

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 - 2023



2020

Victim Services Unit

# Victim Services Unit (VSU)

## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Community Justice (DCJ) Victim Service Unit (VSU) provides survivor-centered consultation on policy and procedures; ensures crime victim rights are upheld and integrated into supervision practices; educates DCJ staff and community partners around victim rights and best practices for supporting victims/survivors; collaborates with partners to engage in system change that is trauma informed, survivor-led, and consistent with best practices; and provides advocacy and support to people who have experienced harm. We provide services to victims/survivors who have been harmed by a justice involved individual (JII) who is being supervised by the DCJ, JIIs on supervision who are experiencing complex trauma (such as domestic or sexual violence, stalking, or sex trafficking), DCJ staff, and our community partners.

## Our Mission

VSU's mission is to support people who have experienced harm by thoughtfully meeting their individualized needs, upholding victim rights, and enhancing our community's response to harm.

## Our Vision

VSU envisions a County that is equitable, responsive, and resourced to meet the needs of those who have experienced harm while creating meaningful options to repair harm.

## Our Values

### EQUITY

We believe that advancing equity, valuing diversity, and addressing intersecting oppressions is essential to preventing disparities within our community. We acknowledge that the criminal justice system is historically oppressive and that white supremacy values have been baked into our social and justice systems. We understand that racism and oppression within systems serve to maintain the power of the privileged and disadvantage traditionally marginalized communities. We believe that we have a responsibility to educate ourselves, be self-reflective and evaluate the ways we hold privilege and perpetuate oppression.

We are dedicated to applying an equity lens to our work and to all the decisions we make. We are committed to dismantling systems of oppression and we will continuously work to transform systems to be safe, inclusive, and equitable for all people.

When working directly with survivors of violence and victims of crime, we utilize a holistic model that centers the whole individual and the entirety of their needs and experiences. We strive to utilize culturally responsive strategies to address people's specific needs including providing referrals to culturally specific community resources. Our approach recognizes the full impact of harm a person has experienced including the harm caused by institutional and systemic oppression.

### **SURVIVOR-LED**

We believe that survivors of violence and crime victims are the experts of their own lives. Our role is to follow the lead of the people we serve by utilizing an empowerment approach to help them identify and build upon their strengths. With a non-judgmental frame, we provide honest and transparent information, and support victims and survivors in making informed decisions that they identify are right for their unique situation. We encourage our community partners to listen to the needs of survivors of violence and crime victims and follow the lead of each individual they serve.

### **TRAUMA-INFORMED**

We understand that being trauma-informed is a process that involves continuous effort to remain at the leading edge of best practices. We strive to actively prevent any re-traumatization while working to restore a sense of safety and power to survivors of violence and victims of crime. We recognize the impacts of systemic and historical trauma. We understand that victims and survivors may come into our justice and social systems with distrust and fear that they will experience additional harm from these systems. Our staff support people in navigating these complex systems and work to minimize barriers for trauma survivors to engage with systems. We invest in the sustainability of our staff and recognize that vicarious trauma must be addressed in order for our staff to do our best work. We strive to find innovative solutions to address harm and utilize principles of restorative justice to repair harm whenever possible.

# Strategic Plan 2020-2023

## OVERVIEW

The VSU embarked on a strategic planning process in the summer of 2020 that included three staff retreats. After gaining input from VSU staff at these retreats, the VSU created a strategic planning committee, which met over several months to develop VSU's Strategic Plan. During our staff retreats, we revised VSU's mission and vision as well as solidified VSU's core values that guide all aspects of our work and inform our strategic goals. Through the strategic planning process, we defined VSU's strategic goals for the next three years as well as action items and measures of success for the first year of the Strategic Plan. Findings from the Juvenile Service Division's Strength and Needs Assessment for Supporting Victims/Survivors and Upholding Their Victim Rights were used to inform VSU's strategic goals, objectives and action items.

The purpose of the VSU's Strategic Plan is to ensure the activities of the VSU are consistent with our core values and are guided by the needs of victims/survivors, DCJ staff and leadership, and our community partners. The purpose of this Strategic Plan report is to share an overview of VSU's strategic goals for the next three years. This report does not list all of the details within VSU's Strategic Plan, such as action items and measures of success for year two and three of the plan. One action item within VSU's Strategic Plan is to meet each year to define the following year's action items and measures of success. Action items in year one include conducting an Adult Service Division's Strength and Needs Assessment for Supporting Victims/Survivors and Upholding Their Victim Rights and creating a Community Advisory Board that is designed to gain feedback from individuals who have experienced sex trafficking. By setting action items on a yearly basis and gaining feedback from victims/survivors, DCJ staff and community partners; the VSU seeks to ensure that our Strategic Plan is a living document that evolves each year by being responsive to the needs of the community we serve.

## OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

The VSU Strategic Plan has six overarching goals, which are outlined below.

### 1. Incorporate a survivor-centered lens throughout DCJ

VSU is committed to utilizing best practices for serving victims/survivors which includes applying a victim/survivor-centered lens to all aspects of our work. A victim/survivor-centered lens involves prioritizing the needs and rights of victims/survivors throughout policies and practices. DCJ’s focus and energy is primarily directed toward the youth or JII that causes harm. As we work toward our mission of enhancing community safety, VSU seeks to expand DCJ’s focus to include those who have experienced harm by incorporating a victim/survivor-centered lens throughout DCJ policies and supervision practices. We will work toward integrating a victim/survivor-centered lens through DCJ by collaborating with leadership, enhancing VSU’s outreach efforts, and by ensuring VSU staff participate in DCJ workgroups and committees to bring a survivor-centered lens to decision making tables throughout DCJ.

### Incorporate a survivor-centered lens throughout DCJ

Objective	Action
Collaborate with leadership to center survivors	VSU regularly attend management meetings
	VSU regularly presents at Senior Leadership Team meetings
VSU enhances outreach efforts at ASD and JSD	Regularly offer trainings for DCJ (ASD & JSD)
	Annually present VSU overview at each unit meetings
	Annual training for DCJ Staff (all PPOs & JCCs)
	Provide DV training for all PPOs
VSU representation at DCJ workgroups/committees	Create process to gain regular feedback from DCJ staff
	VSU representation at DCJ workgroups
	VSU representation at JSD Transforming Probation workgroup
	VSU representation in DCJ policy reviews

## 2. Utilize victim/survivor input to enhance DCJ and system-wide policies and practices

Seeking feedback from victims/survivors aligns with VSU’s core value of being survivor-led and trauma-informed. By gaining victims’/survivors’ feedback, we can identify barriers victims/survivors face to having a meaningful role in our justice system including barriers to engaging with DCJ. Obtaining feedback from victims/survivors will help VSU identify challenges DCJ has to upholding victim rights and support us in improving VSU’s services, policies and practices to be responsive to victims/survivors. Additionally, feedback will be used to improve services for victims/survivors at DCJ and through our partnerships with system and community partners. We will work toward the goal of utilizing victim/survivor input to enhance DCJ and system-wide policies and practices by creating multiple avenues to facilitate feedback from victims/survivors as well as creating policies for tracking and recording victim/survivor feedback.

### Utilize victim/survivor input to enhance DCJ and system-wide policies and practices

Objective	Action
Obtain feedback from victims/survivors	Develop and regularly dispense feedback survey to all victims/survivors working with VSU
	Conduct 1:1 interviews with victims/survivors
	Pilot Community Advisory Board
Record and track victim/survivor feedback	Create policies & practices
	Create feedback tracking process

## 3. Enhance services for victim/survivors

Our Strategic Plan strives to enhance VSU’s capacity to reach out to every listed victim/survivor connected to DCJ. The VSU believes that victims/survivors connected to JSD/ASD deserve information about the post-conviction/post-adjudication justice system, DCJ’s advocacy program, and information about their victim rights.

In the next three years, VSU will also work to enhance DCJ’s victim/survivor notification process to ensure that victim rights are upheld to the best of our ability and victims/survivors have the information they need to plan around their safety. This includes working with Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office to improve Case Companion, which is an online tool that streamlines victims/survivors ability to request their victim right, receive hearing notifications, and navigate the criminal justice system. In addition to improving Case Companion, the Strategic Plan seeks to improve VSU’s online presence to enhance victims’/survivors’ access to information and services. In the next three years, the VSU will work toward improving our relationships with culturally specific services providers and explore opportunities to collaborate together to enhance victim/survivors’s access to culturally specific services.

<b>Enhance services for victim/survivors</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>
Reach out to every listed victim/survivor connected to DCJ	Send letter to every victim/survivor when JII enters ASD services
	Follow up victim/survivor letter with phone call
	Explore options/capacity to send letters to every victim/survivor connected to JSD
Enhancing hearing notification services	Provide ASD victim/survivor hearing notifications for all critical stage hearings
	Research capacity to provide victim/survivor hearing notifications for JSD  Pilot or enhance capacity to offer victim/survivor notifications for JSD
Enhance Case Companion	Collaborate with DA's Office to offer additional features
	Coordinate with Senior Leadership Team to secure resources
	Identify grant opportunities to expand functionality and expand to other jurisdictions
Improve our online presence/services for victims/survivors	Regularly update VSU website and Mult. Co. Commons pages
	Enhance appearance of VSU website

<p>Collaborate with culturally specific organizations</p>	<p>Attend Community Peace Collaborative meetings</p> <p>Invite culturally specific organizations to share program overview at VSU meetings</p> <p>Reach out to culturally specific organizations to build relationship and explore opportunities to support their services and collaborate</p> <p>Explore opportunities to contract with culturally specific organizations</p>
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#### 4. Embed VSU’s values into our practices

The VSU is committed to upholding our core values of equity, trauma-informed and survivor-led as we work to achieve our mission and vision. In an effort to hold VSU accountable to our values, the Strategic Plan outlines how the VSU will incorporate our values into our work and all of the decisions we make at VSU. This includes investing our time and energy into racial justice and equity work.

<p><b>Embed VSU’s values into our practices</b></p>	
<p><b>Objective</b></p>	<p><b>Action</b></p>
<p>Use VSU's vision/mission/values (VMV) in our decision making</p>	<p>Create shared definitions of our values</p> <p>Deepen VSU's understanding of our VMV</p> <p>Create tool to utilize core values in all decision making</p> <p>Re-evaluate team meeting agenda to incorporate VMV</p>
<p>Increase time investment in equity work</p>	<p>Explore options to dedicate staff time</p>

#### 5. Create infrastructure for VSU staff sustainability

Working with victims of crime and survivors of trauma is both rewarding and challenging. We are continuously charged with doing more than we have the capacity to do. The VSU Strategic Plan will work to increase our capacity so that we can more fully meet the needs of victims/survivors and DCJ. Our plan increases staff development opportunities to ensure VSU staff are well trained and are knowledgeable of current best practices for victim/survivor services.

We will also develop a sustainable infrastructure for the VSU team to ensure that our staff are well supported while doing this difficult work and historical expertise is maintained when VSU members transition from our team.

### Create infrastructure for VSU staff sustainability

Objective	Action
Increase VSU's capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore funding/volunteer opportunities</li> <li>Identify &amp; apply for applicable grants</li> </ul>
VSU staff development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training on best practices for supporting victim/survivors</li> <li>Share staff knowledge/expertise with team</li> <li>Mutual learning opportunities about each other's roles</li> <li>Enhance knowledge of court processes</li> </ul>
Enhance on-boarding of new staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create check-list of items to share with new staff</li> <li>Train new staff on software and procedures</li> <li>New staff receive training on VSU's mission/vision/values</li> </ul>
Infrastructure for sustainability of our team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build vicarious trauma supports and resources into VSU</li> <li>Sustainability &amp; infrastructure for Sex Trafficking Sr. Program Strategist position</li> <li>Create transition plans/manuals for each position</li> <li>Build culture that celebrates our successes</li> </ul>

## 6. Advocate for system wide improvements

VSU's mission involves enhancing our community's response to harm by being a collaborative partner that prioritizes our values of equity and survivor-led and trauma informed practices and policies throughout systems. We work to continuously improve systems in order to be at the leading edge of best practices for supporting victims/survivors.

Our Strategic Plan seeks to enhance our relationships with community and system partners so we can support each other in creating a County that is equitable, responsive, and resourced to meet the needs of those who have experienced harm while creating meaningful options to repair harm. In the first year of our plan, we will conduct an Adult Service Division’s Strength and Needs Assessment for Supporting Victims/Survivors and Upholding Their Victim Rights to identify areas for growth within DCJ. We will explore opportunities to create restorative justice services and institutionalize restorative justice practices throughout DCJ. Additionally, we will improve restitution collection practices at DCJ.

### Advocate for system wide improvements

Objective	Action
Conduct ASD Strengths/Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline ASD Strengths/Needs Assessment Process</li> <li>Conduct interviews/surveys with ASD staff</li> <li>Create ASD Strengths/Needs Report</li> </ul>
Expand Restorative Justice (RJ) opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete RJP pilot</li> <li>Create proposal for department wide RJP for staff</li> <li>Explore RJ services for ASD JIIs</li> <li>Propose client focused RJ services</li> <li>Implement client focused RJ services</li> <li>Institutionalize RJ practices</li> </ul>
Increase collaboration with DA's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create formal warm hand off process between advocates (JSD)</li> </ul>
Enhance community partner relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend community partner meetings</li> <li>Build relationships with culturally specific providers</li> </ul>
Assess Strategic Plan progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess progress of completing action items and deliverables</li> <li>Create objectives/action items for year 2</li> <li>Calculate deliverable successes</li> </ul>

Improve restitution collection

Assess current collection practices

Measure trends in restitution collection

Strengthen collection policies & procedures

Document historical & current knowledge  
Advocate for leadership buy-in for improvements

Support ASD staff to enhance collection efforts

Create and share budget forms to help develop  
payment plans

Launch an awareness campaign