

MINUTES
Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime
June 8, 2021

The Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime met via Microsoft Teams.

Members in Attendance: Co-Chair Susan Omilian, Melissa Farley, Bob Garguilo, Beth Hamilton, Gail Hardy, Irene Mikol, Jessica Pizzano, Gerrie Wild, Deborah Witkin, Andrew Woods, Yvette Young

Members Excused or Absent: Amy Lupoli, Ebonie Suggs

OVS Staff in Attendance: Valina Carpenter, Linda J. Cimino, James Morgan, Jean M. Weisbrod

Guest in Attendance: Alison Chandler

Agenda:

1. Welcome
Susan Omilian opened the meeting at 2:03 p.m. Council members introduced themselves.
2. Approval of the April 21, 2021 meeting minutes
Susan asked for a motion to accept the April meeting minutes. The motion was moved and seconded; the minutes were accepted as presented.
3. Roundtable discussion on legislative proposals and issues on the state and federal level (continued)
Deb Witkin provided an update on:
 - A “Right to Counsel” bill for income-eligible tenants unable to afford their own lawyer in which the bill would require the state to provide legal representation for them from a group of legal nonprofits and organizations, such as legal aid agencies.
 - A program, through the Connecticut Bar Foundation, will provide grants to non-profits to provide legal services in the five judicial districts with the highest number of applications for restraining orders: Waterbury, Fairfield (Bridgeport), Hartford, New Haven, Stamford-Norwalk.
Gerrie Wild provided an update on:
 - Senate Bill No. 1091 An Act Concerning the Definition of Domestic Violence, Revising Statutes Concerning Domestic Violence, Child Custody, Family Relations Matter Filings and Bigotry or Bias Crimes and Creating a Program to Provide Legal Counsel to Indigents in Restraining Order Cases:
 - Expands the definition of domestic violence to include coercive control and incorporates that into the family violence restraining order statute

- Allows victims to email state marshals the forms needed to serve a restraining order on the alleged abuser
- Clarifies that victims can testify in family relations matters remotely if there is an order of protection in effect
- Defines the U&T visa application process
- Allows family violence victim advocates in the GA courts to have access to police reports
- Provides legal representation at court hearings to income eligible victims applying for orders of protection with a grant program
- Establishes a process for tenants to change the locks on their apartments after obtaining a protective order or a restraining order

Beth Hamilton provided an update on:

- Every Voice Act which will ensure amnesty for individuals who report sexual misconduct and establish a climate survey to evaluate the progress toward eliminating sexual misconduct on campus
- Title IX Federal Sexual Assault hearings

Jessica Pizzano provided an update on:

- Senate Bill No. 1019 “Clean Slate” bill to erase past criminal convictions
- Jennifer’s Law which includes coercive control as a form of domestic violence

Melissa Farley provided an update on:

- HB No. 6505 – An Act Concerning Court Operations passed with a number of provisions that impact victims:
 - Allows victims and their next of kin access to private proceedings of juvenile court
 - Expanded the eligibility for victim compensation through OVS by adding different types of professionals which victims can report incidents of sexual and domestic abuse to
 - Allows victims to designate certain family members to receive notifications from OVS or DOC

Gail Hardy provided an update on:

- Jennifer’s Law
- HB No. 5557 – An Act which would make it easier for victims to have a conviction erased if their case is related to victimization due to human trafficking

Yvette Young provided an update up on:

- HB 5557 - An Act that would change the language of existing legislation regarding sexual abuse of a minor from “for a fee” to “in exchange for anything of value”. This bill would also create a focus on affirmative defense for trafficking victims

Valina Carpenter provided an update on:

- HB No. 6505 – An Act Concerning Court Operations which would allow victims and family members to observe and participate in juvenile court transfer proceedings

4. Report on OVS Victimization Needs Assessment

Linda Cimino reported about a Teams meeting with the marketing research team. She described the survey as a fifteen minute phone interview with questions about the victims experience and victimization, how services were received, suggestions to improve services, barriers, household victimizations, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and demographics. Stakeholders can expect to receive a draft soon.

5. OVS Report

a) Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund Report

The *Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF) Contributions (P.A. 06-152) FY 2020 – 2021 through 04/30/2021* and the *OVS Victim Compensation Program Budget statement for month ending 05/31/21 FY 07/01/20 – 06/30/21* were distributed to Council Members via email prior to the meeting.

James Morgan reviewed the *OVS Victim Compensation Program Budget statement for month ending 05/31/21 FY 07/01/20 – 06/30/21*. Jim reported that total disbursements through May 31, 2021 were \$2,056,781, which is a \$62,000 increase in expenditures through May 31, 2020. Jim stated that federal VOCA compensation grants were used to supplement state funding to offset declines in revenues into the CICF. Jim reported there is sufficient state and federal funding to make compensation payments for the remainder of this fiscal year. He stated there are no anticipated changes to the appropriations for the new fiscal year which begins on 07/01/2021.

Jim reviewed the *Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF) Contributions (P.A. 06-152) FY 2020 – 2021*. Jim reported court contributions were \$567,624 through 04/30/21. Jim stated this was \$618,404, below total court collections through 04/30/20. Jim reported that the majority of the court collections continue to be through the Centralized Infractions Bureau (CIB) E-Pay for cases that are disposed of online. Jim stated that overall revenues into the CICF fund from all sources are \$1.5 million below revenues through 05/31/2020.

b) OVS Update

James Morgan provided an update on Federal VOCA Funding:

- Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has released the State VOCA Victim Assistance Grant Allocation chart for FFY 2021. Connecticut's victim assistance award will be \$11,887,517, which is a reduction of 34.4 % from the FFY 2020 award.
- OVS will be submitting the application to OVC for the award and anticipate receiving the signed award letter in September 2021.
- Senate Bill No. 611, *VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021*, has not been voted on by the U.S. Senate as of today

Linda Cimino provided an update on the Victim Compensation Unit:

- 995 compensation applications processed in 2017
- 774 compensation applications processed to date in 2021
- New hires include a fifth claims examiner and an office clerk
- At the beginning of the state fiscal year there were 27 SAFEs in the program and 13 SAFEs have resigned by the end of May 2021 primarily due to the negative impact of COVID
- The benefits of on-line training

Valina Carpenter provided an update on the Victim Services Unit:

- VSA Supervisor, Mary Kozicki, has accepted a position with Court Support Services Division (CSSD)
- Most of the victim services advocates have returned to their offices in the courts
- Working on the backlog of protective orders cases
- The benefits to register with CT SAVIN and the efforts to spread this information through training and media

6. Roundtable discussion on how COVID-19 has impacted victim service delivery including vaccination rollout in Connecticut (continued)

Melissa Farley reported:

- The Judicial Branch will continue to use remote technology wherever possible to promote efficiencies
- Jessica Pizzano reported that Survivors of Homicide advocates have been attending hearings in the courts

7. New Business

- Susan Omilian reported on the Avenging Angels Workshops.
- Jessica Pizzano reported that Survivors of Homicide received a grant from the Petit Family foundation to host a victim-centered training for law enforcement, members of the criminal justice system, and providers.

8. Adjournment

Susan adjourned the meeting at 3:10 p.m.

Jean M. Weisbrod, Recorder