

Wrap-Around Services for Victims of Violence

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Introduction

Hospital based violence intervention programs have shifted the violence reduction conversation towards a public health lens. Community Engagement to Reduce Victimization (CERV) is a hospital-based violence intervention program that began on May 30, 2019 in the City of Rochester. This program works in partnership with Rochester General Hospital (RGH), Pathways to Peace, Action for a Better Community's Save Our Youth, Rise Up Rochester, United Christian Leadership Ministry, and the RIT Center for Public Safety Initiatives to reduce retaliatory dispute related violence victimization in the City of Rochester. Retaliatory disputes are when two or more individuals are involved in two or more violent acts and there is a risk of escalation. Rochester General Hospital is CERV's initial point of contact with violence victims.

There are five main elements to CERV¹:

1. A full-time CERV Coordinator designated to coordinate the activities of the partner organizations.
2. Utilizing a risk-assessment tool to identify the cases with a high risk of revictimization or retaliation.
3. Establishing a clear protocol to ensure a smooth hand-off from the hospital to the community.
4. Working with community partners to tailor a person-centered, trauma-informed response for the victim and their surrogates (friends, family, etc.).
5. Providing wrap-around services to reduce the likelihood of revictimization and retaliation.

When an individual is a victim of violence (e.g., stabbing, shooting, or assault), they arrive to RGH for treatment. At that point an RGH clinician will attempt to obtain consent from the victim to be connected to the partner organization Pathways to Peace. If the victim consents, Pathways will go to the hospital and complete a risk assessment on the victim or the surrogate (i.e., friends or family) to determine the risk of revictimization. If eligible, the victim will be connected to a member of the Survivor Intervention Team (SIT) made up of the community organizations listed

¹ For more information on CERV, please see our CERV working paper (2021, #6)

above. This SIT member will provide the victim with services as needed. This paper will discuss the fifth element of CERV: Wrap-Around Services.

Wrap-Around Services

Wrap-around services or wrap-around funds are money or resources (e.g., a hotel stay) provided to violence victims, their surrogates, or any other member of a dispute to reduce the risk of retaliation from occurring. The goal is to use the funds to directly intervene in the short-term. There are multiple types of services that wrap-around funds can be provided for including but not limited to, food, clothing, transportation, hotel stays, prepaid phones, and settling disputes. The cost allotted per dispute is no more than \$1,500. From May 30, 2019 to May 31, 2020, CERV assisted in 11 disputes. Disputes include both victims and their surrogates (i.e., family members or others close to them). The total amount of wrap-around funding spent on these eleven disputes was \$5,680.30. The total per dispute ranged widely from \$0 to \$1,308.19. This is due to the different needs requested by victims and surrogates with some refusing money to others identifying multiple services to intervene in the dispute. The median total per dispute was \$313.60 (median is the middle of a range indicating that half of the values are below and half are above the amount).

The table below displays the five types of wrap-around services that CERV provided, the number of times it was provided, and the total amount spent on each service.

Table 1:

Type of Wraparound Fund	Number of Disputes Provided In	Total Amount Spent
Supplies	7	\$977.19
Transportation	5	\$1135.19
Hotel	4	\$2642.98
Phone	2	\$174.94
Dispute Settlement	1	\$750
Total		\$5680.30

Supplies were provided in 64% of the disputes (7 of the 11 disputes) most often in the form of a gift card for food, clothing, and other needs. In one case a gift card was provided to the sister of a victim as she was the caregiver of the victim's children while she was in the hospital for treatment. This gift card was spent on diapers and baby formula for the victim's children. While wrap-around funds were intended to be used to reduce violence in the near-term, we found one way to engage with this hard-to-reach population was to use these wraparound funds to build trust. In some cases, the victim was initially uninterested in the intervention, so we shifted the focus to the surrogate, in this way, we were able to stay connected to them and build their trust to assist them later on.

Transportation was another common service provided in 45% of the disputes for flights, Uber rides, Greyhound bus rides, and in one instance this was a gift card to pay for gas to get to a safe destination. The third most common wrap-around fund provided was for a hotel stay. Hotel stays are CERV's version of safe housing during a dispute's cool off period. Victims are frequently only in the hospital for a few hours and then released back on the street where they were just assaulted. This creates a situation where emotions are heightened, trauma is prevalent, and victims and disputants lack safety. Therefore, putting a victim in a hotel for a few days can give them time calm down in safe place, collect their thoughts, and for the situation to settle while dispute mediation takes place. Hotel stays are the costliest wraparound fund.

In one dispute, we were able to provide money to settle a dispute and debt owed to ensure there would not be retaliation from the victim. Street outreach workers assisting with the intervention were in contact with the victim and assessed the situation to get to the bottom of the dispute. When asked "What do you need to stop this from going any further?", the root of the problem was money owed. Settling disputes is not a guaranteed way to prevent further violence

from occurring, however, to our knowledge this situation did not escalate after CERV paid the debt that was owed.

When there is a dispute which did not receive any wraparound funds, this is often because a community partner stayed in contact with that person and assisted them in other ways such as mentoring them, assisting them with connections to other resources, and assessing their needs. On the other hand, one dispute was provided \$1,303 total. This was a dispute with a victim who needed a hotel stay while the situation cooled down, a bus ticket to the hotel, a prepaid VISA gift card for food and toiletries while out of town, and a prepaid phone to stay in touch with his SIT member.

Figure 1:

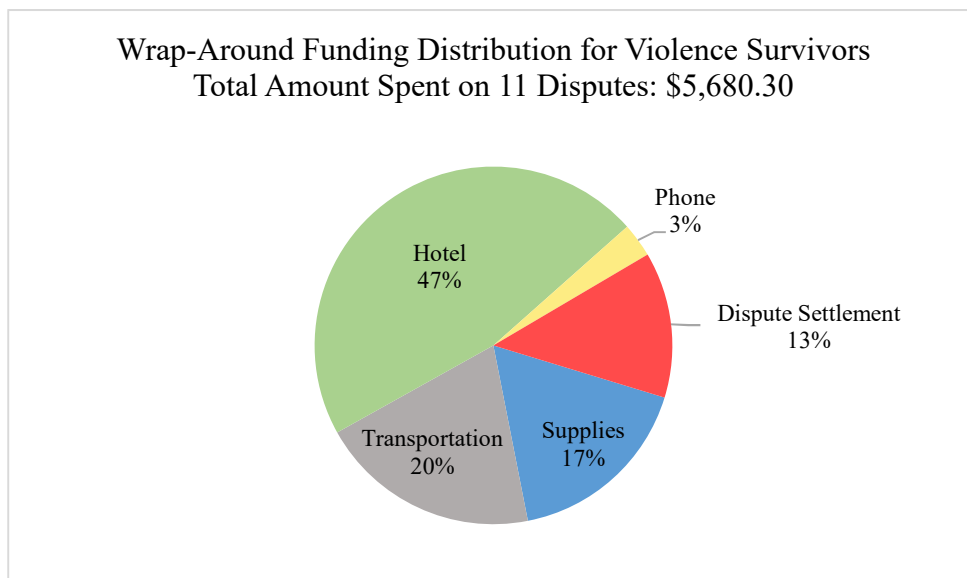


Figure 1 displays the distribution of the total amount of money spent on wrap-around services. Almost half of the money spent for wrap-around services was for hotel stays. Transportation was the second costliest wrap-around fund consuming 20% of the total spent. Although supplies were most often provided, they were only 17% of the total amount spent. The least amount of money was spent on providing victims with a prepaid phone. A victim may

require a prepaid cellphone in order to stay reliably in touch with a CERV Survivor Intervention Team member to provide mentoring and to resolve the dispute. This was provided in two disputes. Understanding the distribution of funding to different services allows an assessment of the needs and costs of those needs for future intervention.

Discussion

Although there are a variety of needs after someone is a victim of violence, there appear to be a few things that victims find most helpful. It appears that most requests for services are centered around the issue of immediate safety. The first is housing, often requested because an individual has nowhere safe to go. Housing in the form of temporary safe housing and permanent housing is what most victims request, even those who did not end up being connected to CERV mentioned a need to get out of town, needing a safe place to go or some form of housing. CERV was able to provide a temporary, yet costly, solution of putting a victim in a hotel for a few nights but this did not assist them long-term. Housing is typically provided by Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or Family Crisis Intervention Team (FACIT), however, there is lengthy eligibility criteria that often excludes victims of violence. Another agency that offers services to victims is the NYS Office of Victim Services however they too have [eligibility criteria](#) that make it daunting for our victims to apply and most are ineligible. Victims of violence cannot be placed in shelters either because they are deemed dangerous and potentially could put other individuals within shelters at risk. This was one of the biggest roadblocks that CERV faced. One of CERV's participants was connected to multiple agencies for assistance finding affordable permanent housing. In the meantime, she was bouncing from couch to couch, essentially homeless, and after 8 months ended up getting multiple jobs and achieving permanent housing herself; all the systems she approached to help, failed her. This is an area where services

need to be improved and CERV is currently working with DHHS and FACIT to bridge the gaps in services for housing.

The second is supplies, victims may not have anything because of their situation, and it may not be safe to go home to get what they do need. Often clothing and other personal belongings are collected by police officers as evidence for the violence that took place which leaves victims coming from the hospital with nothing but medical scrubs. This occurred in one of our cases and a gift card was provided to get clothing from a local store.

Victims are often asked if they need anything by the SIT member they are connected to during the aftermath of trauma. Trauma is often all-encompassing, impacting a person's physical, emotional, behavioral, and psychological state. This impact differs for everyone and can make it difficult for an individual to accurately assess their current situation. One way to properly assist someone who has experienced trauma is to use Solution Focused Trauma Informed Care (SFTIC). It can be difficult for someone to know what they need after a traumatic event has occurred however, if SIT members and hospital staff are trained in SFTIC they can make sure to ask the right questions and use the right language to guide victims to find their own solution and to better understand victims' needs. Knowledge about common needs in the aftermath of violence is also important and the SIT members had this knowledge to provide victims with any assistance in assessing their situation. This is important because when a social worker at the hospital visits a victim, the victim may say they don't need anything, but maybe the wrong questions are being asked to identify accessible and relevant resources. It is important however, that although there is assistance, that it is person-centered. Person-centered means that the actions taking place are what the victim or their surrogate wants to occur, they are not forced upon them.

Conclusion

In providing wrap-around services, it became evident which services are lacking in the community and could be improved. There are necessary steps that must be taken to ensure that victims of violence are treated and provided services that are tailored to their needs. This includes shelters or safe housing options, victim services assistance for food, clothing, and any other basic needs for a victim of a crime. Victims are the experts in their needs and should be provided the autonomy to tell providers what they need to reduce the likelihood of violence in the near term. CERV asks victim's "How do we end this dispute? What do you need for this to occur?" instead of telling them what steps they should take to end the violence. Further, they need not be viewed as dangerous. This mentality that victims of violence are dangerous can cause a lack of proper assistance and services from being provided.

One other conclusion that can be drawn is that individuals who may be involved in street violence may be exposed to other living conditions that aren't ideal. These include, low income or poverty, high crime neighborhoods, high unemployment, among others. It is important that the services provided attempt to prevent future short-term violence from occurring. They cannot, however, solve all of the problems that an individual may be facing. This is difficult when assisting someone and can be overlooked which is why it is important that CERV is not the only program providing this assistance and connections to other organizations exist for all encompassing support. Future project implementation should continue to assess victims' needs and what is missing in the community for policy changes to occur.