

**MINUTES**  
**Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime**  
**March 20, 2007**

The Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime met at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, in the fourth floor conference room on Tuesday, March 20, 2007 from 2:10 p.m. to 3:46 p.m.

**Members in Attendance:**

Judge Patrick L. Carroll, Steve Eppler-Epstein, Fernando Betancourt, Joseph Bibisi, Larry Bostrom, Chester Brodnicki, GERALYN O'Neil-Wild for Lisa Holden, Nancy Kushins, and Kevin Lawlor

**Members Excused or Absent:**

Cheryl Burack, Larry D'Orsi, John Duffey, Janice Heggie Margolis, Neil O'Leary, and Jan VanTassel

**OVS Staff Present:**

Linda J. Cimino, Jamey L. Harris, David Burr, James Morgan, and Brenda Jordan

**Guest:**

Stephen Ment

**Agenda:**

1. Welcome and Introductions

Steve Eppler-Epstein welcomed members and called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. Steve called for a motion to amend the agenda to allow Mr. Louis Sorrentino, an attendee from the public, to speak for five minutes before Council members on matters relating to his personal victimization. Upon motion and second, the amendment to the agenda was unanimously approved.

Steve informed Mr. Sorrentino that the Council would not discuss the matter brought before them.

Two documents outlining the matters Mr. Sorrentino sought to address were distributed to members. Council members and OVS staff introduced themselves.

Mr. Sorrentino began by informing Council members that he was a licensed drug and alcohol counselor and a claimant of the Office of Victim Services (OVS). He remarked that as a claimant, he has an obligation to return two-thirds of the compensation received from the OVS Compensation Program if he recovers funds in a civil judgment. He added that OVS has an interest in recovery, as well, and sought assistance in expanding the services of OVS to provide assistance to victims in recovering monetary losses from the offender.

The second issue Mr. Sorrentino brought before the Council was a proposed amendment to extend the statute of limitations to thirty-five years for victims of sexual assault to pursue civil litigation from the offender, which would include victims such as he, who were excluded from the 2002 statute.

Steve extended sympathy on behalf of the Council to Mr. Sorrentino for his injuries and asked Council members if they had any questions.

Kevin Lawlor sought clarification from Mr. Sorrentino on his expectation of how OVS could assist him. Mr. Sorrentino replied that OVS services should be expanded to include legal assistance to victims in collecting judgments.

Joe Bibisi sought more information regarding the difficulty Mr. Sorrentino was experiencing in obtaining legal representation in his pursuit of the trust fund and provided suggestions to Mr. Sorrentino.

Steve thanked Mr. Sorrentino and suggested that if Council had suggestions or ideas to forward them to Mr. Sorrentino. Mr. Sorrentino then left the meeting.

Fernando Betancourt inquired how Council will address the issues raised by Mr. Sorrentino. Steve responded that the issue will be placed on the next agenda.

2. Review and Approval of the January 16, 2007 Meeting Minutes

Steve asked for a motion to accept the minutes of January 16, 2007, as presented. The motion was moved and seconded, and the minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

3. Update – OVS Compensation Program Issues

Stephen Ment updated the Council on the status of the Judicial Branch's submitted request to increase appropriations to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF): Governor Rell recommended that the State budget include a one-time infusion of \$900,000 to the CICF. The request for a \$600,000 allocation for both years of the budgetary cycle was not included. The issue was discussed before the Appropriations and Judiciary Committees. The preliminary outcome will not be known until April.

Steve sought a vote and members unanimously agreed that a supporting letter from the Council would be submitted to the Appropriation chairs.

Kevin Lawlor inquired if a discussion had been held with the Governor or Appropriations Committee about removing the CICF from the State cap, considering that the CICF is not raised from taxpayer dollars. Stephen responded that the Office of Fiscal Analysis stated that the CICF Fund is considered as an appropriated special revenue fund; these types of funds are counted towards the State-wide spending cap.

Linda distributed an updated illustration on the financial position of the Program (page three of the *Call to Action: Crisis in Compensation* report), which she reviewed with members.

Linda stated at the end of February, the total obligations exceed the remaining budget by \$458,510. Linda anticipates that the \$900,000 infusion of funds should be received mid-July, but by year end, the financial situation may be worse than last year.

Linda informed Council members that due to an increase in telephone calls from claimants inquiring as to when payments will be received, the award letter was revised to include that payment made take up to ninety days as a result of a high demand for funds. The letter is expected to be in production tomorrow.

Linda reported that on Monday, March 26, 2007, she will meet with Judge Lavery, External Affairs, and Executive Director Joseph D'Alesio to discuss the change in loss of support benefits to survivors of homicide victims.

Linda explained that in order to meet current and future obligations, changing the percentage of benefits is necessary. From October 1, 2006, when a proposal to change benefits was introduced, to February 28, 2007, OVS received twenty-nine applications from surviving family members. Sixty claimants were associated with those applications. The cost of the applications at the current benefit level is \$725,000 and with the proposed benefit level the cost would be \$445,000, reducing expenses by \$280,000.

Linda reported that Raised Bill No. 7234 seeks to amend 54-201 (2) (1) to allow OVS to pay eighty-five percent of the expenses actually and reasonably incurred as a result of personal injury or death.

Kevin inquired if the amount of money coming in to the Fund is greater than the amount of money coming out.

Jim Morgan responded yes: \$2.1 to \$2.2 million a year is received from the State and \$850,000-\$900,000 a year in Federal dollars.

Members continued to discuss possible shortfalls and bottleneck issues. Members unanimously agreed that the next agenda include a presentation on the CICF and discuss three different issues:

1. how to strike the balance; maximize number assisted; identify and address gaps
2. minimize delay
3. explore possibilities in eliminating bottleneck

4. FOIC and Public Access Task Force Requirements

Linda distributed a copy of a memo, dated March 7, 2007, that she had written to Council members regarding the Freedom of Information Commission and Public Access Task Force Requirements. Members discussed the recommendations as applied to the Council, including posting the meeting agenda on the Judicial Branch website four days prior to the meeting, posting minutes one week after meeting, and maintaining a binder at OVS Central Office with Council agendas and minutes.

5. OVS Update

Linda introduced David Burr, who joined OVS staff in February as a program manager of the Compensation Unit and Monitoring Unit. David provided Council members with a brief career history. Linda reported that:

- Jim Morgan will manage the Fiscal Unit.
- Program Manager Jamey Harris and Victim Services Supervisor Sue Pakele interviewed candidates for a vacant victim services advocate position in the Waterbury GA.

- The Victim Services Unit is in the processes of implementing a new statistical project that will be effective April 1, 2007.
- Temporary staff, Tedrick Snipes, was hired to fill in for the vacant office clerk position and accounting clerk position while the accounting clerk is out on leave.
- Interviews were held for the office clerk position, but the position was not offered.
- During a ten day period, Linda met with all OVS staff individually to solicit their opinion on three questions: How are you? How has OVS changed in the past two years? Where should OVS direct its efforts in the next three to five years? A summary report will be presented to staff in June during a staff appreciation day.
- On April 9, 2007, OVS will host a subcontractor meeting to discuss changes OVS is considering as well as seeking input on the RFP and contracting documents.
- Linda will attend the Extending Project Passport meeting in Boston.
- The OVS Open House has been rescheduled to April 4, 2007, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Jamey Harris reported that OVS is sponsoring an advanced workshop on Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy on June 15, 2007. OVS developed promotional materials for national crime victims' rights week that will be distributed to a variety of forums.

Jim distributed and explained a summary of the court collections for the CICF. He also provided Council members with the following funding information:

- The October 1, 2006, VOCA grant allotment was posted March 19, 2007
- An \$889,000 compensation grant will be available September 2007
- The VOCA Assistance Grant has not been finalized yet
- The 2007/2008 OVS contracts will receive a three percent cost of living increase on their federal award
- State contracting dollars will maintain at the current level until the state budget is approved

#### 6. Update 2007 Legislative Initiatives

Nancy Kushins reported that Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNACS) is supporting legislation to allow sexual assault victims access to emergency contraceptives at every hospital.

Chet Brodnicki reported that non-profit agencies are advocating a task force of non-profits to look at the issue of inequity of funding in the non-profit arena.

Kevin reported that the State's Attorney's Office legislation recommendations include comprehensive improvements of sex offender laws, investigative subpoenas, and gun violence legislation.

Fernando Betancourt reported that the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) are supporting legislation for funding of court interpreters, health care, and in-state tuition. More information on the LPRAC legislative agendas may be found at <http://www.cga.ct.gov/lprac/Legislative%20Priorities.htm>.

Larry Bostrom reported that Survivors of Homicide is lobbying Bill 708 to establish a violent offender registry.

Geralyn O'Neil-Wild remarked that the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) testified at a hearing on funding for twenty-four hour domestic violence shelters. CCADV is supporting legislation that defines assault by strangulation as a felony, and that household pets of domestic violence victims are protected under the restraining and protective orders.

Steve reported that Connecticut Legal Services is supporting universal access to health care.

7. New Business

Larry Bostrom informed Council members that the Melanie Ilene Rieger Memorial Conference will be held April 18-19, 2007, and will be co-sponsored by OVS.

Chet Brodnicki distributed a save-the-date flyer of the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Builders of Hope Breakfast that will be held on May 16, 2007, 7:30 a.m., at the New Haven Lawn Club.

Kevin requested that the illustration of the financial position of the Compensation Program include how much is currently in the CICF and how much is added to the CICF per fiscal year to measure how much is coming out of the CICF.

Steve called for a motion to adjourn the meeting; the meeting was adjourned at 3:46 p.m.

Brenda Jordan, Recorder