

*Warwick Police Department*

2005

Victim/Witness

SURVEY



**Prepared by: Sergeant Joseph Coffey  
December 2005**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Warwick Police Department is recognized as a nationally accredited agency by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). The achievement comes with great responsibility and commitment to victim/witness needs. The men and women of the Warwick Police play an important role in victim/witness assistance, a role that no other component of the criminal justice system can effectively duplicate. The Warwick Police department depends upon the participation of crime victims and witnesses; knowing their cooperation is integral in holding criminals accountable for their actions. In return, the victim/witness deserves and is statutorily entitled to support services and fair treatment. The manner in which a victim/witness is treated at the time of the crime and afterwards affects not only the victim's immediate and long term ability to cope with the crime, it can determine his/her willingness to assist in prosecution. The Warwick Police Department is committed to ensuring that victim's and other witnesses receive professional handling consistent with their important investigative and prosecutorial role.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the 2005 Victims/Witness Survey is to conduct analysis of victim/witness needs and services available within the local community. The information collected will assist Warwick Police command staff and other service agencies in identifying unfulfilled victim/witness needs that are appropriate for this department to provide or suitable for outside referral. This survey documents the extent of victim/witness involvement and their level of satisfaction with the present delivery system of assistance and related community services. Responses to the survey will ultimately result in changes to the department's Crime Victims Services Directory. Of particular interest and concern to this agency are those services that first responders can provide effectively and those that the police department is in a unique position to provide. Most importantly, this survey attempts to assess the Warwick Police Departments effectiveness in protecting and upholding rights afforded to crime victims.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Warwick Police Department has taken significant steps to conform to the Rhode Island Victim's Bill of Rights, applicable CALEA standards, and related department policy. Some of these accomplishments are summarized as follows:

First Responding officers ask victims at the scene of a crime whether or not they want to be notified of the offender's arraignment. The on-scene officer checks the victim's response on a standard statement form completed by the victim. If the defendant is not apprehended at the scene and an arrest warrant is subsequently issued, the criminal complaint is stamped indicating the victim's notification preference. Should the defendant eventually be apprehended, and the victim indicated he/she wanted to be notified; the arresting officer is responsible for this notification.

The Warwick Police Department enjoys the benefit of having a full-time Law Enforcement Advocate (LEA) on staff, employed by the Sexual Assault Trauma Resource Center. The LEA has experience and training in domestic violence and sexual assault intervention, and works in cooperation with department employees. The primary responsibility of the LEA is to ensure the comfort of the domestic violence and sexual assault victims in crisis situations and throughout the criminal justice process, to include: notification, safety planning, support, information, and referrals.

The Warwick Police Department Prosecution Division also has a full-time paralegal that is charged with seeing that victims are afforded services enumerated in the Victims Bill of Rights applicable to the prosecution process. The Department Paralegal sends correspondence to victims notifying them of pre-trial conference dates and their right to address the Court. Victims who respond to the aforementioned letters are given the opportunity to meet directly with the paralegal to discuss applicable rights relative to the case, i.e. restitution proceedings, victims' compensation, employer intercession services.

In addition to the numerous brochures, forms, and cards containing victim/witness related information provided by officers during the initial investigation of a crime/incident, the Warwick Police Department Prosecution Division maintains a Victim/Witness Services Directory. This directory contains a listing of social service referral agencies located throughout the community. The directory is available to all staff and the general public.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Warwick Police Department 2005 Victims/Witness Survey was initiated by Sergeant Joseph Coffey, the department's Accreditation Manager, pursuant to the requirements of accreditations standards 55.1.2 which reads as follows:

*55.1.2 The agency completes an analysis of victim/witness assistance needs and available services within the agency's service area at least every three years or has access to a current analysis.*

Sergeant Coffey reviewed all department policy relating to victim/witness services as well as the rights enumerated in Rhode Island General Law 12-28-3, entitled, "Victim's Rights." Colonel McCartney approved a survey plan that included the establishment of a committee comprised of the following victims' advocates:

Melissa Alexander  
Melissa England  
Sarah DeCataldo  
Iris Ciani

Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center  
Sexual Assault & Trauma Resource Center (SATRC)  
Law Enforcement Advocate- Warwick Police  
RI Attorney Generals office- Victims Unit

Relying on the committee members experience and training, particularly with victim's surveys, the Warwick Police Department approved of the following survey methodology.

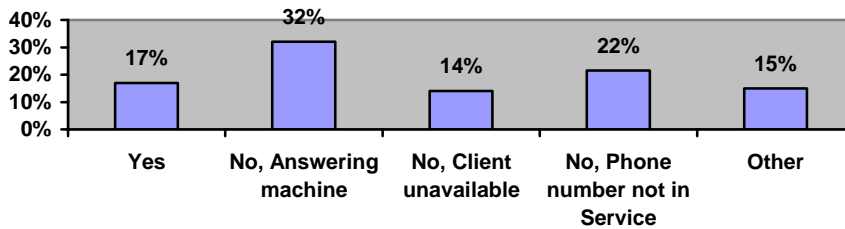
The survey was conducted telephonically. Experienced survey volunteers, provided by SATRC, attempted to contact 150 crime victims and 50 crime witnesses. Calls were originated at Warwick Police Headquarters during afternoon and evening hours on September 6-9, 2005. The number of victims/witness selected was based on a responded success rate of 18%. Each caller was provided with an instruction sheet that included a confidentiality disclaimer and emphasis on protecting the anonymity of the victim. The respondents' identity and personal information remained anonymous throughout the survey. The five major types of victimization within the Warwick community, as reflected in the department's annual crime statistics report, served as the basis for victim/witness selection criterion (burglary, domestic disorderly, assault, larceny, vandalism) Special victims, such as those victimized by domestic violence were also included in the survey. Additionally, victims and witnesses appearing on the contact list represented the three geographic districts of the City, according to zip code designation. The survey questionnaire contained 21 questions and took approximately ten minutes to complete. The questions included in the survey were developed to correspond with specific victims rights enumerated in the aforementioned law, policy, and standards. The respondents answers could then be measured against identified and established police duties concerning victim rights. Sergeant Coffey collected the survey responses and raw data and assigned intern Christopher Geary, a student at Salve Regina University, the task of compiling the data reported herein. Prior to implementing the survey, a press release was disseminated announcing the surveys purpose and scheduled period. Prior to disseminating the finding in this report, the survey committee met on December 6, 2005 to review the results as relating to its intended purpose and emphasize the need to maintain an ongoing channel of communication among service agencies to better serve crime victims and witnesses. Committee members also review and update the department's Crime Victims Service Directory, given the survey findings.

## FINDINGS

### Contact Information

#### Successful Contact:

Yes: 17%  
No, Answering machine: 32%  
No, Client unavailable: 14%  
No, Phone number not in Service: 21.5%  
Other: 15%



#### Willing to Take Survey:

Yes: 15%  
No: 2%

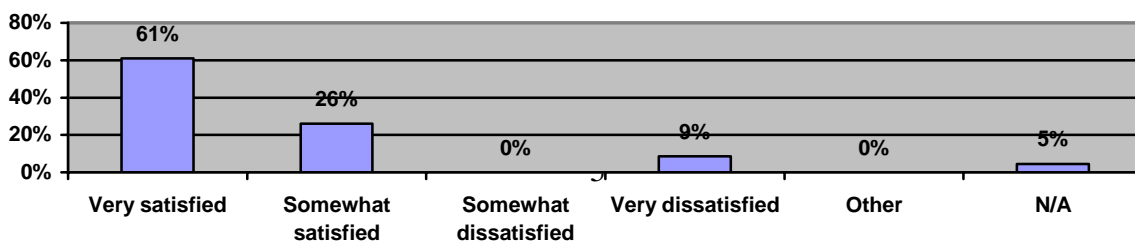
Witnesses: 18%

Victims: 82%

### I. Initial Contact

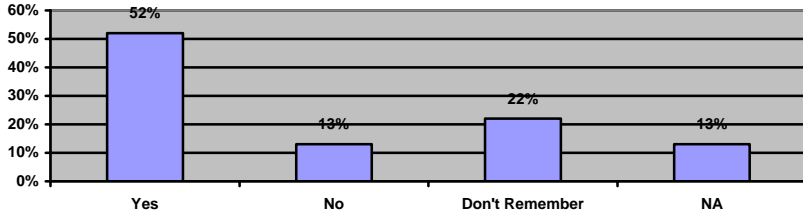
#### 3. During the initial stage of your criminal complaint, how satisfied were you with the services provided and the overall experience you had with the responding police officer(s):

Very satisfied: 61%  
Somewhat satisfied: 26%  
Somewhat dissatisfied: 0.0%  
Very dissatisfied: 8.5%  
Other: 0.0%  
N/A: 4.5 %



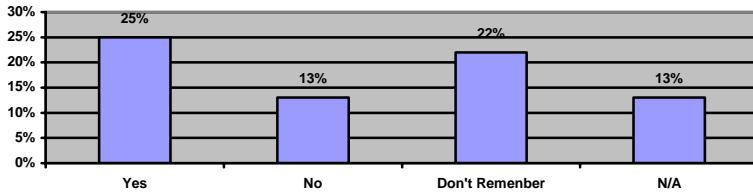
**4. Did the officer(s) who responded to your call explain your rights as a victim?**

Yes: 52%  
No: 13%  
Don't Remember: 22%  
N/A: 13%



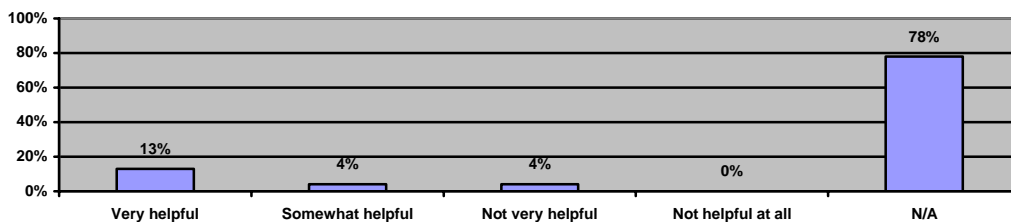
**5. Did you receive any information from the officer about resources for victims/witnesses such as the law enforcement advocate, community agencies or court advocates etc...?**

Yes: 25%  
No: 13%  
Don't Remember: 22%  
N/A: 13%



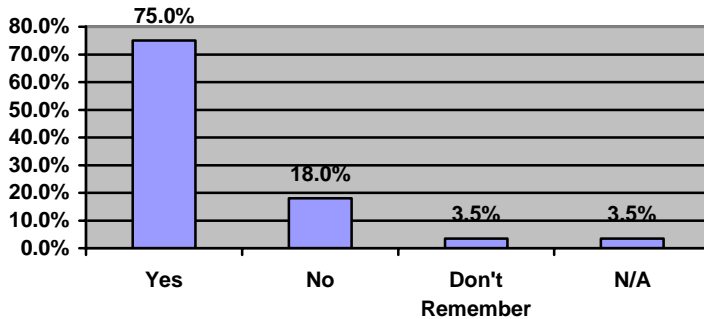
**6. If you answered yes to number 5, how helpful was the resource(s) given**

Very helpful: 13%  
Somewhat helpful: 4%  
Not very helpful: 4%  
Not helpful at all: 0%  
N/A: 78%



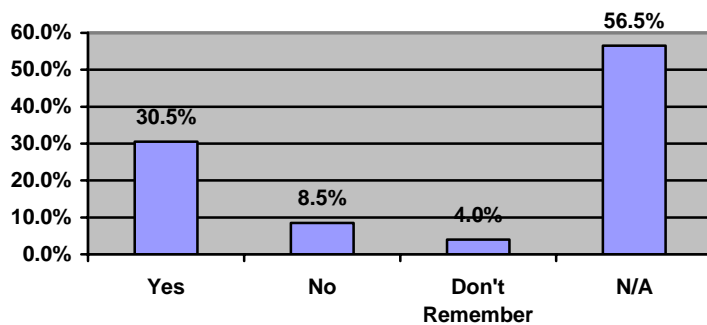
**7. Did the officer(s) meet with you in a private, confidential and comfortable location?**

Yes: 75%  
No: 18%  
Don't Remember: 3.5%  
N/A: 3.5%



**8. If there was no arrest in your case, did you ask to be notified of the offender's first court appearance (arraignment)?**

Yes: 30.5%  
No: 8.5%  
Don't remember: 4%  
N/A: 56.5%



9. I am going to read you a list of some things the police officer(s) may have done when he/she/they responded to the scene. After I read each one please respond by either saying “yes they did”, “no they didn’t” or “not applicable”.

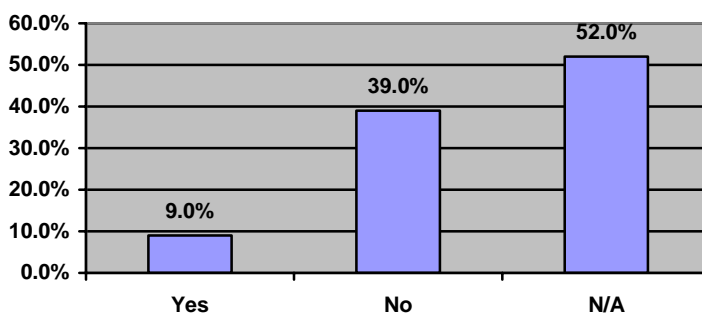
|   | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>N/A</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|------------|
| a. Inquire if you needed medical assistance   | 28.5%      | 25%       | 46%        |
| b. Provide or arrange for medical assistance  | 14%        | 28.5%     | 57.5%      |
| c. Show concern for your current situation  | 75%        | 14%       | 11%        |
| d. Provide or arrange for transportation  | 18%        | 14%       | 68%        |
| e. Provide information on protective orders   | 21.5%      | 25%       | 53.5%      |
| f. Provide case number  | 43%        | 25%       | 32%        |
| g. Offer reassurance that made you feel safe  | 53.5%      | 21.5%     | 25%        |
| h. Explain the subsequent steps involved in processing your case                      | 61%        | 25%       | 14%        |
| i. Allow sufficient time for you to talk about your situation                         | 82%        | 14%       | 3.5%       |
| j. Provide you with a phone number in case you had any questions                      | 57%        | 32%       | 11%        |
| k. Offer civil or other alternative means to resolve the matter, i.e. social services | 18%        | 39%       | 43%        |

10. Are you familiar with the RI-VINE (Victim Information & Notification Everyday) program provided by the Rhode Island Department of Corrections?

Yes: 9%

No: 39%

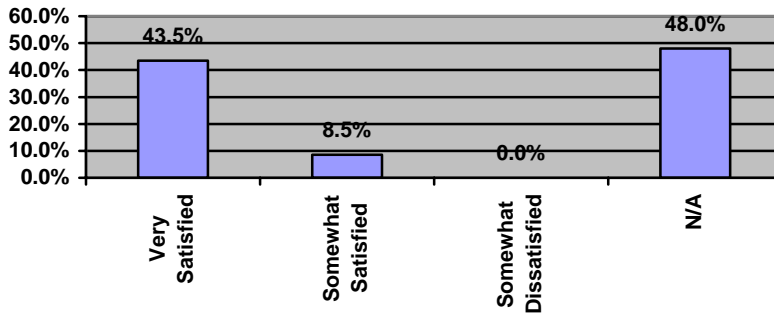
N/A: 52%



## II. Follow up Contact

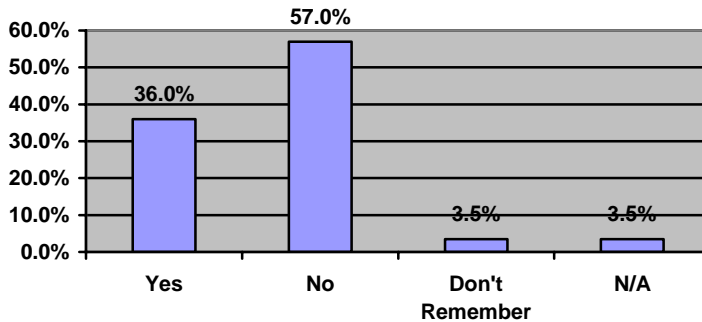
11. During the follow-up stage of your criminal complaint, how satisfied were you with the services and overall experience you had with the follow-up or investigating officer(s) or detective(s):

Very Satisfied: 43.5 %  
Somewhat Satisfied: 8.5%  
Somewhat Dissatisfied: 0%  
Very Dissatisfied:  
N/A: 48%



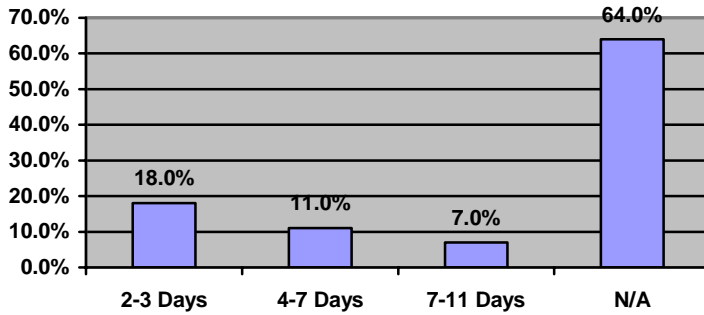
12. Were you contacted by either a police officer or someone else since the incident?

Yes: 36%  
No: 57%  
Don't Remember: 3.5%  
N/A: 3.5%



### 13. How soon were you contacted?

2-3 Days: 18%  
4-7 Days: 11%  
7-11 Days: 7%  
N/A: 64%



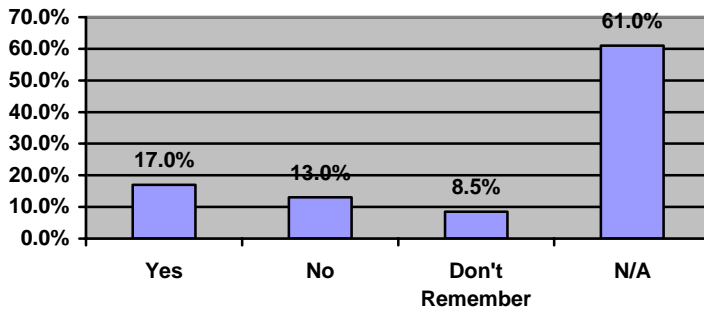
### 14. How were you contact?

Phone: 25%  
In Person: 7%  
Letter: 7%  
Other: 3.5%  
N/A: 57%



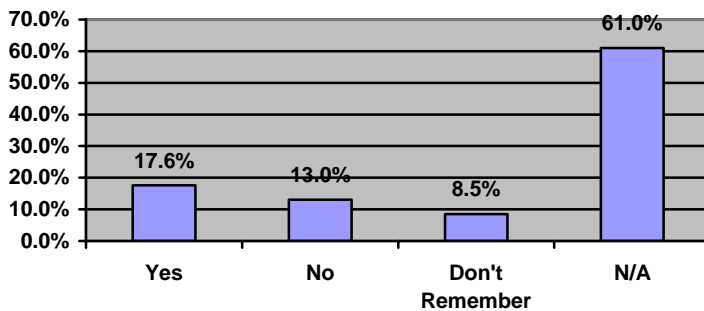
**15. Did the officer/detective explain the procedures involved in the prosecution of your case and your role in the process?**

Yes: 17%  
No: 13%  
Don't Remember: 8.5%  
N/A: 61%



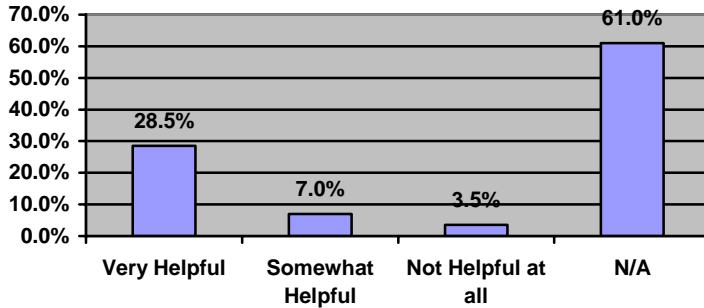
**16. Did the officer/detective keep you informed of the status of the investigation?**

Yes: 17.5%  
No: 13%  
Don't Remember: 8.5 %  
N/A: 61%



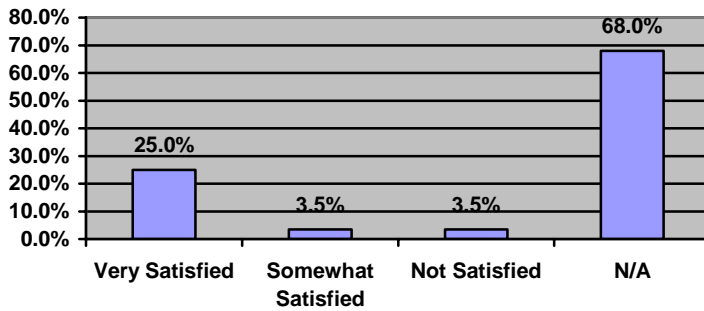
**17. How helpful was the person who contacted you?**

Very Helpful: 28.5 %  
Somewhat Helpful: 7%  
Not Helpful at all: 3.5%  
N/A: 61%



**18. How satisfied were you with the information and assistance provided by the Prosecution Division at the Warwick Police Department?**

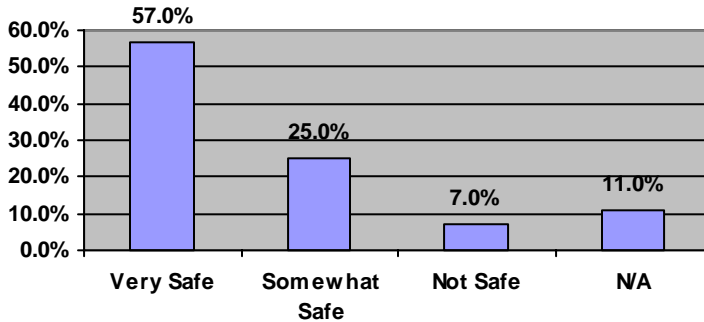
Very Satisfied: 25%  
Somewhat Satisfied: 3.5%  
Not Satisfied: 3.5%  
N/A: 68%



### III. Rating and Recommendations

#### 19. How safe do you feel currently?

Very Safe: 57%  
Somewhat Safe: 25%  
Not Safe: 7%  
N/A: 11%



#### 20. Please list your overall comments regarding the service the Warwick Police Department provided to you:

##### Comments:

- Very professional/ courteous; objective; arrived quickly
- No response, no explanation, nothing to be resolved
- Performed duty very well; took statements from all witnesses and victim(s); interviewed offender out of sight of victim
- Friendly, helpful, realistic, thanked us for calling
- Haven't heard anything at all; satisfied with detective; initial contact with police officer was rude and bad
- Thanks for the help
- Very satisfied; quick to respond; officer helpful through all the steps
- Great, helpful
- Keep up the good work; noticed an increased police presence in neighborhood; satisfied
- Detective was informative; felt good about the officers concern for pursuing the offense
- Victim dissatisfied; should be fired; disrespectful and arrogant; no follow up; was not helpful
- Respect for the WPD and think they are great; no complaints
- Did not feel fairly treated; a proper investigation was not done

- Very satisfied with the responding officers; displeased with the prosecution of his case
- Good job; took care of me
- Fine service; only so much they could do; wishing they could track down and prosecute the guilty; realizes difficult to prove
- Very helpful; very nice; came very quick
- Good job!

**21. Please tell us ways in which you feel the Warwick Police Department may improve our services to meet the needs of victims/witnesses:**

**Comments:**

- Officer requires better manners, other officers very professional;
- Officers were very nice and they did a good job
- No complaints; officers were very helpful
- Officer needs a better attitude; was not helpful, delayed effectiveness; bad service
- Would like to see an increased presence throughout the city
- No suggestions; the WPD has been wonderful
- Approach needs to be more positive
- Would like to have a better explanation of the process; what is going to happen

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Warwick Police Department extends its sincere gratitude to the following volunteers for their assistance in conducting this survey. This important task could not have been accomplished without their commitment and support of the agencies they represent. Their spirit of cooperation and eagerness to participate in this project was obvious and much appreciated. The Warwick Police Department looks forward to our continued relations for the betterment of victim services.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Melissa Alexander | Elizabeth Buffum Chace House                    |
| Melissa England   | Sexual Assault & Trauma Resource Center (SATRC) |
| Sarah DeCataldo   | Law Enforcement Advocate- Warwick Police        |
| Iris Ciani        | RI Attorney Generals office- Victims Unit       |
| Richard Pacheco   | Intern- New England Institute of Technology     |
| Christopher Geary | Intern- Salve Regina University                 |
| Susan Hughes      | SATRC   |
| Rachel Poirier    | SATRC   |