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# Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives Operation Lady Justice

## Victim Centered, Trauma Informed, Culturally Appropriate Services in AI/AN Missing Persons Cases



Community Oriented Policing Services  
U.S. Department of Justice

This August, 2020 virtual training was prepared for the *Tribal Law Enforcement and Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives Forum* hosted by the U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS).



# Media Disclosure

- The material is presented for background purposes only. Should the media have any questions related to this presentation, please contact the Office of Public Affairs at the Department of Justice.



YOU'LL FOREVER  
BE  
MISSED



# Objectives

- To increase understanding of victim needs and working with families in missing person cases in Indian Country
- To incorporate victim services into law enforcement response plan

# What do you think when you see/hear...

## Community Based Advocate?

- A community-based advocate works for an independent agency, often these are non-profit or tribal agencies. They have privileged communication.

## Systems Based Advocate?

- Are normally housed within a criminal justice agency, this applies to BIA and FBI Victim Specialists; we do not have privileged communication.

# Direct Services for families of Missing AI/AN

- Responding in person to assist families
- Providing emotional support and information
- Creating a predictable flow of information to and from the family
- Assessing needs and identifying resources
- Arranging interviews and other case needs with family
- Providing education about the investigative process
- Assisting with school, employer or creditor intervention
- Accompanying law enforcement for case updates or family meetings
- Assisting with delivering difficult news
- Facilitating the return of property
- Coordinating with LE in all aspects of the investigation and assisting with family requests





# Partnerships to Support Families of Missing AI/AN

To be really effective, law enforcement and victim services should work as a team to support the needs of families.

- Victim Centered
- Trauma Informed
- Culturally Appropriate



# Victim Centered Services

Systematic focus on the needs and concerns of victims to ensure the compassionate and sensitive delivery of services in a non-judgmental manner. (Source: OVCTTAC)

## Needs of Crime Victims:

**Need for Safety**

**Need for Information**

**Need to be Heard**



# Trauma Informed Services

Understanding impact of victimization and working to reduce system impacts of trauma during law enforcement investigation by:

- Communicating;
- Listening;
- Providing Services;
- Sharing Information; and
- Planning



# Culturally Appropriate Services

Understanding and respecting the victim and family being served including their background, belief system, family structure, history, language, and customs.

- Everyone involved in the investigation including victim services must have an understanding of the Tribal community or be briefed by someone who does
- Not every family will be traditional, not everyone in the family will be the same, don't make assumptions
- Honor the requests that you can from victims when you can – to build trust, to show respect, to empower, to support grief and healing



# Timing and Needs of Families

IMMEDIATELY	RECOVERED Located Alive	RECOVERED Found Deceased	LONG TERM Investigation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis intervention</li> <li>• Help with case needs</li> <li>• Need for information</li> <li>• Coordination with LE</li> <li>• Emotional support</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Understanding expectations</li> <li>• Impacts of media/social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Reunification</li> <li>• Medical care</li> <li>• Forensic examinations</li> <li>• Interview coordination</li> <li>• Case updates</li> <li>• Media/Social Media</li> <li>• Resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death notifications</li> <li>• Emotional support</li> <li>• Autopsy</li> <li>• Case updates</li> <li>• Funeral/Burial assistance</li> <li>• Grief resources</li> <li>• Site visits, ceremonies</li> <li>• Return of PE</li> <li>• Media/Social media</li> <li>• Community or school assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Leaving the scene/scaling back resources</li> <li>• Support system</li> <li>• Case updates-who, when, how</li> <li>• Prepare for recovery</li> <li>• Additional resources</li> <li>• Media/social media</li> <li>• Continuity plan for new investigators</li> </ul>



# Initial Report of Missing AI/AN

- Contacting your “Team” - Involve victim services early
- Establish communication between victim services and law enforcement
- Coordinate with MDT partners
- Involve child/adult protection as needed
- Gather information
- Communicate with other resource providers



# Engaging Family and First Contacts

- Explain victim services role and boundaries, coordination with LE, set the stage
- Gather family information, legal NOK, understand relationships, get contact info
- Understand cultural and religious considerations
- Assess strengths and support
- Identify needs and resources



# Engaging Family and First Contacts

## Family, Cultural and Community Considerations

- Understanding relationships/family important
- Initial report may not be made by a guardian
- Legal Guardian and Next-of-Kin identification may be complicated
- Multiple people/families may be involved in parenting
- More people/families in households
- More children may need forensic interviews
- Communication needs may look different



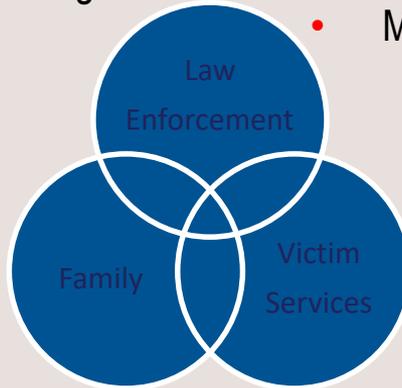
# Communication

## Family Communication

- Create a predictable flow of information for victim family
- Preparing and predicting what might happen next
- Develop plan to quickly mobilize the family for case updates
- Having the discussion about media releases with family (Amber Alert, MEPA, social media posts)
- Communicate changes, transition in the investigation

## Team Communication

- Attend LE briefing to share information and get updates
- Update case agent/lead investigator on family dynamics and other matters
- Provide press releases to family first when feasible
- Coordinate briefings for official updates
- Maintain contact with MDT partners



# Operational Support

- Coordinating and supporting interviews
- Eliciting trust and cooperation in support of investigation and other case needs
- Support during ante-mortem interviews, DNA collection, collection of scent items
- Mobilize family to assist as needed
- Communicating tasks that the family can assist with
- Providing observations and updates to LE



# Concurrent planning for possible outcomes

- Recovered alive
- Recovered deceased
- Transition from acute to long term missing



# Concurrent Planning: Recovered Alive

- Transportation
- Reunification
- Medical care
- Forensic examinations
- Interview coordination
- Case updates
- Media/Social Media
- Resource provision



# Concurrent Planning: Recovered Deceased

- Death notifications
- Crisis intervention
- Autopsies
- Case updates
- Funeral/Burial assistance
- Grief resources
- Site visits, ceremonies
- Return of PE
- Media/Social media
- Community or school support



# Long Term Investigation

- Communication
- Leaving the scene/scaling back resources
- Support system
- Case updates-who, how often, what to share
- Prepare for recovery
- Resources
- Media/social media
- Continuity plan for new investigators



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# Special Considerations

- Children
- Elders
- Male victims
- Traumatic grief and cumulative trauma
- Community intervention



# Resources

BIA Office of Justice Services Victim Assistance Program  
<https://www.bia.gov/bia/ojs/victim-assistance>

FBI Victim Services Division <https://www.fbi.gov/resources/victim-services>

Victim services providers – Tribal, County, State and NGOs – in your community

Child Protection Information for each Tribe and BIA office  
<http://www.nrc4tribes.org/state.cfm?topic=51>

Crime Victim Compensation by State  
<http://www.nacvcb.org/index.asp?sid=6>



# Resources

We Regret to Inform You – <https://www.deathnotification.psu.edu/>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. (NCMEC)  
<https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/isyourchildmissing>

FBI Child Abduction Rapid Deployment Team  
<https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/violent-crime/cac>

NAMUS <https://www.namus.gov/>

Video- If your loved one goes missing  
<https://www.justice.gov/usao-mt/video/district-montana-missing-indigenous-persons-psa>



# Remember that victims are counting on us...

- To listen
- To remember their needs
- To work together
- **And to never forget their loved ones**



# Remembering Families



#NeverForget

#SayHisName

#SayHerName



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# Acknowledgement

These training materials were prepared by the BIA Office of Justice Services Victim Assistance Program and the FBI Victim Services Division in partnership with the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives - Operation Lady Justice.

