

VICTIM SERVICES IN HELENA, MT



12/13/2021
and
12/14/2021

Montana Board of Crime Control State and
Tribal Victim Liaison Project

Data collected from a roundtable discussion with victim service providers who support Helena, Lewis and Clark County, the surrounding areas, and even statewide and federal services.

Victim Services in Helena, MT

MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL STATE AND TRIBAL VICTIM LIAISON PROJECT

PARTICIPANTS

Service providers representing many facets of victim services came together to discuss victim services, gaps in the system, and solutions for those gaps at the Board of Crime Control and Department of Corrections building. Those participating in the roundtable included:

- Montana Department of Corrections Victim Services
- Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Lewis and Clark County Child Advocacy Center
- Helena Indian Alliance
- Helena City Attorney's Office
- MT DPHHS Child and Family Services Division
- FBI
- Montana National Guard – SHARP
- MT DOJ Department of Criminal Investigation – Missing Persons
- The Friendship Center
- Montana VA – Sexual Treatment Coordination
- Montana Legal Services Association
- Montana VA – Intimate Partner Violence Coordination

Services Represented

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

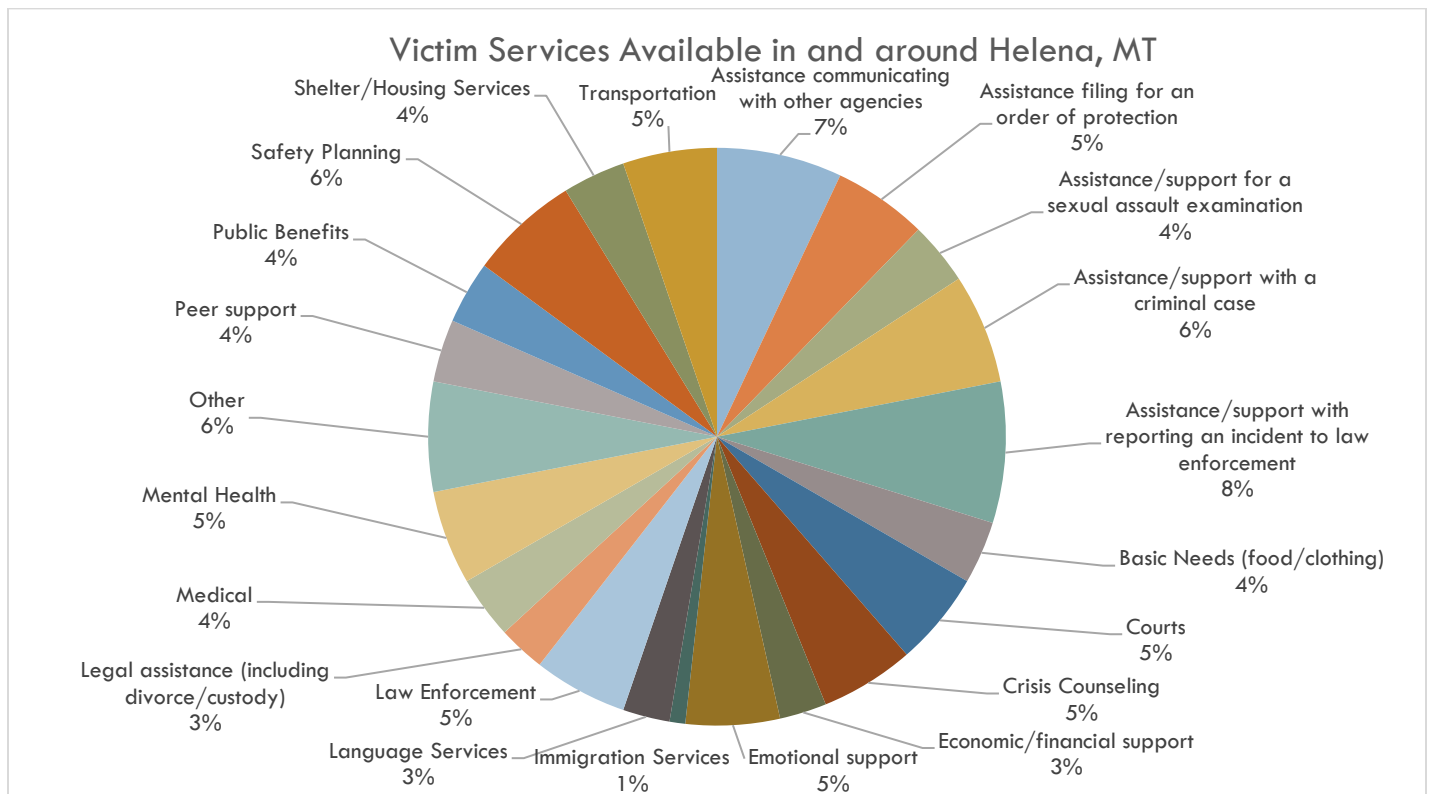
An important dialogue was regarding how services are categorized. This first list represents how victim service agencies and providers classified some of their services that were not on the list of services provided.

Other services were listed as:

- Resources, policy, and direct service support to member programs
- Education and training
- Forensic Interviews
- Grant Administration
- Law Enforcement Advocacy
- Court Advocacy
- Mental Health Residential Care
- Referral/coordination and identification of needs to agencies that can assist with basic needs, safety planning, shelter, legal assistance, mental health, and medical assistance
- Employment Support

This second list encapsulates the listed services from the survey and all the agencies that provide these services. 114 services are represented:

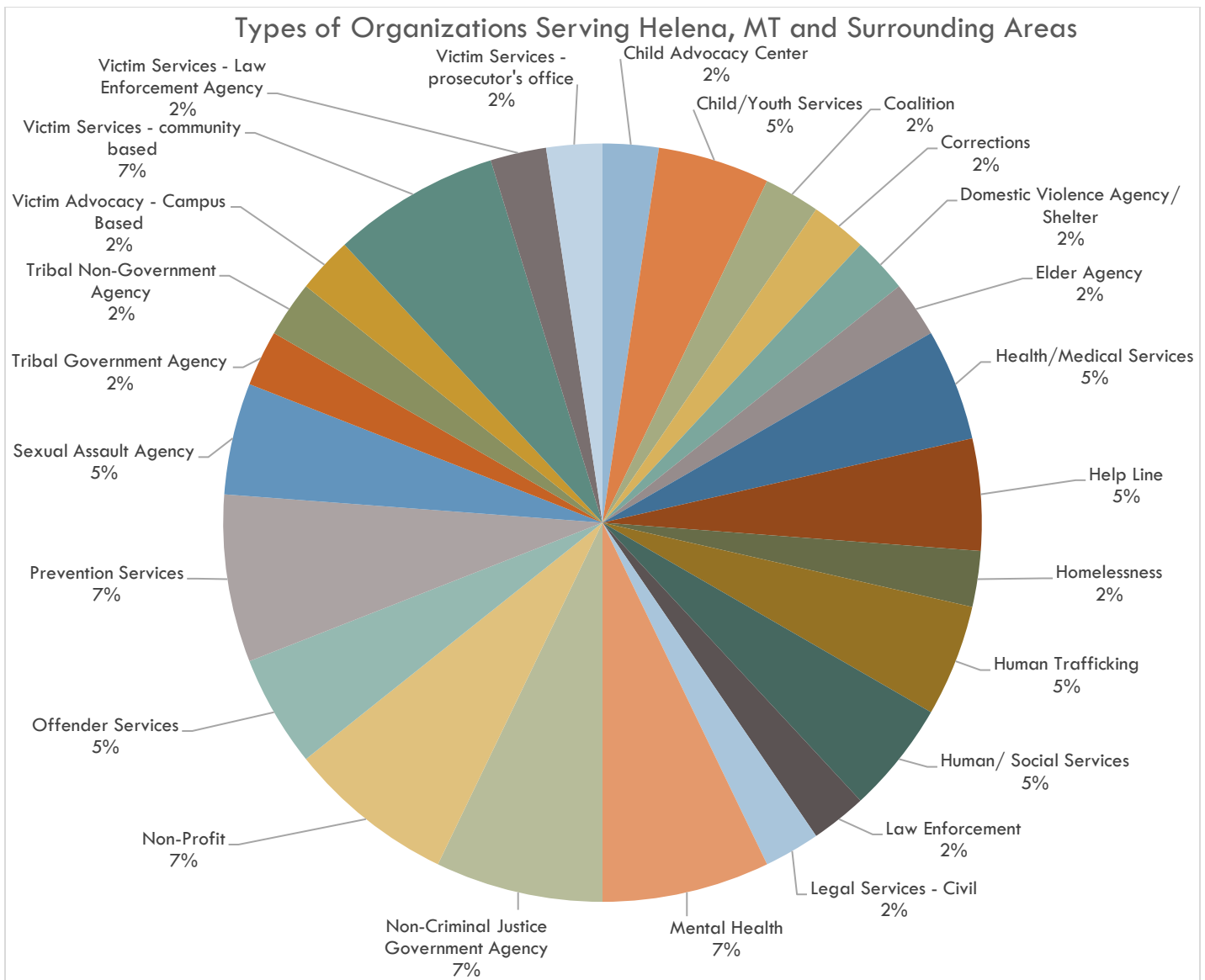
Assistance communicating with other agencies	8
Assistance filing for an order of protection	6
Assistance/support for a sexual assault examination	4
Assistance/support with a criminal case	7
Assistance/support with reporting an incident to law enforcement	9
Basic Needs (food/clothing)	4
Courts	6
Crisis Counseling	6
Economic/financial support	3
Emotional support	6
Immigration Services	1
Language Services	3
Law Enforcement	6
Legal assistance (including divorce/custody)	3
Medical	4
Mental Health	6
Other	7
Peer support	4
Public Benefits	4
Safety Planning	7
Shelter/Housing Services	4
Transportation	6
Grand Total	114



Types of Organizations Represented

The following data represents how the organizations and agencies identified the type of organizations they are; however, it is important to note that because Helena is the capital of Montana, there was a mix of local advocacy agencies, local systemic service providers, as well as statewide organizations and systemic state agencies. This combination of agencies allowed for crucial conversations about the services available to victims and survivors, not only in Helena and the surrounding areas, but also statewide.

<i>Child Advocacy Center</i>	1
<i>Child/Youth Services</i>	2
<i>Coalition</i>	1
<i>Corrections</i>	1
<i>Domestic Violence Agency/ Shelter</i>	1
<i>Elder Agency</i>	1
<i>Health/Medical Services</i>	2
<i>Help Line</i>	2
<i>Homelessness</i>	1
<i>Human Trafficking</i>	2
<i>Human/ Social Services</i>	2
<i>Law Enforcement</i>	1
<i>Legal Services - Civil</i>	1
<i>Mental Health</i>	3
<i>Non-Criminal Justice Government Agency</i>	3
<i>Non-Profit</i>	3
<i>Offender Services</i>	2
<i>Prevention Services</i>	3
<i>Sexual Assault Agency</i>	2
<i>Tribal Government Agency</i>	1
<i>Tribal Non-Government Agency</i>	1
<i>Victim Advocacy - Campus Based</i>	1
<i>Victim Services - community based</i>	3
<i>Victim Services - Law Enforcement Agency</i>	1
<i>Victim Services - prosecutor's office</i>	1
Grand Total	42



Gaps Discussed

Training Needs:

- Lack of training available for rural victim service providers
- Need for more training overall
- Training for law enforcement on resources available
- Training on missing persons

Service Provider Gaps and Needs:

- Comprehensive victim solutions, particularly in Lewis and Clark County
- Supporting agencies as they attempt to expand to fill the gaps
- Notifications – automated and through the whole legal process
- Lack of continuity of funding and stable funding

- Lack of understanding regarding the services provided by various agencies
- Unwillingness to collaborate and service providers operate in a silo
- Lack of understanding of national victim services standards
- Lack of warm handoffs
- Lack of knowledge about community resources
- Lack of mass violence/casualty response plan for victim service providers
- Knowing what agencies have received grants to serve victims and survivors to best refer and utilize services
- Parameters of grants can be stifling
- Grant budgets are a year behind
- Lack of resources or duplication of services
- No state funding
- No sustainable funding
- Staffing capacity
- Pay discrepancies
- Not all counties are formally served
- Turnover of staff
- Capacity for SANE training and capacity in positions
- Lack of access to services in rural areas

Victim/Survivor Gaps:

- Access to services in general, but more so for marginalized populations (homeless, LGBTQI+, disabilities, POC, etc)
- Lack of resources
- Vehicle Assistance, including fixing vehicles
- Housing
- Transportation
- Child Care
- Demographic Challenges
- Funding to assist victims in transitioning from an abusive relationship
- Services for male survivors of sexual assault
- Counseling services
- Victims are not kept well informed pre-conviction
- Crime victim comp for victims of financial crimes
- Mental Health availability
- How to deal with sextortion pressure
- Transitional housing for domestic violence and sexual assault survivors
- No transitional housing when aging out of foster care/the system
- Lack of comprehensive support for victims
- Traumatization of the system (criminal, CPS, systemic)

- Lack of local advocates (esp. tribal)
- Stigma of sexual assault survivors
- Stigma of male sexual assault survivors
- Repercussions or retaliation in reporting
- The re-traumatization of the system and in reporting

Justice System Gaps:

- Trained mental health providers for children who are sexually acting out
- Limited healing resources available to victims
- Lack of collaboration results in missed healing opportunities for victims
- No set place to investigate victim complaints and apply any type of corrective action
- Services for female perpetrators of sexual assault
- Retaliation against male survivors
- Lack of communication between agencies or levels of agencies
- Detectives know different information than patrol
- Dispatch can't flag if someone is a high-risk offender or has a no contact order or order of protection against them
- County is not alerted when people with felony charges commit misdemeanor crimes
- Prosecution often relies on victim and, as a result, many cases get pled down or dismissed
- Lack of formal partnerships, MOUs, protocols being documented, etc. Often things restart with staff turnover
- No restorative justice at a community level
- Lack of education in courts (victim attorneys)
- Lack of statistical data on court convictions and victims
- System values vs. human values
- Lack of training for judges/prosecutors
- No interaction of systems
- Everything is on the victim
- No adequate offender services
- No victim advocacy with law enforcement
- Lack of knowledge/accessibility for veteran's sexual trauma treatment
- Access/knowledge of resources federal/state/community
- An easy place to go to find the info
- Lack of indigenous providers

Other:

- Uniform, non-voluntary sex education in schools
- Sexual abuse prevention education in the schools
- Lack of broadband in MT
- No treatment for kids with sexually acting out behaviors

- No sex education in schools
- No follow through after large systemic meetings
- Lack of smart phone/broadband/service access
- Lack of adequate supervision for those who are doing peer to peer support
- Need for cultural representation, cultural education (inclusion of elders)
- Lack of access to cultural needs within urban areas
- Need for cultural sensitivity
- Limitations: veteran programs where the person has to be a veteran or caregiver of a veteran

Solutions Discussed:

Service Provider Specific Solutions:

- Connection of grants/funding sources
- Shake-up of partnerships
- State funding
- Increasing training for staff
- Availability of training
- Identifying housing options for staff
- Being intentional and formalizing meetings
- Involve CPS/APS
- Updated resources; web-based or otherwise; universal
- General email for services, instead of individual
- Staff to be able to service and dedicate time to SANE exams
- More training surrounding females offending against males
- Have a roadmap of the system available

Survivor/Victim Specific Solutions:

- Crime victim comp inclusivity (property crimes)
- Buy-in from community/churches to fix vehicles
- Care portal - community based tool used to request assistance from the community
- Availability of counseling sessions
- Training for counselors, specifically in missing persons
- More education on and for male survivors
- Mental health services that are available and on-going
- Readily available funds during transitional periods for victims

Justice System Specific Solutions:

- Public awareness and education for sexual extortion
- Development of mass violence task force/response

- Collaboration of notifications systems
- Educate the courts, with grace
- More peer to peer groups
- Wrap around services
- Culture as prevention
- Talking circles (require rights from elders)
- Increase traditional knowledge through elders in schools and other places

Broader Solutions:

- Increasing education/awareness for health/housing equity
- Accessibility to broadband (rural, elderly, reservations, low-income)
- Community listening sessions

Conclusions reached

The roundtable discussions that occurred in Helena involved the most comprehensive set of victim service providers. As the capital of Montana, Helena not only houses many state agencies, but also is home of the Montana National Guard and Montana Veteran Affairs Division. This opened our table up to local advocacy providers, systemic service providers, federal service providers, and those providing services to active military members and our nation's veterans. Through these conversations, a crucial gap identified was the lack of information about the available resources and inability to refer victims and survivors to the services that would best serve them, including culturally representative providers and services. One of the most significant outcomes of these discussions was the want and hope to continue this work as a group and develop an evolving action plan.

Helena Roundtable Action Plan:

- Contact and involve CPS
- Contact and involve APS
- Follow through from meeting stakeholders
- Continue meeting with actionable goals
- Provide participants contact information to each other

Without the voices and knowledge of victim service providers and agencies, the voices of victims would not be heard in an offender-centric system. The primary goal from our Helena roundtable was to move forward in creating solutions to elevate the voices of survivors in Montana.