



**NATIONAL CRIME  
VICTIM LAW INSTITUTE**

**Strategic Plan**

ADOPTED AUGUST 2021

The Board of Directors of the National Crime Victim Law Institute (NCVLI) is pleased to issue this Strategic Plan adopted following NCVLI's twentieth year.

## I. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

NCVLI was conceived in 1997 and established in 2000 as a national resource for crime victim lawyers, advocates, allied professionals, and victims to support the assertion and enforcement of victims' rights. United States Senators Jon Kyl, Diane Feinstein, Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith supported the first congressional appropriation to provide financial support to NCVLI. NCVLI incorporated as a private nonprofit in 2003, and we continue as the only national nonprofit focused on victim law (i.e., the body of law that covers the broad array of legal issues victims confront in the aftermath of victimization). As a legal research, education and advocacy organization, NCVLI works in all arenas of victim law (i.e., criminal, civil and administrative), with particular expertise in and resource allocation to crime victims' rights enforcement in criminal cases.

## II. STRATEGIC PLANNING

Throughout 2019 and 2020, NCVLI undertook strategic planning using a theory of change approach. This effort included issuing a call for national input throughout winter and spring 2020 regarding how NCVLI could best serve the country, and collaborate with the community. Notably, throughout our strategic planning the country has been grappling with a Pandemic and increased attention on deep racial inequities. Staff and Board turned toward these realities, working collaboratively to map a future direction for NCVLI. This work led to a re-envisioning our mission, vision and values; adopting an equity statement; and re-focusing of our activities. This Strategic Plain aims to secure the change we hope for:

A fundamental culture shift, such that victims, the community and system actors:

- know that victims are legal participants in criminal justice with personally held legal rights;
- understand that the prosecutor is not the victim's attorney; and
- accept lawyers protecting victims' rights as the norm in criminal legal system.

## III. RE-ENVISIONED MISSION, PURPOSE, AND VALUES

### *Our Mission:*

NCVLI actively promotes comprehensive and enforceable legal rights for crime victims, and access to knowledgeable attorneys to help protect those rights in every case through victim centered legal advocacy, education, and resources.

### *Our Vision:*

We envision a justice system in which every crime victim has:

- comprehensive and meaningful legal rights;
- access to a trained victims' rights attorney at no cost; and

- rights that are recognized and enforced.

*Our Values:*

- **Empowerment.** Voice, choice and agency are critical components of empowerment. We recognize and acknowledge that individual experiences, needs, and decisions will vary and support empowerment by providing legal expertise to ensure victims may make informed decisions, and to have those decisions honored and respected throughout the criminal justice process.
- **Dignity.** We value the dignity of all individuals and believe that every person deserves to be treated with respect and with care for their well-being.
- **Equity.** NCVLI works to ensure all victims - no matter who they are and what their background - have their rights afforded and are treated by the justice system with respect and dignity. Please see our equity full statement for more on how we approach this work.
- **Collaboration.** We view our work as part of a national community - where we actively seek out, amplify, complement, and support the work, knowledge, and perspectives of other organizations and individuals - to ensure that victims' rights are respected and enforced throughout the country.
- **Innovation.** We value creative legal analysis, inventive solutions and strategic litigation to advance victims' rights.

#### IV. COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

We recognize that to honor our mission, vision and values, and to contribute to a more just system, we must continue working to remove historical and systemic racism and discrimination. We recognize that this work is evolving and ongoing and we are cognizant that we will misstep in our pursuit of equity. We will learn from our mistakes and hold ourselves accountable to our principles. Our work must continue to reflect our commitment to individuals and communities that the criminal justice system has historically underserved, oppressed, and harmed.

We define our work through an equity lens.

- We believe that every crime victim has comprehensive and meaningful legal rights and must have access to a knowledgeable attorney for representation in the justice system;
- We believe that every crime victim's attorney must have access to inclusive education, training, and technical support from a community of experts that reflects the people it serves;
- We believe that every person playing a role in the justice system must respect and pursue knowledge about the legal rights of every crime victim, and understand the justice system's barriers to equitable access and treatment;

- We believe that every person working in support of crime victims' rights must create equitable access to representation for members of communities made vulnerable, marginalized, or underserved by the justice system;
- We believe that crime victims' rights must be equitably and consistently enforced to facilitate meaningful participation in the justice system for every person; and
- We believe that every right of every crime victim must be honored in every case.

We acknowledge inequities.

- We acknowledge that inequity is pervasive and historic. Disparities and discrimination are daily occurrences that are rooted in long-standing majority privilege and power inside and outside of the criminal justice system;
- We acknowledge that inequity occurs within all levels of the criminal justice system and within other systems pivotal to comprehensive crime victims' services;
- We acknowledge that equity demands more than representation and inclusion to correct the power imbalances with which our systems have burdened some communities and individuals; and
- We acknowledge that diverse representation alone fails to dismantle the unequal nature of voice, resource allocation, and visibility that exist in the criminal justice system.

Our commitment:

- We will hold a continuous dialogue about our equity work within our organization and within the greater criminal justice system;
- We will expose and unravel the historical and systemic inequities in the criminal justice system through leadership, trainings, and technical support;
- We will advance practices that build equity, as well as acknowledge and amplify those victims and victims' rights professionals who are equity champions;
- We will continue to engage in formal cultural competence development for our staff, board, and volunteers;
- We will expand leadership and employment positions according to our commitment to equity;
- We will integrate an equity lens into every aspect of our organization; and
- We will advocate for the broader development of policies and practices in the criminal justice system that better serve the historically and systemically marginalized, oppressed, and underserved people throughout the nation.

## V. STRATEGIC DECISIONS

With the newly adopted mission, vision, values and equity statement in hand, and with a commitment to working toward the change we hope for, we will execute our activities using three key tools deployed as follows.

- Training & Education. We will continue to train nationwide on the meaning, scope, and enforceability of victims’ rights, to host the Crime Victim Law Conference, and to maintain a robust online Victim Law Library. As we look forward, we will ensure the broadest reach of our work through social media engagement, technology advancements, and dissemination of our legal writings. We will enhance community awareness of the existence of victims’ rights, and how they can ask for them in a variety of venues, and we will grow the capacity of law students and lawyers to represent crime victims.
- Legal Advocacy. We will continue to ensure attorneys and advocates working with crime victims can make the best arguments possible to protect victims’ rights by providing them with technical assistance in the form of legal research, writing, strategic consultation, and amicus curiae (friend of the court) support in strategic cases. As we look forward, we will redouble our efforts to secure positive appellate case law through enhanced litigation tools and technical assistance for attorneys representing victims, active participation in appellate litigation, and creation and dissemination of pro se victims’ rights assertion tools.
- Public Policy. We will continue to work in partnership with others across the country to secure victims’ rights legislation that guarantees victims substantive rights and the procedural mechanisms to secure those rights. As we look forward, we will more actively develop and disseminate model legislation, host policy forums, and work to ensure victims’ voices and rights are centered in policy conversations.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The Board of NCVLI is pleased to share this Strategic Plan with the community, partners, funders, and the many supporters interested in our work. We are excited about the future of NCVLI and victims’ rights. We hope this plan provides insight into NCVLI’s direction. Ongoing input from the community is invaluable. Please continue to let us know your thoughts and suggestions as together we move forward in this important work. You can reach us at:



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