

Victim Services Management MS  
Assessment Plan Summary

Victim Services Management MS

The Master of Science in Victim Services Management (MSVSM) Program will provide online student-practitioners with the knowledge required to effectively manage victim service organizations.

Goal Description:

The Master of Science in Victim Services Management Program will remain a leader in providing high quality education to students in the field of victim services. The program has broad application to policy analysts, program administrators, and direct service providers. Through a rigorous, online curriculum, developed and taught by experienced faculty, the program is committed to promoting professionalism in victim services nationwide. Students earning this advanced degree will be educated on evidence-based best practices to provide more efficacious programming for victims of crime.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Students in the MSVSM Program will be able to demonstrate an understanding of evidence-based practices in victim service delivery with an emphasis on the benefits of trauma-informed care.

Learning Objective Description:

The Office for Victims of Crime defines “trauma informed care” as “(interventions) delivered with an understanding of the vulnerabilities and experiences of trauma survivors, including the prevalence and physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma. A trauma-informed approach recognizes signs of trauma in staff, clients, and others and responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings. Trauma-informed approaches place priority on restoring the survivor’s feelings of safety, choice, and control” (<https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/glossary.html>.) Trauma informed care is generally regarded as the “gold standard” in service delivery.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Students in the MSVSM Program will be able to demonstrate an understanding of evidence-based practices in victim service delivery by designing mock shelter programs that are trauma-informed.

Indicator Description:

In CRIJ 5635 (Crime Victim Services and Management), students are tasked with developing a policy manual for a mock shelter program. As partial fulfillment of the requirements for the assignment, students must formulate: 1.) a cooperative living agreement (outlining clients’ rights and responsibilities) and 2.) a service component description. In preparation for the assignment, students are required to review: 1.) Section 379.701 of the Texas Administrative Code; and 2.) a document entitled, How the Earth Didn’t Fly into the Sun: Missouri’s Project to Reduce Rules in Domestic Violence Shelters. Student grades are assessed in accordance with whether their respective hypothetical programs meet Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) criteria. In Texas, family violence programs are required to provide (at minimum) the following services: intervention, safety planning, support groups, a 24-hour crisis hotline, legal advocacy, children’s advocacy and activities, emergency medical care, information and referrals (ex. including job counseling and children’s educational arrangements), and emergency transportation (Texas Administrative Code, §379.701). However (from a best practice standpoint), and for the purposes of the assignment, students are also required to incorporate trauma-informed service components. Borrowing from the above-listed OVC definition, trauma-informed care reinforces client safety, choice, and control. Creating a safe environment entails providing adequate security and minimizing shelter rules to avoid replicating the power dynamics clients experienced in their prior relationships. Providing choices is accomplished by offering an array of voluntary services. Empowering clients, or allowing them to regain a sense of self-efficacy and control, is reflected in programming respecting clients’ rights to privacy and self-determination. Privacy refers to: “the right of the individual to decide what information about (him or herself) should be communicated to others and under what circumstances” (Westin, 1970). Self-determination is: "an ethical principle in (victim advocacy and) social work that recognizes the rights and needs of clients to be free to make their own...decisions” (Barker, 2003).

As the attached rubric reflects, students will be assigned a separate score for each of the following key performance indicators: 1.) services meeting HHSC minimum standards; and 2.) programming maximizing: a.) client safety, b.) choice, and c.) control. A score of “0” would be indicative of the student’s neglect to incorporate the information; a “1” would reflect an unsatisfactory attempt to integrate the criterion; and a “2” would represent satisfactory performance on the assessment indicator. To achieve a “satisfactory” rating, the student would be required to appropriately synthesize and apply learning material (see attached rubric).

Attached Files

[Assessment Criteria Rubric for Learning Objective #1](#)

Criterion Description:

It is expected that at least 70% of students will develop mock shelter programs meeting HHSC minimum service standards and an equal percentage will incorporate program features maximizing client safety, choice, and control. Given the absence of prior data, we believe that a 70% (baseline) target for each criterion is reasonable.

**Findings Description:**

In the fall of 2016, twenty-one students enrolled in the CRIJ 5365 (Crime Victim Services and Management) course. Of those, 20 (or 95%) were successful in developing mock shelter programs meeting HHSC minimum service standards. Such students received a “2” for this component of the assignment. [As previously noted, a score of “0” would be indicative of the student’s neglect to incorporate the information; a “1” would reflect an unsatisfactory attempt to integrate the criterion; and a “2” would represent satisfactory performance on the assessment indicator. To achieve a “satisfactory” rating, the student would be required to appropriately synthesize and apply learning material.] One student (or 5%) received a “0” for failing to incorporate HHSC standards.

With respect to item #2 (“Creating Trauma-Informed Service Components Designed to Maximize Client Safety”), 15 students (or 71%) received the maximum score ("2") for this category, satisfactorily synthesizing and applying learning material. Six students (or 24%) were deficient in this area. Of the students who received a “1,” the vast majority (n=5, or 83%) lost points for proposing unnecessary rules. Such rules included: prohibitions against dressing inappropriately and napping in common areas and requirements for residents to shower, feed their children, understand their medical needs, manage their own finances, notify staff of observed rule violations, be open and honest during counseling, and to develop and maintain healthy boundaries while in shelter. [Some of the same students identified multiple, unnecessary rules.] One student’s cooperative living agreement also incorporated threatening language (ex. disciplinary action up to involuntary termination for violating the rules). [As per HHSC guidelines, termination should be a last resort, and limited to the most extreme circumstances, where resident and/or staff safety is/are concerned.)

With respect to item #3 (“Creating Trauma-Informed Service Components Maximizing Client Choice”), 16 students (or 76%) received a score of “2,” satisfactorily synthesizing and applying learning material. Five students (or 24%) were deficient in this area. Of the students who received a “1,” all (or 100%) required clients to remain “drug-free.” Victimization and substance abuse go hand-in-hand. [Per HHSC guidelines, programs are prohibited from “screening clients out” on the basis of drug or alcohol addiction.] Furthermore, rather than penalizing clients for self-medicating with intoxicants during their shelter stay, staff should, ideally, work with residents to identify treatment options and healthier coping strategies. According to the Office for Victims of Crime's (OVC) professional standards for service providers, “Programs should have sufficient experience, training, supervision, materials, and outreach to provide competent service delivery based on the characteristics of (their client populations). This includes services for...clients with...substance abuse (issues)” ([https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/program\\_standards\\_1.html](https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/program_standards_1.html).)

With regard to item #4 (“Creating Trauma-Informed Service Components Designed to Maximize Client Control”), 17 students (or 81%) received a score of “2” for promoting client self-determination. Four students (or 19%) were deficient in this area. Of the students who received a “1,” two (or 50%) mandated that clients participate in case management and counseling; one (or 25%) required residents to disclose private/medical information; and one (or 25%) required clients to seek employment and permanent housing. While the students met the (70%) target(s) for this learning objective, there is still a need for improvement in all areas.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3**

**Action Plan for Enhancing Student Performance on Learning Objectives**

**Action Description:**

All targets will increase during the next cycle. For the first learning objective ("Students in the MSVSM Program will be able to demonstrate an understanding of evidence-based practices in victim service delivery with an emphasis on the benefits of trauma-informed care"), students will continue to be assigned a separate score for each of the following assessment categories: 1.) services meeting HHSC minimum standards; and 2.) programming maximizing: a.) client safety, b.) choice, and c.) control. A score of “0” will remain indicative of the student’s neglect to incorporate the information; a “1” will reflect an unsatisfactory attempt to integrate the criterion; and a “2” will represent satisfactory performance on the assessment indicator. To achieve a “satisfactory” rating, the student will be required to appropriately synthesize and apply learning material. The target for item #1 will increase to 95%. {In other words, 95% of students will be expected to design shelter programs meeting HHSC minimum service standards). The target for item #2 will increase to 75%. (In other words, 75% of students will be expected to design shelter programs characterized as “trauma-informed”). The target for the second learning objective will similarly increase: For the purposes of writing grants, 85% of students will be expected to successfully identify at least one hypothetical outcome that is measurable, attainable, and directly attributable to the program services.

To enhance student performances, assignment instructions will be revised to include both examples and learning objectives. Furthermore, to enable students to better distinguish between outputs and outcomes, more concerted instructional emphasis will be dedicated to this area.

**The Master of Science in Victim Services Management Program will provide online student-practitioners with the skills required to effectively manage victim service organizations.**

**Goal Description:**

The Master of Science in Victim Services Management Program will remain a leader in providing high quality instruction to students in the field of victim services. The program is committed to providing professionals in the industry with a range of marketable skills. Such skills include, but are not limited to: 1.) grant-writing; 2.) leadership/management; and 3.) program evaluation.

## RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

### Students in the MSVSM Program will be able to identify meaningful outcomes for the purpose of writing grants

#### Learning Objective Description:

In recent years, victim service organizations have become increasingly outcome-driven. According to Voth (2013) “An outcome-focused organization uses quality measures to assure evidence-based, comprehensive, and efficient services that are victim-centered and victim-driven” (<http://www.socialsolutions.com>.) Grantors are likewise concerned with outcomes when evaluating programs’ success. For these reasons, students in the MSVSM Program should be able to identify (and understand the significance of tracking) meaningful program outcomes.

## RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

### Students in the MSVSM Program will be able to identify meaningful outcomes for the purpose of writing grants as reflected in a mock application for foundation funding.

#### Indicator Description:

In CRIJ 5385 (Non-Profit Management and Grant-Writing), students are tasked with developing funding proposals for a mock family violence program. As partial fulfillment of the course requirements, students must submit a proposal in response to a fictitious solicitation for a foundation grant. For the purposes of the assignment, students are required to expand their hypothetical shelter programs to include a children’s play therapy project. As previously noted, victim services grants have become increasingly outcome-driven. According to the textbook assigned for the course, outcomes are measurable goals. Short-term outcomes are attainable, or able to be measured within the service period (ex. the length of a client’s shelter stay, etc.). Examples of initial outcomes include: 1.) increased feelings of safety or 2.) Increased knowledge of available options.

As the attached rubric reflects, students will be assigned a separate score for each of the following assessment categories: 1.) the ability to identify at least one outcome that is measurable (ex. “measurable” would suggest that the outcome is able to be operationalized and counted); 2.) the ability to identify at least one outcome that is attainable (ex. “attainable” outcomes are able to be achieved within the service period.); and 3.) the ability to identify at least one outcome that is directly attributable to the program services. A score of “0” would be indicative of the student’s neglect to incorporate the information; a “1” would reflect an unsatisfactory attempt to integrate the criterion; and a “2” would represent satisfactory performance on the assessment indicator. To achieve a “satisfactory” rating, the student would be required to synthesize and apply learning material (see attached rubric).

Attached Files

[□ Assessment Criteria For VSM Learning Objective #2](#)

#### Criterion Description:

Given the concerted textbook emphasis on outcome management in victim services, it is expected that at least 70% of students will identify at least one hypothetical outcome that is attainable, measurable, and directly attributable to the program services. Since this is a new learning objective, we believe that a 70% (baseline) target is reasonable.

#### Findings Description:

In the spring of 2017, 32 students enrolled in the CRIJ 5385 (Non-Profit Management and Grant-Writing) course. Of those, 26 (or 81%) were able to identify at least one outcome that was measurable, attainable, and directly attributable to the services. Five students (or 16%) were deficient in this area. Of the students who received a “1,” most confused outcomes with outputs. Finally, one student received a “0” for neglecting to complete this portion of the assignment. While the students met the 70% target, the findings still support the need for additional focus on this objective, specifically with respect to the difference between outputs and outcomes.

## RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

### Action Plan for Enhancing Student Performance on Learning Objectives

#### Action Description:

All targets will increase during the next cycle. For the first learning objective ("Students in the MSVSM Program will be able to demonstrate an understanding of evidence-based practices in victim service delivery with an emphasis on the benefits of trauma-informed care"), students will continue to be assigned a separate score for each of the following assessment categories: 1.) services meeting HHSC minimum standards; and 2.) programming maximizing: a.) client safety, b.) choice, and c.) control. A score of “0” will remain indicative of the student’s neglect to incorporate the information; a “1” will reflect an unsatisfactory attempt to integrate the criterion; and a “2” will represent satisfactory performance on the assessment indicator. To achieve a “satisfactory” rating, the student will be required to appropriately synthesize and apply learning material. The target for item #1 will increase to 95%. {In other words, 95% of students will be expected to design shelter programs meeting HHSC minimum service standards). The target for item #2 will increase to 75%. (In other words, 75% of students will be expected to design shelter programs characterized as “trauma-informed”).

The target for the second learning objective will similarly increase: For the purposes of writing grants, 85% of students will be expected to successfully identify at least one hypothetical outcome that is measurable, attainable, and directly attributable to the program services.

To enhance student performances, assignment instructions will be revised to include both examples and learning objectives.

Furthermore, to enable students to better distinguish between outputs and outcomes, more concerted instructional emphasis will be dedicated to this area.

## Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

### Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):

In 2014, the faculty teaching in the VSM Program began developing courses that are National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP) approved. The NACP is a voluntary credentialing option for victim advocates. We currently offer a single course that is NACP “pre-approved” (CRIJ 5366

Advocacy and Case Management.) In addition to receiving credit toward the MSVSM degree, students successfully completing the course may apply for a provisional advocate credential. This is an entry-level certificate; prior experience is not required. CRIJ 5366 is the only NACP “Series A” course in the state of Texas. During the current assessment cycle, three additional courses (CRIJ 5383 Family Violence, CRIJ 5384 Child Abuse and Neglect, and CRIJ 5370 Elder Abuse) were designed according to NACP continuing education (“Series B”) requirements. Per the Committee, it would be logical to develop additional courses with advanced (“Series C”) credentialing in mind. Other NACP specialty topics include: drunk driving, sexual violence, and homicide. By offering additional electives focusing on these specialty topic areas, we can provide opportunities for student-practitioners to acquire more certifications.

Moving forward, the Committee will revisit prior discussions about: 1.) fall-only/”fixed” admissions; 2.) a possible portfolio requirement; and 3.) more meaningful program evaluation indicators.

In the summer of 2016, a pilot survey was administered to students. In the fall, the Committee will begin reviewing the data.

#### **Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:**

As planned, the MS VSM committee, in consultation with Office for Academic Planning and Assessment, worked to enhance the program's ongoing evaluation efforts. The committee identified two new goals and learning objectives. While students met the established targets, the findings still support the need for added instructional emphasis in both areas.

In addition to the above, the committee reviewed admissions practices, and consistent with a recent directive from the Office of Graduate Studies, agreed to admit program applicants on a rolling basis.

Furthermore, as noted in last year’s report, much of the program coursework focuses on service delivery. However, fundamentally, victim service organizations are also businesses. In the spring of 2016, in order to better prepare graduates, faculty developed a “special topics” course entitled HR Management. Additionally, the Non-Profit Management and Grant Writing course was expanded to include budgeting. Finally, two required courses (Victimology and Critical Analysis of Justice Administration) were overhauled to better meet program needs. The Victimology course was redeveloped in accordance with National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP) standards, providing students with a fifth, voluntary option for acquiring professional certification. (This is consistent with the program’s goal of increasing students’ marketability).

Finally, in the summer of 2016, students completed a pilot survey. In response to an overwhelming demand for information on professional development opportunities, faculty teaching in the VSM program developed a job and information portal. Committee conversations will continue into the next cycle regarding a possible portfolio option.

### **Plan for Continuous Improvement**

#### **Closing Summary:**

Moving forward, the MS VSM committee will revisit prior conversations about the degree plan, course development needs, and a possible portfolio requirement. We will also continue working closely with the Office for Academic Planning and Assessment to identify additional program evaluation measures. A program coordinator was recently assigned to coordinate these various efforts.

A student survey was administered in the summer of 2017. In the fall, the committee will begin reviewing the data. For triangulation purposes, the next iteration of the survey (for AY 2017-2018) will include two self-assessment questions to better gauge student performance on learning objectives.