This week is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, and the theme *Expand the Circle – Reach All Victims* is a time to remember that when victims feel understood and supported, they are more likely to seek services.

DYS has an Office of Victim Services (OVS) that is responsible for ensuring that the rights of crime victims of DYS youth are recognized and honored. OVS has a current caseload of 1,260 crime victims who have signed up to receive services, including written notification of potential or actual status changes of youth, information and support, copies of apology letters written by youth, victim-offender dialogue opportunities, victim advocacy through linking victims with the Release Authority, and referrals. OVS also provides a free support hotline that victims can call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at (800) 872-3132.

OVS designed the Victim Awareness Curriculum to help youth understand the impact of their criminal behavior upon their victims and community. It is intended to provide a consistent tool through which youth can address their victimizing behavior. Twelve different sessions, provided by trained facility staff, examine a variety of topics including remorse, empathy, hate, bias, punishment, and justice. The curriculum looks at the dynamics of each crime and the effect crime has on its victims. The program uses written exercises and victim impact panels to bring the youth face-to-face with victims, community members, and other stakeholders affected by their crime.

**Victim Services in 2017**

- OVS provided 6,279 written notices of potential or actual status changes of youth
- OVS managed 1,745 victim-related phone calls
- 141 youth successfully completed the Victim Awareness Curriculum

The office also oversees the Peer Assistance Team and the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) programs, which offer support to DYS staff in cases when they have been victimized by youth. Last year, OVS staff trained 30 staff members in Peer Support and CISM,
providing additional team members to work and support their co-workers through difficult situations. OVS staff developed materials specifically for staff to utilize when looking for outside resources, and these materials are available at all DYS sites.

Thank you to all of our staff and volunteers for their efforts in helping our youth become more aware of the impact of crime on victims, take responsibility for their actions, and begin to make amends. For additional information about our OVS, please contact Kate Foulke, Victim Services Administrator, at (800) 872-3132.