

VIOLENT CRIMES COMPENSATION BOARD
MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT GUIDELINES
THE “RED CROSS APPROACH”
TO CRISIS INTERVENTION

The Red Cross is the Nation’s best known humanitarian organization. Every day, throughout the year, the Red Cross is always there, dedicated to helping make families and communities safer here and around the world.

Imagine a world – a world where you are hurt by crime, your life falls apart, and nobody is there to help you put it back together. Imagine that nobody tells you anything about the criminal case that arises out of the victimization, about the status of the offender. You might be sleepless, living in fear that you will be victimized again.

And when the trial is held – you are barred from the courtroom. You have no opportunity to tell the judge about the devastating impact that the crime has had on you...on your family...on your future.

Imagine feeling totally terrified, with no significant protection offered to increase your feelings of security. Imagine being faced with devastating financial losses. Put your life back together. How? You face the impossible and no one seems to know or care. Imagine the utter loneliness and despair. And there is no one to turn to – no one to talk to – no one to help you to even begin to pick up the pieces of your broken life. A life splintered, fragmented, and broken by crime.

Such an imaginary scenario was the painful reality that crime victims in America endured a mere twenty years ago. Today, in America, and indeed in Alaska, victims of crime are afforded both rights and respect that they so richly deserve. They are, for the most part, informed about and involved in the criminal and juvenile processes that determine not only the fate of the offender, but their very future as people who have been hurt by crime.

The American Red Cross, modeled after the national Red Cross, was established in 1881 to serve America. Guided by dedication to humanity, a desire to promote mutual understanding, friendship, independence, impartiality, neutrality, service, unity, and universality, the Red Cross has become the symbol of hope and help to the devastated.

Like the Red Cross, which was conceived by a Swiss business man to relieve the suffering of the wounded following a battle, we (victim advocates, victim compensation, mental health treatment providers, etc.) must render succor to the wounded – those wounded by crime.

Like Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross, we must help with the nursing/the nurturing back to health, the feeding/tender guidance towards wholeness. Like Clara Barton, who was not permitted to work with the International Red Cross because she was a woman, serving crime victims may not be a primary “job description.”

But, like Clara Barton – we must find a way. May our dedication, our perseverance, our benevolence become as legendary as hers.

As soon as the Red Cross organizations were founded – they were called into action to provide aid to the victims of a string of disasters, including war, fires, floods, famine, and hurricanes. We are called to action to provide aid to victims of robberies, drunk drivers, rapes, assaults, homicides, and terrible crimes. The Red Cross has significant and recognizable impact because during a disaster, supplies are distributed quickly – the Red Cross stand ready/responsive and with answers...answers which don't eliminate the hardship, but deliver relief. And that relief is delivered irregardless of culture or nationality.

Alaska's Red Cross for victims includes police officers, safety officers, and troopers; victim assistance programs; prosecutors and victim witness coordinators; doctors, dentists, nurses, and aides; counselors, therapists, and psychologists; and the Violent Crimes Compensation Board. Each participant has a place and without each participant relief is short changed.

Through years of hard work in the field, crime victim services providers have determined, most crime victims can recover emotionally if they receive immediate and appropriate relief. Alaska's Red Cross for victims can help victims by understanding the crime victims three major needs after a crime has been committed: the need to feel safe; the need to express emotion; and the need to know "what comes next."

The following chart lists some of our responsibilities:

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Immediate safety
- Advise concerning victim programs
- Advise concerning compensation program
- Advise concerning cooperation requirements

VCCB

- Immediate safety
- Advise concerning victim programs
- Compensation for losses
- Ensure appropriate mental health treatment

VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

- Immediate safety
- “Hands on” crisis intervention
- Support
- Advise concerning cooperation and reporting requirements

MHT SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Immediate safety
- Advise concerning cooperation requirements
- Initial assessment
- Coping skills
- Appropriate therapy - short and or long-term

PROSECUTION

- Victims rights upheld
- Education concerning criminal justice system
- Advise concerning cooperation and reporting requirements

MEDICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Medical needs
- Emotional needs – referral to mental health treatment providers, victim programs, VCCB, etc.