

Research on Involving Crime Survivors in Program Planning and Policy Making



The Center for Victim Research (CVR) Library's annotated bibliographies collect and summarize research about difficult-to-search topics in victim research.

"Service user involvement" means inviting people who have used services to discuss the design and delivery of those services. This annotated bibliography collects research about people with lived experiences participating in nonprofit committees and boards. This research may be useful for victim services organizations reviewing their governance structures and seeking insight and accountability from crime survivors. The research articles below mostly do not discuss crime victims who work as service providers or staff in victim services agency. (One summary mentions a related report about victim-practitioners' experiences integrating personal experiences of victimization into their work). This is not a comprehensive scan of all literature. Articles included are published between 2005-2019 and mostly about services in the United States and United Kingdom. Articles are linked to the full-text when possible; most articles are available in the [CVR Library](#) for registered users (free to register).

Know Me Before You Speak for Me: Substantive Public Representation Among Nonprofits by K. Andrasik & J. Mead (2019, *Public Performance and Management Review*: 42(1), 34-58)

This study reviewed academic and practitioner literature to develop a conceptual framework for nonprofits to increase representation of their clients' experiences, needs, and ideas for policy changes. The authors also conducted an exploratory case study of one nonprofit's approach.

'The Lion's Den': The Epistemic Dimensions of Invisible Emotional Labour in Service-User Involvement Spaces by L. Brosnon (2019, *Journal of Ethics in Mental Health*: 10(1), 16 pgs.)

Search Tips

Try the following search in CVR Library:

(clients OR users OR recipients OR victims OR peers) n5 (inclusion OR involvement OR member*) AND (board OR council OR advisory OR committee) AND (social services OR victim services OR nonprofits)

Related phrases: co-creation, expertise-by-experience, participatory governance, service user involvement, lived experience, or nothing about us without us

This article discusses mental health service users' experiences in decision-making spaces like committees in Ireland. The author discusses how in these spaces, study participants felt that their lived experience was not always valued as highly as professional identities

and this tension was often visible “when service-users express passionate convictions rooted in the unconstructed raw ontology of painful experience and past traumas. Or equally when dry, officious procedures and overt power inhibits passionate expression and manages it via business-as-usual.” Relatedly, many study participants felt insulted by other meeting members’ comments about mental illness. The study also discusses how participants sustained themselves through difficult interactions: identifying their own fears and anxieties, keeping service users’ needs in the front of their minds, debriefing with allies, and sharing laughter.

[Exploring Approaches to Service User Involvement in Sexual Violence and Domestic Violence Services](#) by J. Fish, A. Szabo, & D. Turgoose (2017, De Montfort University-Leicester, 30 pgs.)

This pilot study aimed to understand how much sexual violence and domestic services in the United Kingdom were enabling survivors to shape service design and delivery.

[Domestic Violence Survivors’ Forums in the UK: Experiments in Involving Abused Women in Domestic Violence Services and Policy-making](#) by G. Hague (2007, *Journal of Gender Studies*: 14(3), 191-203)

Based on early domestic violence survivors’ forums in the United Kingdom (Croydon Domestic Violence Survivors’ Forum, Voice for Change and the Phoenix Group), this paper discusses “whether the views of domestic violence survivors are both heard and heeded by professionals.” It highlights the value of involving survivors in service improvement, the need for sensitivity when soliciting such feedback, and potential difficulties in implementing suggestions.

See also an article co-authored by this researcher, **[Giving Voice to Women Survivors of Domestic Violence through Recognition as a Service User Group](#)**, which includes discussion of practitioners who are also survivors and the struggles they experience about applying their personal experiences in practice.

[Individual, Group and Organised Experiential Expertise in Recovery from Intimate Partner Violence and Mental Health Problems in Finland](#) by L. Hokkanen, A. Nikupeteri, M. Laitinen, & P. Vasari. (2017, *British Journal of Social Work*, 47(4), 1147-1165)

This study discusses the ways that participating in shaping service delivery can also be part of survivors’ recovery process, from influencing policy/addressing common issues in service delivery, to meeting other survivors and finding community.

[Intersectional Trauma-Informed Intimate Partner Violence \(IPV\) Services: Narrowing the Gap between IPV Service Delivery and Survivor Needs](#) by S. Kulkarni (2018, *Journal of Family Violence*, 12 pgs.)

This author's recommendations for improving the IPV field include: "1) expanding survivors' roles/input; 2) strengthening funding streams and organizational commitment to antioppressive, survivor-defined, trauma-informed services." The author also lists ways that IPV programs can support meaningful survivor participation at every stage of contact: "establishing advisory boards, hiring peer support specialists, creating speakers' bureaus, tenant groups and organizing policy advocacy initiatives."

Paternalistic or Participatory Governance? Examining Opportunities for Client Participation in Nonprofit Social Service Organizations by K. LeRoux (2009, *Public Administration Review*: 69(3), 504-517)

Based on surveys of Michigan nonprofit social services, this article highlights factors that boost client involvement in nonprofits. The authors studied agency work groups, client feedback surveys, advisory boards and committees, and client service on the agency board of directors. The study found that government funding plays a major role in supporting these functions.

Clients as Voting Board Members: A Mixed Methods Examination of San Diego County Nonprofit Human Services Organizations by E.M. Lewis (2016, *Dissertations*, University of San Diego: 48, 140 pgs.)

This study analyzed prevalence and participation of clients in nonprofit boards and reviewed board meeting minutes. In addition to membership on boards, the study also evaluated clients' involvement in other decision-making activities related to service provision and research about services.

The Position of the Victim-activist in Crime Victim Service Organizations by F.J. Weed (2005, *The Social Science Journal*: 42(1), 97-105)

This study explores the variety of roles that victims and their family members serve within victim services organizations, including unpaid positions.

Mission, margin, and the role of consumer governance in decision-making at community health centers by B. Wright & G.P. Martin (2014, *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 25(2), 930-947)

This study interviewed trustees of community health centers in Alaska, California, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Virginia, and Wisconsin. The sample included both non-consumer and consumer trustees (patients of the community health centers). Study participants noted the importance of consumer trustees as "a mechanism for ensuring that the CHC is

providing patients with high quality care—or at least addressing problems.” However, some participants noted concerns about involving consumers in governance, mostly because their lack of professional skills and of objectivity.

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Examples from the field:

- [Crime Survivors For Safety and Justice](#) is building a network across the United States to empower survivors to share their stories, shape local and national policies to prevent future victimization, and provide more recovery services. They also produce an annual survey, [Survivors Speak](#).
- [Victim/Survivor Advisory Committee](#) of the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence: includes quotations from participants on why they joined and the value they find in the committee. See their [Legacy of Survival: Next-steps guide for survivors, by survivors](#)
- [Crime Victims’ Advisory Committee](#) formed in Philadelphia in 2018; this article and a [sidebar interview](#) focus on why participants are involved.
- [The Civil Legal Needs of Victims of Crime](#) in New York State needs assessment was created by an advisory committee that includes crime victims.
- [ACT Victims of Crime Referral Project](#) comes from the Australian Institute of Criminology and includes evaluation of the referral process for connecting victims with support services and information about the Victims Advisory Board.
- [Network of Excellence in IPV](#) (Finland) includes Experts by Experience in their trainings and policymaking. This article about the program includes discussion on how to support and train Experts by Experience in presenting.