**Average processing time**

Hare some factors that go into any consideration of this issue:

1. What period of time are we measuring?

a. One definition is from the victim's point of view: start from the time the application comes in, and end when the check actually goes out.  But this brings the performance of the check-cutting agency into play.  (This is the definition that OVC wanted to adopt when it used to ask states for processing time on the Performance Report; but what actually happened is that they found there was so much variation in how states count processing time, that OVC gave up and removed the question from the Performance Report.  There is a vestige in the narrative portion of the Performance Report but it really doesn't ask for the time, it asks for how a state measures it.)

b. If you look only at the compensation program's performance, does it start from the time the application comes in, and end when eligibility is determined?  Or end when the decision on what and how much to pay is made?

2. Some individual state variations that cropped up that affected an effort to get a standardized measurement:

a. Some states didn't start the clock until all the documents were gathered.

b. At least one stopped the clock any time a request had gone out, and the program was waiting for a response.

c. A number of states rely on people in the field, like advocates in prosecutor's offices and nonprofits, obviously not employed by the compensation program, to do most of the initial gathering of information, like police reports, bills, etc.  These states don't start the clock until the claim comes in, virtually complete, so we have a few programs saying that there average processing time is 1 day, or 3 days, or a week.  Now, from the victim's point of view, it wasn't a day or a week, because that advocate employed by someone else may have taken six months to gather the documents.  That six months would be measured by the comp. program if the comp. employee had done the work, but not if the advocate somewhere else did.

3. At least some -- maybe many -- really don't have the electronic capability to rigorously measure processing time.  We get guesstimates, and who knows if those are self-serving.

4. On a mathematical level, it makes a difference if someone uses a median, or an average.  As you know, the median is the midpoint, meaning half the claims are processed within that median, and half take longer.  If you use a median, then that 10-year claim doesn't affect your median, since it's just one more claim that went past the median, and it doesn't matter by how much.  If you use an average, then you're tallying in 3,650 days for that one claim along with all the other claims, and dividing those total all-claim processing days by the number of claims to come up with an average is going to result in something longer than if you just took a median.  So we might have to ask how people are coming up with an "average" and whether they mean "median" or "average."

There may be other issues but these are the main ones I can think of.

And here’s the bottom line – State A may say its average processing time is 3 days and State B may say 3 months, when in fact the reality is that victims in both states are getting their money at exactly the same time after filing the claim on a certain date.  So, when it really comes down to it, any comparison of states on “average processing time” is a useless exercise.