



OVC Tribal Grantee Spotlight

Crime Victims' Rights

Tribe/Program: Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribal Victim Services Program (<https://www.fpst.org/>)

Location: Nevada

What approach did your Program take to develop/enhance and implement services related directly to crime victims' rights?

When I came to the Tribe, the program already was working under the victims of crime grant. The program staff were already starting to do outreach with local agencies about parenting classes and family wellness activities. During that time, I was introduced and connected to the University of Nevada-Reno. They had worked with a smaller tribe in Washington State to complete a needs assessment related to social services efforts in their community. The University asked if we had interest in collaborating with them in an attempt to obtain more quantitative data related to tribal services. With support from our OVC Grant Manager, we collaborated with the University in 2015 to conduct a comprehensive assessment for elder abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence. All the deliverables and services we provide as part of this program are a direct result of those need assessment findings. We are so grateful for the early collaboration efforts with the University on this project.



Top Left to Right: Sandra Hicks; Sofia Delacruz; Margo Dyer; Shalone Jimmy; Vanessa Charley **Front Left to Right:** Kari Gonzalez; Rosalinda Berreman

Following this needs assessment, our OVC TTA provider, Fox Valley Technical College, conducted a two-day strategic planning process training for project staff, program directors, court personnel and mental health personnel. All participants at this training were able to learn important strategies on how to utilize the assessment results to map out a plan that would serve our community. This in-person training helped provide the necessary direction for our program to start creating change for victims.

After the strategic planning process, we began focusing on other important processes, including rewriting our domestic violence and family codes and drafting a new elder abuse code. We were able to establish a multidisciplinary team of judges, law enforcement, court personnel, legal counselors, etc. to help modify and write these codes. The establishment of these codes and processes reinforce the fact that all departments need to work together for the sake of the victims. We are lucky to have such great local programs to collaborate with!

Currently, we feel victims have more say, than ever before, in the direct services they need; victims are very comfortable with the entire process of getting the help they need. There continues to be great, on-going collaboration with our TTA providers, other local agencies, and the clients we serve.

What challenges did you overcome in developing these services?

The main challenge that comes to mind is protecting the confidentiality of our clients, especially ensuring signed releases of information. The best thing to happen for the program was receiving funding to purchase our own building. The program was originally housed within the tribal administration office. For security reasons, the doors to the facility were constantly locked. When a client came in to talk with advocates or access services, our staff had to go up to the front of the building and escort (basically parade) the client all the way through the administration building. This was a huge concern to the anonymity of our clients. While other “off reservation” locations were presented to our program, the feasibility of having a safe, confidential location did not exist at that time. Luckily, we have been able to establish our new “home” across from the tribal administration building. This move has helped out a lot. While this still may not be perfect, it is a much better option for the privacy of our victims.



Left to Right: Kari Gonzalez; Michelle Bowers

What recommendations do you have for other Tribal Programs considering services in this area?

I think the biggest thing is to think outside the box. We go to all these trainings and orientations and usually it’s the same information we are always receiving. It is up to you to begin to think creatively on how you can get things done for your program and the people you help. Also, rely on your grant manager and your TA provider to help out. I have to say that our OVC Grant Manager is amazing; we would always run things by her to get her feedback on new ideas and how we can turn our needs into something that benefits our victims. Also, I really value our work with the TA providers. There is no way we could have established this program without Fox Valley’s help. They helped on creating our strategic plan, fostered collaborative efforts with other programs, and helped our program develop a common direction. They really showed our staff and stakeholders how to streamline services and promote victim rights through code development.

How has OVC funding/support helped to develop and/or sustain this Program?

“It is the cornerstone. We could not have done this without OVC funding. First, from the foundation, getting our own building so our clients feel safe to talk to us.”- Michelle Bowers

We could not have sustained the services without the funding. We are now able to complete the five-year follow-up needs assessment and are excited to see what that assessment shows. It may be overwhelming but I get excited to see how things have changed. We have been able to receive more funding from other sources because we have been able to show how helpful we are to our clients. We have never done victim-specific outreach to help promote our program; now we are purchasing sewing kits with the hotline number on it and hot/cold ankle wraps with the program information listed. These types of ideas have been a huge hit! We are now serving more victims than ever before; this includes service areas for Fallon Paiute Shoshone, Yamba Reservation (which is 140 miles to our east), and the Lovelock Paiute Tribe (which is 60 miles to our north). These tribes are very small and they have no grant funding or service providers for victims—so we are able to serve them due to the OVC funding we receive.

If you have questions about Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribal programs or would like to speak to Michelle Bowers about victim rights, code development, program evaluation, or other related items, please feel free to contact her via email at victimservices@fpst.org.