



For Immediate Release

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New Square One Project Report Offers Sherrifs and Prosecutors Recommendations for Better Serving Crime Victims

A [new report](#) from the Columbia University's Square One Project offers prosecutors, sheriffs, and other practitioners systemic recommendations for better serving crime victims. According to the 2018 National Crime Victimization Survey, more than half of violent crimes and over 60 percent of property crimes were not reported to police; among victims that reported, a dismal 11 percent actually received help—including financial, medical or mental health assistance—during their recovery. Low crime reporting and the failure to provide all victims with the help they need, poses challenges to the notion that “justice is served” under our current system.

In “[Protecting and Serving Victims—Their Way, Not Ours.](#)” Melissa Nelson, State Attorney, Florida's Fourth Judicial Circuit, and Kevin Thom, Sheriff, Pennington County, South Dakota provide recommendations for their peers in law enforcement and prosecutor offices to better serve victims, and more effectively pursue justice, safety and healing.

“We have no greater duty than to ensure crime victims are treated with dignity, respect, and care as they progress through a system that is often foreign to them,” said Melissa Nelson, co-author of the report.

The recommendations for law enforcement and prosecutors include:

1. Provide training and develop policies focused on the treatment of victims in law enforcement and prosecutors' offices.
2. Make internal changes to law enforcement and prosecutors' offices to facilitate best practices to support victims
3. Offer comprehensive victim options and services
4. Ensure that victim services are widely accessible, and expand outreach and impact of services where gaps or opportunities exist

5. Create metrics to track interactions with victims
6. Implement restorative justice practices in the aftermath of harm
7. Ensure victims have a seat at the table in criminal justice policy discussions

At a time where criminal justice reform, criminal justice reinvestment, and system changes are under serious consideration, we should be sensitive to crime victims, their families, and how such discussions and reforms may impact them. Law enforcement and prosecutorial offices must improve their interactions with victims, and be willing to work closely with victims to reflect upon and adapt practices.

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About the Square One Project

The Square One Project at the Columbia Justice Lab aims to reimagine justice and create a pathway for reckoning in our country. Square One incubates new thinking on responses to racism, poverty and violence; promotes equitable safety and community thriving; and advances narrative and cultural change. Learn more about the Square One Project at squareonejustice.org