<i>Assistance/support with a criminal case</i>	6
<i>Assistance/support with reporting an incident to law enforcement</i>	6
<i>Basic Needs (food/clothing)</i>	3
<i>Courts</i>	3
<i>Crisis Counseling</i>	6
<i>Economic/financial support</i>	2
<i>Emotional support</i>	7
<i>Immigration Services</i>	1
<i>Language Services</i>	2
<i>Law Enforcement</i>	2
<i>Legal assistance (including divorce/custody)</i>	3
<i>Mental Health</i>	1
<i>Other</i>	3
<i>Peer support</i>	3
<i>Safety Planning</i>	7
<i>Shelter/Housing Services</i>	1
<i>Transportation</i>	2
<u>Grand total of services offered: 77</u>	

Victim Services Available in and around Missoula, MT



Other services identified, but not captured:

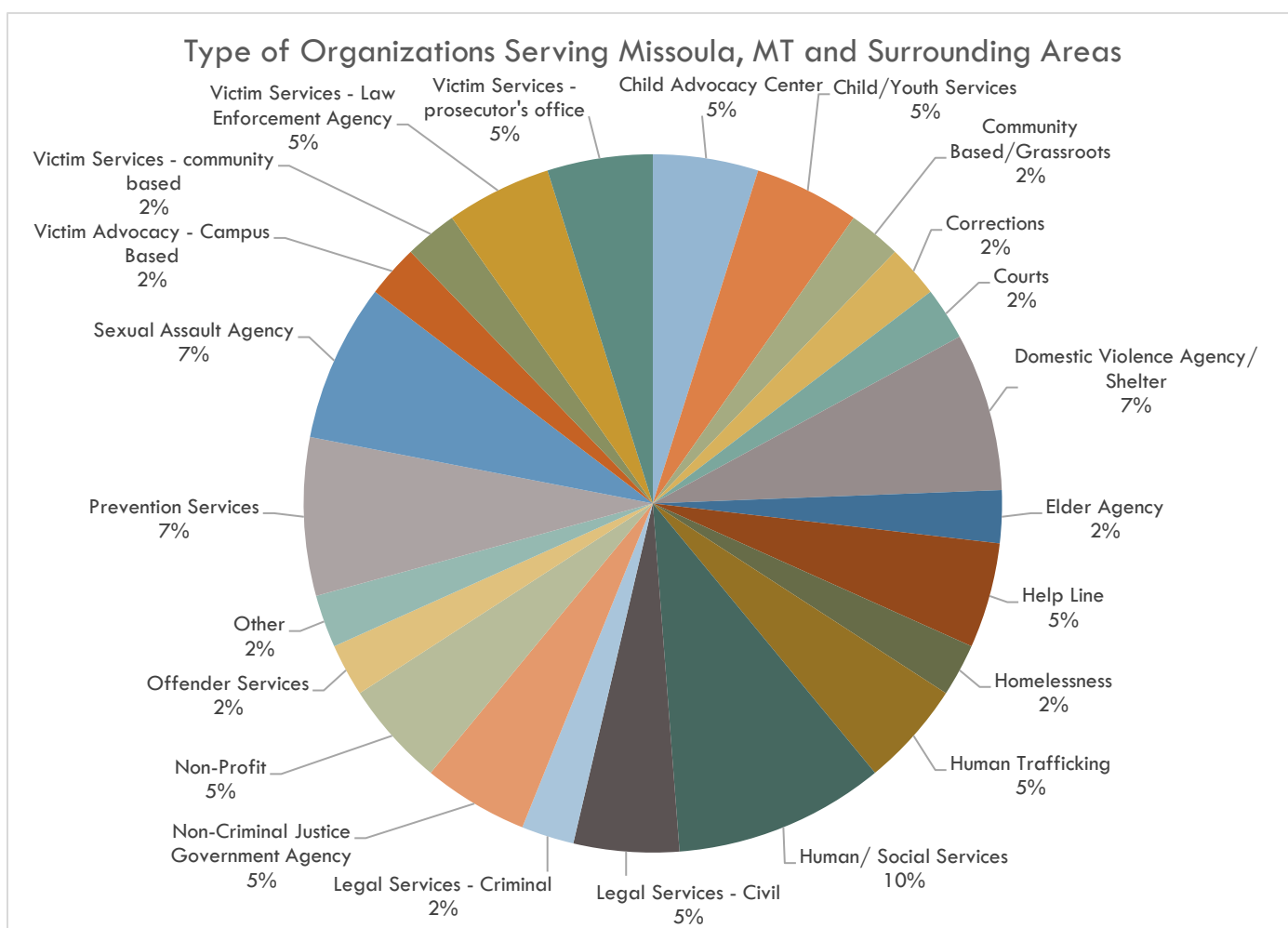
- Investigation
- Guardianship
- Referral/coordination, and identify needs to agencies that can assist with basic needs, safety planning, shelter, legal assistance, mental health, and medical assistance

Types of Organizations Represented

Based on the answers on the survey, the following are the types of organizations serving Missoula and the surrounding areas. It is important to note that agencies were encouraged to select all types of agencies that their agency may be identified. We recognize that many agencies and service providers in Montana wear many hats and want to be able to display that information accurately.

<i>Child Advocacy Center</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Child/Youth Services</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Community Based/Grassroots</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Corrections</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Courts</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Domestic Violence Agency/ Shelter</i>	<i>3</i>

<i>Elder Agency</i>	1
<i>Help Line</i>	2
<i>Homelessness</i>	1
<i>Human Trafficking</i>	2
<i>Human/ Social Services</i>	4
<i>Legal Services - Civil</i>	2
<i>Legal Services - Criminal</i>	1
<i>Non-Criminal Justice Government Agency</i>	2
<i>Non-Profit</i>	2
<i>Offender Services</i>	1
<i>Other</i>	1
<i>Prevention Services</i>	3
<i>Sexual Assault Agency</i>	3
<i>Victim Advocacy - Campus Based</i>	1
<i>Victim Services - community based</i>	1
<i>Victim Services - Law Enforcement Agency</i>	2
<i>Victim Services - prosecutor's office</i>	2
<u>Grand total types of agencies represented: 44</u>	



Gaps Discussed

Training Needs:

- Diversion, equity, and inclusion training across justice system.
- Strangulation Training
- Accessible training
- A lot of training is out of date

Service Provider Gaps and Needs:

- Stable Funding
- Need for vicarious trauma intervention and prevention
- Less restrictions on grants
- Information sharing
- Siloed communities, need for statewide network
- Chronic stress
- Turnover of service providers resulting in inexperienced staff
- Secondary Trauma
- Lack of collaboration
- Lack of access to information regarding offenders (both pre- and post-conviction)
- Lack of mass violence/casualty response plan for victim service providers
- Lack of knowledge of grants and recipients and how those funds can be utilized, or survivors referred for funds
- Grant parameters form a gap because they're short and specific

Victim/Survivor Gaps:

- Affordable and permanent housing
- Affordable childcare
- Lack of legal representation
- Lack of available legal services
- Stigma for victims and survivors, stigma for survivors of abuse
- Lack of communication among agencies and organizations that serve 50+
- Support services for older adults and adults with disabilities
- Legal support services for older adults and adults with disabilities
- No advocates for older adults in rural areas
- Lack of funding for transportation/hotels for victims/survivors for court and trial
- Basic stability
- Lack of culturally appropriate/accessible resources
- Lack of mental health and counseling services
- No mental health/counseling for victims of financial crimes
- Temporary housing for survivors (that doesn't include hotels)
- Victims have to call multiple people to gain access to services

- Lack of guardianships for older adults and adults with disabilities
- Access to assistance with parenting plans
- Pets not allowed in shelters
- Slow court process
- Isolation equates to lack of accessibility
- Transportation (training for drivers, assistance for those attempting to access transportation)
- Lack of respite care available
- Notification to victims of their cases/trials
- Limited housing services for older adults or adults with disabilities
- No elder abuse database (abusers can jump facilities)

Justice System Gaps:

- Accessible and consistent behavioral health services
- Availability of substance use disorder treatment
- Lack of trauma-informed investigations
- Lack of trauma-informed services
- Lack of available prevention services
- Lack of awareness for the later life population
- Lack of available specialized support services
- Failure to appear just result in continuances, no consequences for the offender
- Lack of GPS/SAP monitoring
- Continuously changing court systems take time away from victims
- Lack of attorneys for kids
- Getting to the root of the problems on what should be a very basic/fundamental level
- Restorative justice options
- Communication in the system
- Lack of victim voice's in the justice system
- Lack of meaningful participation in criminal process for victims
- Lack of educated solutions
- Only able to do one trial at a time is delaying cases
- Re-traumatization of victims through the system
- Diversion doesn't take victims into account

Solutions Discussed

Service Provider Specific Solutions:

- Confidential Victim Information Database
- Warm Handoffs
- Victim Notification System (mimics federal notification system)
- Stable funding for victim services
- Education for service providers on releases of information
- Secondary trauma training and resources

Survivor/Victim Specific Solutions:

- Available pro bono legal services
- Free, available medical care
- Long term counseling sessions available
- Same day mental health services
- Unlimited counseling sessions
- Petcare for victims/survivors
- Respite care for those caring for elderly
- Long term housing solutions
- Hospitals and nursing care facilities that could help with elder care
- Elder abuse tracking system

Justice System Specific Solutions:

- Outreach and education
- More advocates to match the increase in judges, police, prosecutors
- Victimless prosecution
- More CD treatment centers

Conclusions reached

After a wonderful conversation, one of the most important conclusions reached was the need to continue these conversations and this work in order to truly implement change in a system that puts the voice of the victim last.

One of the top discussed gaps was the lack of continuous notifications for victims as an offender moves through the criminal justice system. The group also discussed how stable funding would benefit service providers and survivors. In particular, the need for stable funding so positions do not lapse, and survivors continue to receive services. Stable funding would also assist service providers in better utilizing their time to serve survivors, versus spending substantial time trying to find ways to fill gaps.

When discussing solutions, the group discussed the best ways to ensure that victims are not lost in the system and there is collaboration between service providers. Many brought up the need for collaborative systems that are shared by providers.

The next step includes moving forward and finding how to continue these conversations in productive ways that don't take up the time of service providers, but also ensures that we are moving forward in filling gaps and meeting the needs of victims and survivors.