Call for Pilot Sites: National Vicarious Trauma Toolkit

An Evidence-based Approach to Understanding and Addressing Vicarious Trauma in Victim Assistance Providers, Law Enforcement Officers, Firefighters, and EMS

In recent years, there has been growing awareness of the significant impact that interventions with victims of mass casualty incidents and crimes of violence have on first responders and direct service providers. Many agencies and organizations have come to know that vicarious trauma is harmful to their staff and, ultimately, to their ability to deliver quality services in a consistent and sustained manner. While many of you have already instituted ways to address such needs, the field has yet to identify evidence-based practices that can inform and support agencies in their efforts to effectively address these critical needs.

Until now. The U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime awarded a two-year grant to Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, for the Vicarious Trauma Toolkit (VTT) Project. Managed by the Institute on Urban Health Research and Practice (IUHRP) at Northeastern, the primary purpose of the VTT is to develop and pilot a state-of-the-art collection of resources that will assist victim assistance providers, law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical services (EMS) and other first responders in learning about, and responding to vicarious trauma.

The VTT will be an online resource, featuring promising policies, procedures, practices and programs gathered through research including a national survey with more than 8,000 respondents. The Toolkit will include resources that are relevant to all users and also organized by specific disciplines so agencies and professionals can quickly find the best resources for them. Further, the VTT will be applicable for those responding to mass casualty events and those chronically exposed to trauma when interacting daily with individual crime victims.

The VTT has benefitted from the active engagement and leadership of national partner organizations and experts in vicarious trauma and their respective fields. OUR CRITICAL NEXT STEP IS TO SELECT FOUR PILOT SITES that will benefit from having a hands on role in shaping the final toolkit for the field.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- Expected Time Commitment: 45 total hours per team member over 5 months from Feb to July 2015
- Applications Due: October 22, 2014 by 11:59 PM EST

QUESTIONS? Direct inquiries to: VTT toolkit@neu.edu. Plan to attend our Informational Call: Monday, September 15, 1:00 pm EST 712-432-1212, passcode 850-992-428
1. **Review criteria for being a Pilot Site.**
   - Application must include a Lead Agency and one Partner Agency that represent one of the following disciplines: Victim Assistance, Law Enforcement, Firefighters, Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
   - Commit to finding two additional partner agencies from your community if selected as a pilot site, so all four disciplines are represented and the team consists of a total of eight members.

2. **Identify the two team members from each of the Lead and Partner agencies (four total).**
   - One member from each agency must be in a management/supervisory role with the authority to implement vicarious trauma-related policies, practices and/or programs to support staff.
   - The second team member should be actively involved in providing direct services to victims or intervening as a first responder.

3. **Designate someone from the Lead Agency as the Pilot Site Team Leader to serve as liaison to national team and coordinator for pilot implementation, including logistics for on-site trainings, meetings, monitoring of progress and data collection as needed.**

4. **Obtain authorization from each agency head indicating that organization’s commitment to fully participate in project activities and meet the time requirements for this groundbreaking project.**

5. **Demonstrate any or all of the following:**
   - Knowledge, experience, and/or commitment to agency responses to vicarious trauma;
   - Experience with testing of other demonstrations/pilot projects;
   - Involvement in community collaborations and/or coordinated community responses to violence.

6. **Submit application by 11:59 pm EST on October 22, 2014.**

---

**THERE IS NO COST FOR PARTICIPATION AS A PILOT SITE**
Selected Pilot Sites and member organizations will be expected to make a good faith effort to participate in all tasks related to the pilot. All Pilot Site Team members must agree to complete all evaluation documents, and participate in all training and technical assistance activities related to the pilot, including attending the Pilot Site Launch Training and Pilot Site Debriefing, participating in conference calls, and spending time required to implement and evaluate the VTT. No travel outside of the pilot site will be necessary.

It is anticipated that time spent performing tasks as a Pilot Site participant will be able to take place within existing work schedules, requiring approximately 45 hours over the course of the entire project. Further, these efforts will contribute significantly to the agency’s ability to address vicarious trauma as well as inform other organizations nationally.

**January – February 2015**
- Teams will learn the status of their application. Teams selected as pilot sites will receive an updated schedule, with specific dates for pilot activities and deadlines.
- Pilot Site Team Members will be provided consent forms for participation in pilot study and pre-pilot assessments.

**Time Commitment per team member:** ~ 1 hour per month

**February – March 2015**
- Team leaders arrange for the initial two-day launch training about the VTT and the pilot testing process overall in the pilot site’s community.
- The National VTT Team will outline the structure and expectations of the pilot, including how to evaluate the Toolkit and record and provide data to the Project Team. Pilot Site Team members will complete an assessment of their agency’s readiness to address vicarious trauma, and develop an agency action plan to integrate the pilot activities into their agency.

**Time Commitment per team member:** ~16 Hours for launch training

**April — June 2015**
- The web-based VTT will be implemented and tested at each Pilot Site during this period.
- All 8 Pilot Team members are expected to be actively involved in the testing process.
- Participate in monthly conference calls/webinars with VTT Training and Technical Assistance Liaison.

**Time Commitment per team member:** ~4-6 Hours per month (12 to 18 Hours total)

**June – July 2015**
- At each pilot site, Pilot Site Team members will participate in a one-day focus group facilitated by a member of the National VTT Team from which final data about the Toolkit will be collected.
- Pilot Site Team members will have completed all activities connected to the VTT project and submitted final evaluations report.

**Time Commitment per team member:** ~8 Hours
The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, is dedicated to a constant improvement in the national response to crime victims by identifying emerging needs and gaps in existing services, enhancing the skill sets of service providers to better meet these needs, and promoting greater public awareness of the issues that crime victims face.

The Institute on Urban Health Research and Practice (IUHRP) is a public health research institute at Northeastern University’s Bouvé College of Health Sciences. IUHRP is devoted to research and its practical application in an effort to improve the health and well-being of the residents of Boston and other urban communities. The IUHRP is focused on exploring the social determinants of health in urban settings, the promotion of health equity, and the elimination of health disparities. The Institute examines the efficacy of programs and interventions in order to inform health care practices, policies, and training.

**Project Partners**
- Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Center for Violence Prevention & Recover, Boston, MA
- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, Cambridge, MA
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- International Association of Fire Chiefs
- International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies
- National Association of State EMS Officials
- National Center for Victims of Crimes
- National Children’s Advocacy Center

**PROGRESS TO DATE**
The VTT Project is working on several objectives to which you may have already contributed:

- An extensive search and review of literature and internet resources;
- A national survey of the field to assess existing policies, procedures, practices and programs;
- A gap analysis to determine what is lacking in the identification, prevention, and treatment of the effects of vicarious trauma;
- A compilation of training and technical assistance resources for the pilot toolkit.

**NEXT STEP—PILOT TESTING TOOLKIT!**
Your role is essential!
Download an application from [here](#).

**QUESTIONS?** Direct inquiries to: VTToolkit@neu.edu. Plan to attend our Informational Call:
Monday, September 15, 1:00 pm EST
712-432-1212, passcode 850-992-428.

---

**Disclaimer**
This VTT Pilot Site Application Packet was produced by the Institute on Urban Health Research and Practice (IUHRP) at Northeastern University under award #2013-VF-GX-K011 An Evidence-Based Approach to Understanding and Addressing Vicarious Trauma in Victim Assistance Professionals, Law Enforcement Officers, and Other First Responders, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.