

OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES
BIENNIAL ACTIVITIES REPORT

October 1, 2017 - September 30, 2019



Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
Pursuant to Section 54-203(b) (16) of the Connecticut General Statutes



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH

CHAMBERS OF
PATRICK L. CARROLL III
CHIEF COURT ADMINISTRATOR

231 CAPITOL AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06106

January 15, 2020

Senator Gary A. Winfield, Co-Chair
Representative Steven J. Stafstrom, Co-Chair
Members of the Judiciary Committee

It is my pleasure to present this report outlining the activities of the Office of Victim Services for the biennium October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2019. This document is submitted in compliance with Connecticut General Statutes § 54-203 (b) (16).

I hope that you find this report helpful. Please let me know if I can provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrick L. Carroll III".

Patrick L. Carroll III, Judge
Chief Court Administrator

PLC: sw

c: Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson
Hon. Elizabeth A. Bozzuto, Deputy Chief Court Administrator
Tais C. Ericson, Executive Director, Superior Court Operations
Linda J. Cimino, Director, Office of Victim Services

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Office of Victim Services

Focusing on a brighter future

Historical Overview

On January 9, 2019, the Office of Victim Services (OVS), the state's lead agency dedicated to providing services to victims of violent crime, recognized its 40th anniversary. In honor of this milestone, OVS hosted an event held at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford on January 8, 2019.

At the event, victims spoke about their experiences with OVS programs and services, leaders from OVS contracted agencies shared how OVS grant funding supports the victims they serve, and OVS Director Linda J. Cimino provided a legislative historical overview of OVS. To reflect the breadth and growth of OVS services these past 40 years, a brief historical overview is included throughout this biennial report.

In 1978, Connecticut legislators unanimously passed Public Act 78-261, An Act Relating to Compensation for Innocent Victims of Crime or the Dependents of Such Victims, which established the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (Board). The Board's sole legislative purpose was to compensate victims or their dependents for crime related expenses. The Board established an office on Washington Street in Hartford and began assisting crime victims on January 9, 1979.

In 1983, the Board's responsibilities expanded to allow for the application, receipt, allocation, and disbursement of grant funds to support the provision of services to victims of crime in communities throughout the state.

Services to crime victims were enhanced in 1986 with the legislative creation of a statewide victim advocate program. The victim advocate program consisted of court-based victim advocates who provided emotional support and assistance to crime victims in their journey through the criminal justice system.

This report is dedicated to the crime victims OVS served throughout the years; judicial, executive, and legislative leaders; community, state, and federal partners; victim service providers; and past and present OVS staff who have been vital in our success and growth.

Their dedication, commitment, and efforts have made it possible for OVS to become the multi-facet agency that it is today.

Biennial Highlights

- OVS released nine educational videos that provide information on OVS services, the criminal court process, and orders of protection. These videos, which premiered during the OVS 40th Anniversary event, are posted on the Judicial Branch YouTube page and on various OVS Web pages.
- OVS Director Linda J. Cimino recorded a voice-over for an OVS public service announcement that aired during this biennium on radio stations WLIS 1420-AM Old Saybrook/New London and WMRD 1150-AM Middletown/Hartford.

In response to the continued growth, the Board was legislatively renamed as the Commission on Victim Services (COVS) in 1987, which better reflected the direct services provided.

Additional legislation also passed in that year which established the Information Clearinghouse, a central repository of information for crime victims; a telephone helpline that provided crime victims with information on referrals to appropriate services; and directed COVS to meet with legislators, state agencies, and victim groups to assess and coordinate programs affecting victims. To accomplish the latter, COVS implemented the Victim Services Coordinating Council (VSCC), assisting COVS in eliminating victim barriers and improving services for crime victims.

COVS transferred from the Executive Branch to the Judicial Branch and renamed the Office of Victim Services (OVS) under Public Act 93-310, An Act Concerning Victim Services.

This movement gave OVS a unique position within the criminal justice system including access to meet its statutory compensation, advocacy, and training mandates. This Act also eliminated the formal name of the VSCC and made changes to its appointing authorities, membership, and responsibilities.

The 2000s brought the expansion of advocacy services to victims navigating the pardons and paroles process; the creation of the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) Program to provide

standardized, compassionate sexual assault forensic examination services at participating health care facilities to victims of sexual assault; support for applicants seeking a civil protection order; and expanded the types of victim notification and the persons eligible.

OVS also began utilizing the latest technology to remove access barriers and to improve service delivery. This technology included creating online, fillable victim compensation applications that could be emailed directly to the Victim Compensation Program, as well as utilizing social media platforms, such as Twitter and YouTube, to provide information to victims, service providers, and the public.

Under the leadership of OVS Director Cimino, a new logo, slogan, and theme were developed in 2001. The logo, a sunrise with a heart in its center

and the slogan *Focusing on a brighter future* conveys hope and support to crime victims.



OVS continues to have an important role in a crime victim's journey through the criminal justice system,

as OVS is the one agency that can be involved with a crime victim throughout the entire process. OVS offers services directly and indirectly to crime victims while collaborating with other victim service providers and criminal justice agencies to provide seamless services.

This report provides a brief historical overview of OVS services and programs, the initiatives, activities, and special projects during this reporting period, as well as quotes from crime victims, survivors, and service providers who interacted with OVS staff, benefited from the services offered, or attended OVS trainings. Their words from surveys, letters, and thank you notes reflect the quality of services provided and the value the services hold for crime victims.

**Quote from the Honorable
Elizabeth A. Bozzuto, Deputy Chief Court
Administrator, 40th Anniversary Event**

[OVS staff] "are the voice for the less heard, support for the vulnerable, and the light in a time of darkness."

Crime Victim Compensation

Focusing on a brighter future

Historical Overview

In 1978, Connecticut legislators unanimously passed Public Act 78-261, An Act Relating to Compensation for Innocent Victims of Crime or the Dependents of Such Victims, which established the Victim Compensation Program, its funding stream the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund, and established the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (Board), charged with implementing and managing the Program. The Board, an autonomous agency, was placed under the Office of Policy and Management for administrative purposes.

In the first year of operation, the Board received 82 applications and issued eight determinations totaling \$9,499 from which \$3,957 in compensation was paid.

To reflect the growth of services, Public Act 87-554, An Act Concerning Compensation and Assistance of Crime Victims, renamed the Board as the Commission on Victims Services (COVS). In 1993, Public Act 93-310, An Act Concerning Victim Services, replaced COVS with the Office of Victim Services and placed it within the Judicial Branch. Throughout the years, numerous legislative initiatives passed that continued to expand the coverage of crimes, victims, and expenses eligible for victim compensation, as well as eliminating or reducing access barriers.

During the past 40 years, more than \$84 million dollars in victim compensation was paid to approximately 30,000 claimants.

The Victim Compensation Program offers financial help to victims; family members of homicide, sexual assault, and domestic violence victims; child witnesses of domestic violence; and other eligible persons for certain unreimbursed expenses associated with violent crime.

Biennial Highlights

- Public Act 17-99, An Act Concerning Court Operations, Victim Services, Fraudulent Filings and Transfers of an Interest in Real Property to a Trust, granted OVS the right to waive the consideration of health insurance as a collateral source in certain situations, required health care providers to suspend the debt collection process for expenses in which there is a pending victim compensation claim, and increased the number of victims eligible for victim compensation by expanding the types of injuries, crimes, and situations under which a victim may qualify, including:
 - compensation to victims who suffered an emotional injury from a threat of either physical injury or death and received treatment,
 - compensation to Connecticut residents who are injured or killed in a country that does not have a crime victim compensation program for which the victim is eligible and the crime would be eligible for victim compensation in Connecticut,
 - expanded the definition of relative to include aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews, and
 - reimbursement to injured victims and their relatives for the costs associated with attending court proceedings related to the crime that resulted in the victims' injuries.
- There was a 63% increase in the number of applications received in comparison to the 2015-2017 biennium, which is attributed the passing of Public Act 17-99.
- Effective October 1, 2018, OVS increased the funeral reimbursement benefit from \$5,000 to \$6,000.

Funding

OVS receives state and federal funding to compensate eligible persons for unreimbursed crime related expenses.

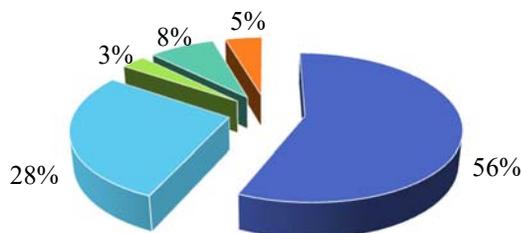
The Connecticut General Assembly allocates funds from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF). Deposits into the CICF are specified in the Connecticut General Statutes and include:

- defendants' contributions (Section 54-56h),
- court fines and fees (Sections 54-143, 15-140p, 53a-217e, and 54-56g),
- five percent of inmate work-release wages (Section 18-85),
- halfway house client wages (Section 18-101), and
- escheated funds collected pursuant to Section 53a-30 (Section 54-215(b)).

CICF Contributions

October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2019
Total Revenues: \$6,004,532

- Defendant's contributions
- Court fines and fees
- Compensation Program subrogation recoveries
- Escheated funds¹
- Other²



¹Escheated funds are restitution funds collected by the Court Support Services Division that have not been distributed within five years because the victim could not be located.

²Other category includes halfway house client wages, five percent of Department of Correction inmate work-release wages, Victim Compensation Program reimbursements from court, private donations, and investment interest.

Victim quote on the services received from the Victim Compensation Program

“This is a good program because it not only helps families but keeps them together.”

OVS also receives federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Compensation funds. Fiscal administration of these funds is managed by the Fiscal Services Unit.

The following table reflects the statistics as reported to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, in compliance with the VOCA requirements for this biennium.

VOCA State Performance Report

October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2019

Applications received	3,535
Applications approved ¹	2,456
Applications not meeting eligibility criteria ¹	412

¹Decisions on applications may occur in a year different than the year received.

Payments by Crime Type

Homicide	2,289,792
Assault	1,819,021
Child abuse	514,839
Sexual assault	314,397
DWI/DUI	38,848
Other vehicular crimes	126,033
Arson	2,528
Robbery with injury	25,069
Human trafficking	2,893
Stalking	4,655
Kidnapping	265

Total \$5,138,340

Expenses Paid

Economic Support (lost wages and loss of support)	2,196,682
Medical/dental	1,331,527
Funeral/burial	678,733
Mental health	867,433
Other (replacement services, crime scene cleanup, and travel)	63,965

Total \$5,138,340

Victim Compensation Program Activity

The Victim Compensation Program may grant victim compensation on eligible claims for unreimbursed crime-related expenses not covered or eligible to be covered by other financial sources.

Eligible crime-related expenses include the costs for medical and mental health care, lost wages, expenses associated with attending court proceedings related to the crime, funeral expenses, and crime scene cleanup.

Victim compensation claims filed by dependents and relatives of an eligible crime victim are processed as part of the crime victim's claim and may not exceed the maximum compensation allowed by state law.

During this biennium, the maximum compensation allowed for physical injury claims was \$15,000, \$25,000 for survivor benefits claims, and \$5,000 to a victim who sought treatment as a result of an emotional injury resulting from either the threat of physical injury or death.

Effective October 1, 2017, Public Act 17-99 expanded the types of crimes, injuries, and situations under which a victim may qualify for victim compensation, including:

- victims of human trafficking, child abuse, domestic violence, and certain sexual assaults who disclose the injury to a professional in existing law, in lieu of reporting the crime to law enforcement,
- increasing the time from 72 hours to 120 hours in which a sexual assault victim may go to a health care facility for a sexual assault forensic examination, in lieu of reporting the crime to law enforcement,
- persons who have a disability and owns or keeps a service animal that was killed during a crime (prior law limited compensation to a guide or assistance dog injured during a crime),
- one bereavement week of salary loss for the parent or guardian of a homicide victim,
- crimes involving the operation of a water vessel, snow mobile, or all-terrain vehicle operated by someone under the influence of alcohol or drugs

(prior law limited compensation to crimes committed with motor vehicles),

- persons who paid some or all of the crime scene clean-up expenses, and
- requiring victims' attorneys to communicate with providers about outstanding balances and to ensure payment to providers as documented by OVS.

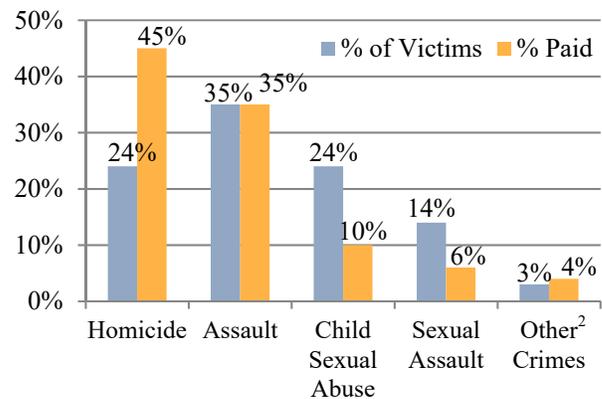
During this biennium, \$5,138,340 in victim compensation was paid on 2,367 claims for expenses associated with medical and mental health care, lost wages for personal injury victims, funeral and burial expenses, loss of support, and lost wages to attend court proceedings.

Payments by Crime Type

October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2019

Total Claims Paid: 2,367

Total Paid: \$5,138,340¹



¹Payments on applications may occur in a year different than the year the application was received.

²Other crimes include DWI/DUI, other vehicular crimes, and human trafficking.

Victim quote on the services received from the Victim Compensation Program

"[Compensation staff] have been so kind to me from the start; the experience with them helped me to heal. I am forever grateful."

Victim quote on the services received from the Victim Compensation Program

“My daughter is grateful with the [financial] support to attend the summer camp and the neighborhood music school, as it helps her with her trauma.”

Compromised Claims

The Victim Compensation Program’s claims examiners advocate on behalf of claimants whose approved claim has medical expenses that exceed the statutory maximum compensation allowed. The claims examiners will negotiate with medical providers to reduce the amount owed and to accept the amount to be paid by the Victim Compensation Program as payment in full.

During this biennium, claimants saved more than \$1.3 million in potential expenses from the Program’s efforts to compromise claims.

Filing-time Requirement

Section 54-211 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires a person seeking victim compensation to file a victim compensation application within two years from the date of the personal injury or death.

OVS may grant a waiver of the two-year filing requirement if:

- the claimant was a minor at the time of the criminal incident, or
- the physical, emotional, or psychological injuries resulting from the crime prevented the claimant from filing on time.

During this biennium, 395 requests to waive the two-year filing requirement were received with 379 requests granted.

Recovery Program

Section 54-212 of the Connecticut General Statutes allows OVS to apply a lien, not to exceed two-thirds of the amount paid by OVS, if a claimant brings an action against the person or persons

responsible for such injury or death or if the claimant recovers monies from his or her own collateral sources.

Section 54-215(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes allows OVS to recover full reimbursement of the victim compensation granted if the court orders restitution to a claimant for the compensation paid, unless the court orders differently.

During this biennium, more than \$325,000 was recovered from court-ordered restitution and settlements.

Review of Determination

Section 54-205 (b) of the Connecticut General Statutes grants claimants the right to request a review of the determination made by the Victim Compensation Program on their claim for victim compensation. Claimants must file the review request within 30 days from the date the determination was mailed.

Victim Compensation Commissioners

Section 54-202 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires the governor appoints five Victim Compensation Commissioners (VCC) to a four-year term to hear review requests on Victim Compensation Program determinations and to issue new decisions based on such reviews.

The following attorneys served as VCCs during this biennium:

- Atty. Joseph W. Bibisi, chief victim compensation commissioner (appointed by the Chief Court Administrator),
- Atty. Seth D. Feigenbaum,
- Atty. Lisa K. MacDonald (retired January 2019), and
- Atty. Louis A. Spadaccini.

During this biennium, VCCs heard 34 review requests and issued 25 decisions. Thirteen of those decisions affirmed the determination made by the Victim Compensation Program, while 12 determinations were reversed by the VCCs. Review determinations may occur in a year different from the year the review request was received.

Fiscal Services

Focusing on a brighter future

Historical Overview

In 1983, Public Act 83-341, An Act Concerning the Assistance of Victims by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, authorized the Office of Victim Services (OVS), formerly the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, to apply, receive, allocate, disburse and account for grant funds from outside sources for the delivery of victim services. Two years later, Public Act 85-609, An Act Concerning Creation of a Statewide Victim Assistance Program, established the Technical Assistance Fund, which provided funding to OVS to contract with private and nonprofit organizations for individual and group services to crime victims. United Social and Mental Health Services (USMHS) was the first contractor to receive an award from this Fund. In 1986, USMHS received \$40,000 to provide victim advocacy services in Windham County and counseling services for crime victims, survivors of homicide victims, and victims of child sexual abuse and their families in the northeastern region of the state.

Throughout OVS's 40-year history, more than \$134 million has been awarded to non-profit and community-based agencies for advocacy, counseling, and other direct services to crime victims.

Public Act 92-153, An Act Concerning the Commission on Victim Services, eliminated the Technical Assistance Fund; however, the Act allowed for the continuation of contracted services. OVS receives state and federal funding for contracted services with nonprofit and community-based agencies to provide information and services to victims of violent crimes and their families. Through the funding of these organizations, crime victims and their family members receive criminal justice support and advocacy, crisis counseling, therapy, individual, and group treatment and support, personal advocacy, referrals, and assistance with filing victim compensation applications.

Biennial Highlights

- In Fiscal Year 2017-2018, OVS issued a request for proposals to expand services to adult victims of sexual assault. Three new programs were added under this solicitation. New services included legal assistance for adult victims of sexual assault, counseling services for adult victims of sexual assault in Litchfield County, and case management and counseling services to adult victims of sexual assault who are currently incarcerated at the York Correctional Facility.
- As a result of a \$16 million increase in the 2018 VOCA Victim Assistance Grant, OVS issued a request for proposals for services to crime victims. The funds will be used to support an additional 15 new programs in the next biennium, with continued or increased funding to 27 existing programs.
- A court planner was hired in August 2018 to assist with subcontractor monitoring.
- In August 2018, the Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Justice, released its Audit of the Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime, Victim Assistance Formula Grants Awarded to the Connecticut Judicial Branch Hartford Connecticut. The purpose of the audit was to evaluate the design and implementation of the crime victim assistance program. The audit contained no recommendations and found that through OVS's periodic site visits and testing, the Connecticut Judicial Branch decreased the risk of its sub-recipients inaccurately reporting performance data.

Funding

OVS’s primary source of federal funding is the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which provides funds for the Victim Assistance Program, the Victim Assistance Discretionary Grant Training Program, and the Victim Compensation Program.

In addition to the federal VOCA funds, OVS receives state funding to support programs such as victim advocacy services in domestic violence dockets and sex offender supervision units, staff support for the statewide Spanish-language domestic violence hotline, counseling for family members of homicide victims, and shelter services to victims of human trafficking.

Summary of OVS Revenues by Funding Source

July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2019

Federal Awards	
Victims of Crime Act Victim Assistance	56,856,742
Victims of Crime Act Victim Assistance Discretionary Grant Training Program ¹	89,224
Victims of Crime Act Victim Compensation	1,952,000
Total Federal Funds Awarded	\$58,897,966
State Funds	
Alternative Incarceration Program	1,268,000
Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund	
Victim Compensation	4,050,000
Contracted Services	1,928,915
Forensic Sex Evidence Exams Account	
Forensic Evidence Collection	1,902,020
Forensic Interview Reimbursement	300,000
Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners	394,000
Victim Assistance Contracted Services	414,123
Victim Security Account	12,000
Total State Funds Awarded	\$10,269,058
Total Funding	\$69,167,024

¹Multi-year carryover funding

Victim Assistance Program

The VOCA Victim Assistance Program provides funding to community-based victim service agencies to provide services at no cost to crime victims and includes:

- direct services to crime victims,
- improving victims’ access to services, and
- increasing victims’ knowledge of the criminal justice system.

During this biennium, OVS issued contracts under the Victim Assistance Program totaling \$43,576,905 to 55 nonprofit victim services agencies, who provided services to 177,268 crime victims.

These funded agencies are in each of Connecticut’s eight counties. The cities of Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, Stamford, and Waterbury have multiple programs that assist crime victims.

Types of Services Supported by Grant Funds

During this biennium, VOCA funds were used by subcontracting agencies to provide crime victims with a variety of services.

The largest percentage of awarded funds were used for advocacy based programs; however, OVS provided funding for therapy programs for adults and children, legal aid programs for legal assistance in criminal and civil courts, on-scene crisis response for child victims of crime, and translation and interpreting services for non-English speaking crime victims.

Advocacy programs provided services to victims in courts, shelters, specific towns and neighborhoods, and on a statewide basis using regional offices. These programs provided victims with crisis counseling, safety planning, assistance with basic needs, assistance with completing applications for victim compensation, information and referral to other social service agencies, assistance in court, and translation and interpreting services.

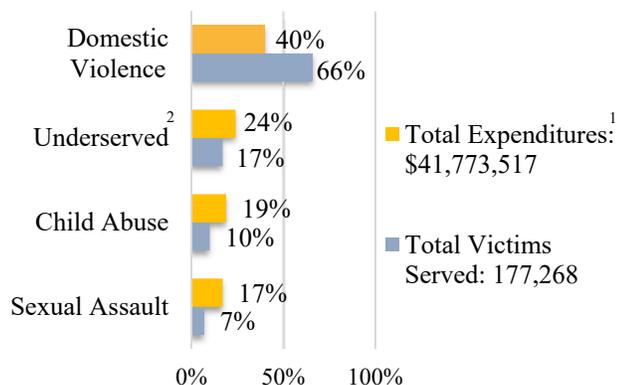
Victim quote on the services received from an OVS subcontracted agency

“I would highly recommend [the subcontracted agency] to others in need because they help you stay safe, stay positive, and stay strong.

OVS also awarded funding to agencies that provided free therapy services to child and adult victims of crime. These services included the initial psychiatric evaluation, individual and group therapy sessions, follow-up, referral to other services, and assistance with completing applications for victim compensation. Most of the programs offered short-term therapy, and if the victim was eligible for victim compensation, the victim could receive additional therapy to be reimbursed or paid for by the Victim Compensation Program.

Grant Funded Priority Categories

July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2019



¹Total expenditures reflect total project expenditures of grant funds and subcontracting agency matching funds. Unexpended grant funds are reallocated in subsequent years for future victim service contracts.

²Underserved represents victims of various crimes including assault, robbery, hate and bias crimes, adults molested as children, DUI/DWI, elder abuse, family members of homicide victims, abuse of vulnerable adults, gang-related crimes, stalking, federal crimes, economic exploitation, and fraud.

Forensic Sex Evidence Exams Account

The Fiscal Services Unit is responsible for processing payments to providers for sexual assault examination and evidence collections. Health care facilities may be reimbursed up to \$900 per case for forensic examination and evidence collection of adult and child victims of sexual assault. Providers or examiners working in conjunction with Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) or Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) may be reimbursed up to \$250 per interview for the forensic interviews of child victims of sexual abuse.

During this biennium, hospitals were reimbursed \$1,832,574 for forensic examination and collection services provided to 829 adult victims and 1,882 child victims of sexual assault. Providers working in conjunction with MDTs and CACs were reimbursed \$420,000 for forensic interviews of 1,675 child victims of sexual abuse.

VOCA Victim Compensation Program

The VOCA Victim Compensation Program matches state funding for reimbursement to crime victims and other eligible persons for crime related expenses not covered by collateral sources. See Victim Compensation Program page 4 for the description of funding.

Victim quote on the services received from an OVS subcontracted agency

"[The subcontracted agency's] social worker supported and helped [my child] stay safe when I am feeling overwhelmed. They helped me through hard times and [I] feel they can do the same for others."

Subcontractor Monitoring

To ensure that grant funds are expended in accordance with the grantor's guidelines, state guidelines, Judicial Branch regulations, as well as OVS policies and procedures, the Fiscal Services Unit provides annual training sessions to current contractors on recordkeeping and reporting requirements. In addition, the Fiscal Services Unit conducts on-site contractor monitoring visits.

The trainings and site visits are designed to ensure that the funded programs operate in accordance with the contract and to provide technical assistance, if needed. During this biennium, 10 training sessions were provided and 29 site visits were conducted.

Subcontractor List

(July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2019)

Assistance Support and Counseling Program

~BHcare, Inc.

Assistance to Survivors of Homicide Program

~Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Hartford
~Family Centers
~Institute of Professional Practice
~United Services

Charlotte's Place - Child Abuse Program

~Charlotte-Hungerford Hospital Center for Youth and Families

Child Abuse Treatment Services

~Klingberg Family Center

Child and Adolescent Crime Victims Assistance Program

~Child Guidance Center of Southern Connecticut

Child First Program

~Village for Families and Children

Child Sexual Abuse Clinic

~Yale University School of Medicine

Community Connections for Survivors Program

~Community Mental Health Affiliates

Community Reintegration for Survivors Program

~Community Mental Health Affiliates

Connecticut Survivor Care Project

~LOVE146

Domestic Violence Project

~LifeBridge Community Services

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Legal Representation Project

~Connecticut Legal Services

Empower Together Project

~Newtown Youth and Family Services

EsperanzaCT - Domestic Violence Program

~Domestic Violence Crisis Center

Greater Hartford Childrens' Advocacy Center Program

~Saint Francis Hospital

Hungerford Hope Program

~Charlotte Hungerford Hospital

Legal Assistance for Adult Victims of Sexual Assault Program

~Victim Rights Center of Connecticut

Neighborhood Victim Advocacy Program

~Family Centered Services of Connecticut

Polish Victim Advocacy Program

~Human Resources Agency of New Britain

Project CATCH (Collaboration, Advocacy, and Treatment for Children)

~Clifford Beers Clinic

Project S.A.V.E (Stop Abuse Violence Empowerment)

~Hartford Behavioral Health

Recovery Services for Child Abuse Victims and Their Families

~Human Services Council

Sandy Hook Recovery

~Clifford Beers Clinic

Sandy Hook Trauma

~Town of Newtown

Services to Victims of Family Violence Court-based Program

~Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Sexual Violence Intervention Services

~Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

Shelter Services to Victims of Trafficking in Persons

~Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Statewide Domestic Violence Spanish Hotline

~Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Victim Assistance Program

~Community Child Guidance Clinic of Manchester
~Mothers Against Drunk Driving, CT Chapter
~The Hospital of Central Connecticut
~Wellmore

Victim Representative Services for Statewide Supervision of Sex Offenders Unit

~Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

Victim Support Service Program

~Survivors of Homicide

Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners

Focusing on a brighter future

Historical Overview

Public Act 09-3, An Act Implementing the Provision of the Budget Concerning Public Health and Making Changes to Various Health Statutes, created a temporary Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) Committee to advise the Office of Victim Services (OVS) on the establishment and implementation of a SAFE Program to provide forensic examination and evidence collection services to victims of sexual assault at participating health care facilities. The SAFE Advisory Committee, under the leadership of OVS Director Linda J. Cimino, named the program after the late Gail Burns-Smith, a pioneer in the field of advocating for sexual assault victims.

On December 2, 2010, the SAFE Program launched on a limited schedule in the Hartford and Windham counties with seven SAFEs and three health care facilities participating. In its first year of operation, more than 160 victims of sexual assault received forensic examination services and three additional health care facilities became contracted SAFE Program sites (currently there are nine participating health care facilities).

In April 2011, SAFE Program operation was expanded to 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The SAFE Advisory Committee, which terminated on June 30, 2012, was reinstated under Public Act 19-114, An Act Concerning Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners to recommend SAFE Program policies and procedures. This Act also expanded the types of health care providers who could become SAFEs and clarified the types of health care facilities where SAFE services may be provided, as well as who may use the SAFE title.

The SAFE Program provides compassionate, patient-centered sexual assault forensic examination services to sexual assault victims, 13 years or older, who present at a participating health care facility within 120 hours of the assault. The SAFE Program also provides specialized training and education to qualified health care providers to perform knowledgeable and skilled medical-forensic examinations, securing the evidence collected (chain of custody), and providing expert testimony during criminal proceedings.

Since launching in 2010, the SAFE Program has provided compassionate, comprehensive forensic examination services to more than 1,600 victims of sexual assault.

Biennial Highlights

- Public Act 17-99, An Act Concerning Court Operations, Victim Services, Fraudulent Filings and Transfers of an Interest in Real Property to a Trust, directed OVS, within available appropriations, to establish a training program for health care professionals in nonparticipating health care facilities on the care and collection of evidence from adolescent and adult victims of sexual violence. The first training sessions were held in 2018.
- In the spring of 2019, the SAFE Program was regranted the IAFN seal of approval for its training program, becoming one of only 17 adult/adolescent SAFE education programs in the nation to meet the revised IAFN Education Guidelines (the IAFN seal of approval was first awarded to the SAFE Program in 2017).
- During this biennium, 53 health care providers were trained as SAFEs, representing 14 hospitals and five satellite emergency departments.

Participating Health Care Facilities

The Judicial Branch has formal agreements with certain health care facilities in the Hartford, Middlesex, New Haven, and Windham counties to serve as designated sites for SAFE Program services.

As a SAFE Program designated site, the health care facilities agree to:

- screen patients for eligibility for SAFE services,
- activate the SAFE Program on-call system for eligible patients,
- have accessible the necessary equipment and supplies for sexual assault forensic examinations,
- maintain a locked refrigerator for the evidence collected,
- provide interpreter services for sexual assault patients who are not proficient in English, and
- perform sexual assault forensic examinations and evidence collection when a SAFE is not available.

During this biennium, the following health care facilities served as SAFE Program designated sites:

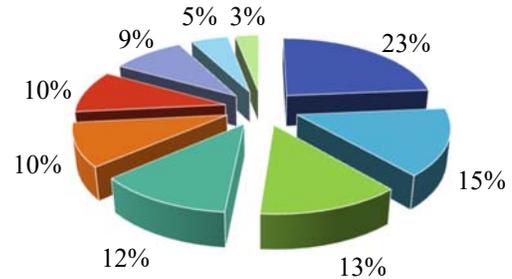
- Connecticut Children’s Medical Center,
- Hartford Hospital,
- Manchester Memorial Hospital,
- Middlesex Hospital,
- MidState Medical Center,
- St Francis Hospital,
- The Hospital of Central Connecticut, New Britain,
- Windham Community Memorial Hospital, and
- University of Connecticut (UConn) Student Health Services, Storrs Campus.

During this biennium, the SAFE Program responded to 362 cases at participating health care facilities.

Case Response by Health Care Facilities

October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2019

Cases: 362



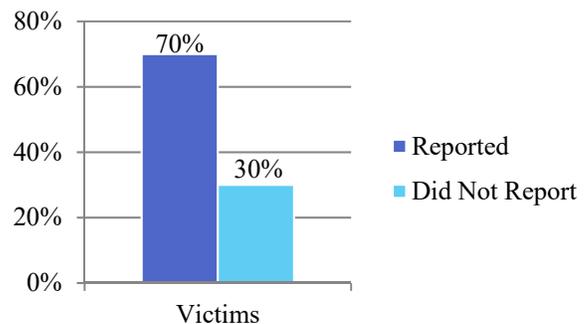
- Hartford Hospital
- Saint Francis Hospital
- Connecticut Children's Medical Center
- The Hospital of Central Connecticut, New Britain
- Manchester Memorial Hospital
- Middlesex Hospital
- MidState Medical Center
- Windham Community Memorial Hospital
- UCONN, Student Health Services

Approximately, 70% of the victims who received SAFE services reported the crime to law enforcement at the time of evidence collection, which is consistent from the last two bienniums in the number of victims reporting.

Sexual Assaults Reported Versus Not Reported to Law Enforcement at Time of Evidence Collection

October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2019

Cases: 362



Collaborative Response

To minimize further trauma to sexual assault victims, the SAFE Program utilizes a coordinated, collaborative response for SAFE Program services.

Responding SAFEs contact a sexual assault counselor from the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence for accompaniment to the SAFE Program designated site.

While SAFEs conduct the medical-forensic examination and collection of evidence in a compassionate manner, the sexual assault crisis counselor supports the victim's emotional and informational needs while providing a personal connection that preserves the victims' confidentiality.

Victim quote on the services received from the SAFE Program

"I am so grateful that the SAFE Program exists. Through all of the stress, they kept me calm and made sure I understood the tests. Although I refused some of the tests, they did not judge me or make me feel uncomfortable."

Training

OVS provides training to qualified health care providers, which enables them to perform knowledgeable and skilled medical-forensic sexual assault examinations and to ensure the integrity, preservation, and documentation of forensic evidence.

Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) Training Program

In the spring of 2019, the SAFE Training Program became one of 17 adult/adolescent training programs nationally to have its curriculum approved by the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) as meeting the IAFN 2018 Education Guidelines. The IAFN is an international, professional organization that

provides leadership in establishing national benchmarks, standards, and best practices in forensic nursing.

The training curriculum was approved by IAFN for 42 Continuing Nursing Education contact hours for SAFEs who successfully complete the didactic component of the training. IAFN is accredited by the American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Accreditation as an accredited approver for continuing education.

The SAFE training curriculum consists of various topics including the dynamics of sexual violence, victim response, victim advocacy services, the collection and handling of evidence, providing court testimony, as well as regulatory issues such as informed consent and confidentiality.

During this biennium, four trainings were held with 53 health care providers successfully completing all training components. A number of these health care providers were awarded contracts with the Judicial Branch to serve as SAFEs in the SAFE Program. Currently, there are 28 SAFEs actively participating in the SAFE Program.

Health Care Facility Trainings

Trainings were conducted at both participating and non-participating health care facilities during this biennium. These training sessions were provided to emergency department staff to increase competency of care to the sexual assault patient.

Quality Assurance Meetings

SAFEs are required to attend monthly quality assurance meetings, which provide continuing education, case review, program updates, and collegial discussion on current issues and practices.

During this biennium, training topics included evidence collection, sexually transmitted infection (STI) and nonoccupational postexposure prophylaxis (nPEP), advanced injury and trauma identification, legislative review, mock trial, law enforcement, strangulation, case review and documentation.

Training and Outreach

Focusing on a brighter future

Historical Overview

Historically, mandated training activities and public outreach at the Office of Victim Services (OVS) were not managed within a dedicated unit. Public outreach activities were accomplished through the efforts of existing administrative staff resources and trainings were coordinated with the assistance of OVS victim services advocates.

In October 2000, a unit was created that encompassed both mandated trainings and public outreach as well as the hiring of a public education and training coordinator (Court Planner). Consolidating both functions into one unit with a dedicated staff member assigned to planning and implementing these activities positioned OVS proactively. In August 2001, the OVS Speakers Bureau, a public speaking training program for OVS staff launched. The creation of the Unit and Speakers Bureau allowed OVS to better plan, identify, and respond to the needs of crime victims, as well as training criminal justice professionals, victim assistance professionals, and educating the public on OVS programs and services and the rights and concerns of Connecticut's crime victims. The Training and Outreach Unit is also responsible for distributing OVS printed materials to support these education and training activities and coordinates professional development activities that increase the knowledge of OVS staff.

Since 2000, more than 28,000 criminal justice professionals, victim assistance professionals, and members from the public attended OVS sponsored trainings or presentation that provided information on OVS programs and services and victims' rights.

The Training and Outreach Unit provides training on the topics of victims' rights, services, and victim responses to crime to three primary audiences:

- the victim assistance community consisting of community-based agencies that provide services to crime victims,
- mandated audiences listed in Section 54-203 (b) (13) of the Connecticut General Statutes (judges; prosecutors; police; probation and parole personnel; bail commissioners; intake, assessment, and referral specialists; correction officers; and judicial marshals), and
- OVS staff.

Biennial Highlights

- The West Hartford Police Department assigned OVS a one-hour time slot during its regional recertification class to provide information on OVS programs and services; previously OVS was allotted 15 to 20 minutes of presentation time, which was held during the time slot of another police department.
- OVS served on the informational panels at the annual Melanie Ilene Rieger Memorial symposiums held during this biennium. The intent of the symposium was to provide information on the services and rights of crime victims in Connecticut.
- In November 2017, OVS sponsored its seventh *Death Notification: Delivering the News with Compassion* workshop, which provided information on delivering compassionate death notification, managing stress, and developing resilience. More than 100 law enforcement personnel and other professionals, who interact with crime victims, attended the workshop.

Training

Mandated Training Activity

During this biennium, the Training and Outreach Unit provided 45 trainings to 1,176 professionals in the criminal justice system. The majority of these trainings were provided to law enforcement, through the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC) Recruit Training Program, police academies, and recertification classes. The information provided to this audience included the impact of crime on victims, law enforcement's role as a first responder to victims, and death notification.

Victim Assistance Community Training

The Training and Outreach Unit coordinates trainings on behalf of OVS program managers.

Each quarter, Training and Outreach staff collaborate with the Fiscal Services Unit on planning and implementing trainings to subcontracted agencies' staff. The training topics include information on OVS services, victims' rights, victim notification, court orders of protection, and testifying at a trial. During this biennium, 957 staff members from subcontracted agencies attended 47 OVS trainings.

Community Education Activity

The Training and Outreach Unit offers a community education program designed to increase victim service providers and the public's awareness of the rights and services available to crime victims.

Presentations

During this biennium, community education activities included 88 presentations on OVS services and victim-related topics to 2,359 individuals from various community groups, such as sexual assault crisis centers, domestic violence programs, and senior centers, as well as high school and college students.

Resource Tables

The Training and Outreach Unit staffed resource tables at various venues to distribute OVS materials and to raise awareness about OVS services.

OVS subcontracting staff quote from an OVS subcontractor training

"[OVS Trainer] was engaging and knowledgeable and made the information easy to comprehend. Super mindful about language and sensitivity."

During this biennium, OVS provided information at seven professional conferences, health fairs, college fairs, and other community events.

Distribution of OVS Materials

During this biennium, more than 66,000 copies of OVS materials were distributed to police departments, courthouses, law libraries, community-based programs, hospitals, and other service providers throughout the state.

Staff Development

The Training and Outreach Unit coordinates staff activities and trainings that meet OVS goals and values and develops core competencies and specialized work-related knowledge.

Staff Training

During this biennium, OVS staff attended 168 in-service and Judicial Branch trainings and 42 external trainings that included courses on leadership skill building, Limited English Proficiency, cultural competence, computer-based programs, domestic violence, sex offender management, elder abuse, and child sexual abuse.

Staff Recognition

The Training and Outreach Unit facilitates the Staff Recognition Committee, which organizes two annual staff appreciation days that promote staff engagement, personal development, teamwork, and staff recognition.

During these events, staff recognition awards were presented to nine OVS staff for their dedication, exceptional service, and efforts to contribute to the OVS mission.

Victim Services

Focusing on a brighter future

Historical Overview

The Office of Victim Services (OVS) has a long and proud history of providing advocacy, notification, referrals, and information to crime victims and their family members as they navigate the criminal justice system. As early as 1981, OVS (formerly the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board) was actively funding victim advocates to provide information on the services available to crime victims, and in 1983 was legislatively authorized (Public Act 83-341) to utilize grant funds to provide these advocacy services.

In 1985, Public Act 85-609, An Act Concerning Creation of a Statewide Victim Assistance Program, established an advocacy program within the agency. This program launched in September 1986 with six victim advocates (VSA). In the first three months of operation, more than 600 crime victims and their family members received services.

Two years later, Public Act 87-514, An Act Concerning Victim Rights, created the OVS Helpline, removing an access barrier that required victims to come to OVS or to court for advocacy services. Advocacy services expanded in 1997 with the assignment of a VSA at the Juvenile Matters, New Haven court; in 2008 with the assignment of two full-time VSAs at the Board of Pardons and Paroles; and in 2014 with the assignment of VSAs to assist applicants during the civil protection order process (Public Act 14-217).

A significant advancement in victim notification was the automation of the process using a computer-controlled system. The first computerized effort was the Post-conviction Victim Notification system (Public Act 91-389), followed by the Protection Order Registry (Public Act 92-153), and later the Connecticut Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (CT SAVIN) Program (Public Acts 06-100 and 08-1). All of these programs are still operational under OVS and provide timely, confidential notification to victims, who choose to be notified.

As crime victims often are not familiar with the workings of the criminal, juvenile, and civil justice systems, the OVS Victim Services Program is an important resource that assists victims through all stages of the process.

In the past 40 years, more than:

- 650,000 CT SAVIN notifications were provided,
- 455,000 notification letters generated from the Protective Order Registry,
- 168,000 victims received criminal justice support and advocacy, and
- 50,000 victims contacted the OVS Helpline for information.

Biennial Highlights

- During this biennium, seven VSAs retired and two VSAs were hired to provide advocacy services to crime victims during the criminal justice process.
- Public Act 17-99, An Act Concerning Court Operations, Victim Services, Fraudulent Filings and Transfers of an Interest in Real Property to a Trust, provided VSAs with independent access to police reports required for VSAs to perform their responsibilities and duties.
- In 2018, a VSA received the Mothers Against Drunk Driving victim assistance award for their dedication in providing quality services to victims of intoxicated drivers.
- In August 2019, an enhanced version of the Connecticut Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (CT SAVIN) Program was released. This enhanced version includes an interactive website, text notifications, and the ability for registrants to manage their own registration information online.

Victim Services Advocacy Program

The Victim Services Unit has VSAs assigned to Judicial District courthouses throughout the state, the Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP), and the Helpline to respond to the expanding needs of crime victims within the criminal, juvenile, and civil justice systems.

As crime victims often are not familiar with the workings of the criminal, juvenile, and civil justice systems, OVS VSAs are uniquely positioned to assist them through all of the stages of the process. VSAs serve as a liaison with criminal justice personnel and ensure that crime victims understand their rights at each proceeding, as well as accompany crime victims to proceedings and assist with the delivery of victim impact statements.

The duties and responsibilities of VSAs, outlined in Section 54-220 of the Connecticut General Statutes are to:

- provide initial screening of each personal injury case,
- assist victims in the preparation of victim impact statements,
- notify victims of their rights and request that each victim attest to the fact of such notification of rights,
- provide information and advice to victims in order to assist victims in exercising their rights throughout the criminal justice process,
- direct victims to public and private agencies for services,
- coordinate victim compensation applications to OVS, and
- assist victims in the processing of restitution requests.

Court-based Advocacy

During this biennium, court-based VSAs assisted more than 30,000 crime victims. In addition to assisting crime victims through the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems, VSAs provided assistance and support to civil protection order applicants. This assistance included helping applicants file civil protection order applications and providing information and support during the process.

Victim quote on services received from the Victim Services Advocacy Program

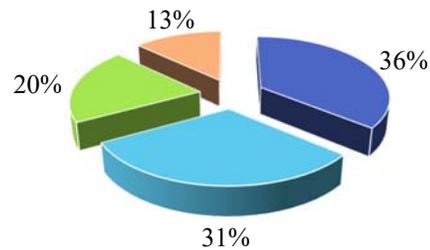
“... thank you for taking the time to speak to me about our case. It meant so much to me that you wanted me to feel comfortable and be informed. This has been such a tough few months ... You made me feel like my questions are valid, but more importantly, you made my daughter feel like her voice matters.”

Court-based Advocacy Services

October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2019

Number of new and ongoing victims served: 30,853

Total services provided: 46,495



- Safety Planning
- Referrals
- Victim Impact Statement
- Court Escort

More than half of a court-based VSA's quarterly caseload is related to the ongoing criminal justice support provided to victims of offenders who have a pending case.

During this biennium, this support included assisting more than 9,500 victims with preparing and presenting victim impact statements. Providing a victim impact statement to the court gives the victim the opportunity to speak directly to the court to explain how the crime has affected him or her. Victims often view this opportunity as valuable and empowering.

Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP) Advocacy

Two VSAs are assigned to the BOPP to assist crime victims during the parole and pardon process. This assistance included providing support and advocacy to crime victims when an inmate is being considered for parole release or clemency.

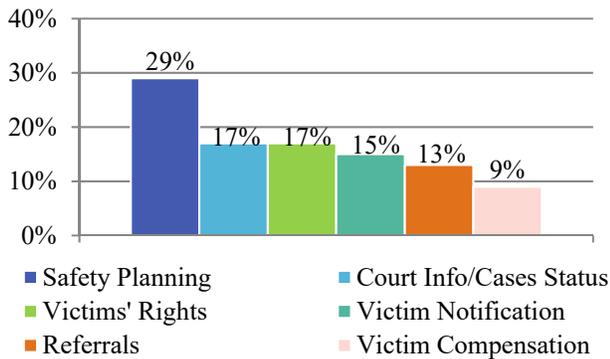
From October 1, 2017, through June 30, 2019, the VSAs assigned to the BOPP assisted more than 3,800 victims.

BOPP VSAs Most Requested Services

October 1, 2017 – June 30, 2019

Number of victims provided with services: 3,878

Total services provided: 6,360



Helpline

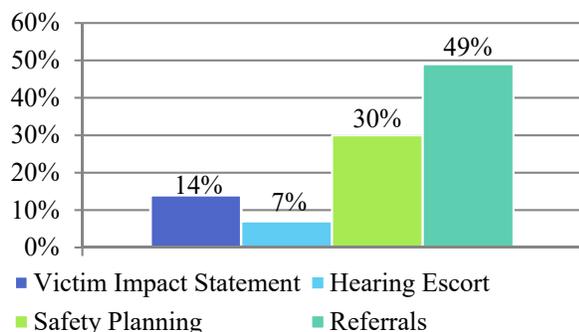
Two VSAs are assigned to the Helpline (800-822-8428) to provide callers with information on the juvenile, civil, and criminal justice systems, OVS and community-based programs and services, victims' rights, victim notification, and referrals to public and private agencies. Victims also contact the Helpline through the OVS general email account at OVS@jud.ct.gov.

During this biennium, Helpline VSAs received 7,218 calls from victims and professionals. The majority of callers requested information on safety planning, the status of a criminal case, court information, referrals to supportive services, victims' rights, and the Victim Compensation Program.

Helpline Most Requested Services

October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2019

Total services requested: 6,474



The Helpline VSAs also attend Sentence Review hearings to provide support, information, and assistance to crime victims and their family members. Sentence Review Hearings are held in response to a defendant's application for a review of the court-imposed sentence.

Victim Notification

The Victim Services Unit Helpline staff is responsible for administering three victim notification programs that inform crime victims and other registrants on orders of protection, changes to the status of offenders with court cases in the criminal justice system and in the Department of Correction (DOC) custody.

These notification programs allow crime victims to exercise their constitutional right to be informed about, present at, and heard during criminal justice proceedings. These programs also serve as a valuable safety tool by informing crime victims of an offender's release or possible release from custody or when an offender absconds from prison or fails to appear in court.

Protection Order Registry Notification Program

The Protection Order Registry Notification program features automatic generation of notification letters to protected parties when protective orders terminate or five weeks prior to the expiration of restraining orders and civil protection orders.

Protected parties receiving notification are directed to contact the OVS Helpline for information on obtaining or extending orders of protection and referrals to social service agencies.

During state fiscal year July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019, more than 50,000 protective order notification letters were mailed to crime victims.

Post-conviction Notification Program

Section 54-227 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires OVS and DOC to provide inmate status information to crime victims and other eligible individuals who have registered for notification.

Crime victims, parents/guardians and relatives of crime victims, inmates’ family members, and state’s attorneys may register for notification by submitting a confidential request for notification form to OVS, DOC, or both agencies.

Registrants are notified when an inmate applies to the BOPP or DOC for a release other than a furlough, applies to the sentencing court, judge or the Review Division for a change in their sentence, or when any person requests the court change their status on the Sex Offender Registry.

Crime victims who receive notification are informed that they can make a statement to the BOPP, DOC, or court regarding the impact the crime has had on them and their opinion on or concerns about the inmate’s request.

During this biennium, there were 842 new notification requests and 5,500 post-conviction notification letters mailed to registrants.

Connecticut Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification

The Connecticut Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification Program (CT SAVIN) provides confidential telephone, email, text, and in-app notifications in English and Spanish on criminal court, orders of protection, and DOC events.

Crime victims and the public may register for notification in English, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish by contacting an OVS VSA at the Helpline, the BOPP, or at court; community-based advocates; the CT SAVIN dedicated telephone number (877-846-3428); or by registering online at the CT SAVIN Web page accessed from www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim/.

During this biennium, there were more than 37,000 new registrations and more than 291,000 notifications delivered with the majority of registrants registering and requesting to be notified by email.

Victim quote on services received from the Victim Services Advocacy Program

“We are grateful for the services [the victim advocate] provided to us. She kept us well informed and was an invaluable resource. We don’t know how we would have navigated the process without her. She was patient, compassionate, and unfailingly helpful.”

Notification of criminal case events include:

- upcoming court hearings,
- change in bail,
- case transfers,
- failure to appear,
- plea hearings,
- the issuance, modification, or termination of an order of protection,
- case disposition,
- probation violation and violation decisions,
- sentence reduction decision, and
- appeal filed and appeal decision.

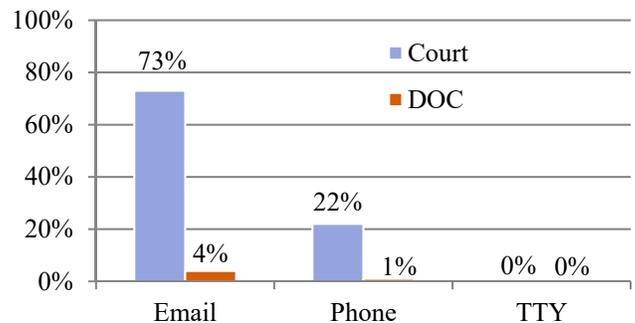
Notification of custody status events include:

- scheduled release or release from prison, parole, or to the community,
- escaped from and returned to prison, and
- transfer to a prison in another state.

CT SAVIN Notifications

October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2019

Total Notifications: 291,547



Quality Assurance

Focusing on a brighter future

Historical Overview

In March 2010, the Quality Assurance Unit was established to create a mechanism and resource readily available to OVS program managers and unit supervisors to assist their efforts in the delivery of quality, standardized, comprehensive services to Connecticut's crime victims.

The responsibilities of the Quality Assurance Unit expanded in October of that year following the enactment of the federal Plain Writing Act of 2010.

The Unit was charged with the responsibility of writing and revising OVS external communications to ensure plain language principles and standards were applied with a victim-centered tone that articulated compassion and sensitivity in a nonjudgmental manner. In 2005 as result of a strategic planning initiative, OVS began an ongoing collaborative endeavor among OVS managers and supervisors to rewrite all of its public communications using clear and respectful language. This collaborative effort is still an existing component in the development and revision of external communications and expanded by the Quality Assurance Unit to include victim, community, and other appropriate stakeholders.

Connecticut will be a state where all victims of crime are treated with respect and fairness and will receive comprehensive, coordinated, and victim-centered services.

- OVS Vision Statement

The Quality Assurance services include:

- assisting in the development and revision of policies and procedures,
- developing computer-based tools for program and service assessment and recommending modifications to existing computer applications that track data and information,
- developing written materials for crime victims and the public, and
- assisting in the assessment of feedback from crime victims, their family members, and other individuals who access OVS services.

Biennial Highlights

- Assisted the State of Connecticut Sentencing Commission, Special Committee on Sex Offenders' Subcommittee on Community and Victim Needs with the compilation, analysis, and written summary of the results from a public input survey of Connecticut residents to obtain information on their concerns and needs related to the sentencing, registration, management and supervision of sex offenders.
- Served as the business analyst for the Post-conviction Notification system revision from a desktop application to a Web-based application. During this biennium, the Quality Assurance Unit developed a system Requirement Analysis document that identified the functional and nonfunctional needs of the application, conducted system testing, and served as the liaison between end users and information technology staff. The application is expected to be released in the next biennium.
- In January 2019, the Polish translation of the OVS Web pages (www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim) were posted. Site visitors may toggle between the English and Spanish translation utilizing a language selection dropdown located on each OVS Web page. The Portuguese and Spanish translations are expected to be posted in the next biennium.

Information Technology Activities

The Quality Assurance Unit values the importance of converting raw data into meaningful information that assesses services to ensure the needs of crime victims are being met as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Data and Information Analysis

During this biennium, the Quality Assurance Unit provided guidance and assistance to the Victim Services Unit on establishing a more effective and efficient way to combine the victim services advocates (VSA) statistical data as an interim measure until a case management system software is obtained. The process established included utilizing a Judicial Branch internal network drive to store each VSA's spreadsheet used to track demographic and services data. These multiple spreadsheets are linked to various OVS performance reports, which are automatically populated and updated whenever data is added or revised, eliminating the time-consuming manual retrieval and tabulation of the data by the Victim Services Unit supervisors.

SAFE Program Time Sheet Process

During this biennium, the Quality Assurance Unit provided guidance and assistance to the SAFE Program Manager on streamlining and standardizing the SAFE time sheet process. A fillable, interactive PDF time sheet was developed that requires SAFEs to select the type of service provided from a drop down box, auto-populates the number of hours to be paid for the services provided based on the information entered, and allows both SAFEs and the supervisor to electronically sign a time sheet. SAFEs email the completed, signed time sheet to the supervisor for approval and signature, which are then forwarded to the Fiscal Services Unit accountant, who utilizes a spreadsheet developed by the Quality Assurance Unit to export the data and populate payment information. The benefits of this process modification include reducing the amount of manual compilation, creating standardization of terminology to indicate services for payment, and establishing data elements for incorporation into the existing SAFE Program Web-based application.

Internal and External Communications

The Quality Assurance Unit develops publications, forms, public service announcements (PSAs), and other electronic and printed materials that inform victims, the victim assistance community, and the public about the rights of crime victims and the services available to them.

During this biennium, the Quality Assurance Unit reviewed and revised 35 publications and forms with several being translated in Spanish, Polish, and Portuguese, as well as the revision or creation of more than 45 letters sent to victims accessing victim compensation, victim notification, or victim advocacy services.

Public Service Announcements

To promote OVS programs and services, the Quality Assurance Unit submits PSAs quarterly to the Judicial Branch, External Affairs Division for submission to radio stations across Connecticut. During this biennium, 24 PSAs were released to 30 English and 15 Spanish-speaking radio stations.

Victim Feedback

Victim Advocacy Program Surveys

The Quality Assurance Unit assisted the Victim Services Unit in the revision of its surveys to analyze the services provided by victim services advocates, as well as the development of a database to maintain and summarize the survey data. The revised surveys were released in July 2019 with 22 surveys being returned during this biennium. One hundred percent of the respondents were overall satisfied with the services received from victim services advocates with 94% of those responding indicating they participated in the criminal justice process.

Victim Compensation Program Surveys

During this biennium, 2,487 Victim Compensation Program surveys were mailed with 351 surveys being returned, representing a 14% return rate. The combined overall satisfaction reflected that 86% of the respondents were satisfied with the Victim Compensation Program services and 89% agreed their claims examiner was courteous and helpful.

Legislative Updates

The following Public Acts, enacted during this biennium, modified the services offered to crime victims by the Office of Victim Services (OVS) and/or amended Chapter 968 Victim Services of the Connecticut General Statutes, which governs the work of OVS.

Public Act 17-32, An Act Concerning Human Trafficking expands the list of people and entities required to post a notice about services for human trafficking victims and imposes a penalty for violations. OVS distributes the notice on behalf of the Office of the Chief Court Administrator.

Public Act 17-99, An Act Concerning Court Operations, Victim Services, Fraudulent Filings and Transfers of an Interest in Real Property to a Trust grants OVS the right to waive the consideration of health insurance as a collateral source in certain situations; increased the number of victims eligible for victim compensation by expanding the injuries, crimes, and situations under which a victim may qualify, including compensation to victims who suffered an emotional injury from a threat of either physical injury or death and received treatment; compensation to Connecticut residents who are injured or killed in a country that does not have a compensation program for which the victim is eligible and the crime would be eligible for victim compensation in Connecticut; expanded the definition of relative to include aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews; reimbursement to injured victims and their relatives for the costs associated with attending court proceedings related to the crime that resulted in the victims' injuries; allows victims of human trafficking, child abuse, domestic violence, and certain sexual assaults who disclose the injury to a professional in existing law, in lieu of reporting the crime, increases the time from 72 hours to 120 hours in which a sexual assault victim may go to a health care facility for a sexual assault forensic examination, in lieu of reporting the crime; extends compensation to persons who have a disability and owns or keeps a service animal that was killed during a crime (prior law limited compensation to a guide or assistance dog injured during a crime); allows one bereavement week of salary loss for the parent or guardian of a homicide victim; expands compensation to victims of crimes involving the operation of a water vessel, snow mobile, or all-terrain vehicle operated by someone under the influence of alcohol or drugs (prior law limited compensation to crimes committed with motor vehicles), persons who paid some or all of the crime scene clean-up expenses; requires victims' attorneys to communicate with providers about outstanding balances and to ensure payment to providers as documented by OVS; and requires health care providers to suspend the debt collection process for expenses in which there is a pending victim compensation claim. The Act also requires the Office of the Chief State's Attorney, the Division of State Police within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, any municipal police department or any other law enforcement agency to provide a copy of any police report in their possession required for the OVS victim services advocate to perform the duties outlined in Section 54-220 of the Connecticut General Statutes, and directed OVS, within available appropriations, to establish a training program for health care professionals in nonparticipating health care facilities on the care and collection of evidence from adolescent and adult victims of sexual violence.

Public Act 18-75, An Act Concerning Court Operations replaced Office of the Chief State's Attorney's with state's attorney regarding OVS victim services advocates' access to any police report in their possession required to perform responsibilities outlined in Section 54-220 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Public Act 19-114, An Act Concerning Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners reinstates a SAFE Advisory Committee to recommend policies and procedures for the OVS SAFE program, expands the types of health care providers that may become sexual assault forensic examiners, and clarifies the type of health care facilities where SAFE services may be provided and who may use the sexual assault forensic examiner title.

Committees

During this biennium, Office of Victim Services (OVS) staff served on the following committees, councils, and multidisciplinary teams.

Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations is responsible for reviewing and revising the Technical Guidelines for Health Care Response to Victims of Sexual Assault and the design of the sexual assault evidence collection kit. Director Linda J. Cimino, member.

Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision Connecticut State Council is charged with overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision, a formal agreement between member states that seeks to promote public safety by systematically controlling the interstate movement of certain adult offenders. Deputy Director Valina Carpenter, member.

Interstate Compact for Juveniles Connecticut State Council is the rule-making authority of the Interstate Compact for Juveniles and has the statutory authority to enforce compliance between signatory states to promote the welfare protection of juveniles, victims, and the public by governing the states' supervision of juveniles and the return of runaways, absconders, escapees, and juveniles who have fled prosecution. Deputy Director Valina Carpenter, member.

Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee examines intimate partner homicides to identify systemic gaps and barriers to service and to recommend coordinated community responses that will enhance the safety of victims and accountability of batterers. Director Linda J. Cimino, member.

Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children oversees the need for greater coordination of Multidisciplinary Team agencies involved in the investigation, intervention, and prosecution of child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse cases. Victim Services Supervisor Koren Butler-Kurth, member.

Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team (HART) multidisciplinary teams that respond to the needs of victims of domestic minor sex trafficking. An OVS victim services supervisor and several OVS victim services advocates are members of HART.

Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT) coordinate the prompt investigation and prosecution of suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to reduce the trauma of any child victim and to ensure the protection and treatment of the child. Several OVS victim services advocates are members of their local MDTs.

Special Committee on Sex Offenders established by the Connecticut Sentencing Commission for compliance with Special Act 15-2, which required the Commission to investigate Connecticut's current system of assessment, management, treatment, and sentencing of sex offenders. The Special Committee of Sex Offenders undertook a comprehensive two-year study of the issues and submitted a report to the Sentencing Commission in December 2017. Director Linda J. Cimino, member.

Trafficking in Persons Council is responsible for determining what services are available to human trafficking victims and how to best coordinate a response. Director Linda J. Cimino, member.

Advisory Council for Victims of Crime

Historical Overview

In response to Public Act 87-514, An Act Concerning Victim Rights, the Office of Victim Services (OVS), formerly the Commission on Victim Services, created a multi-disciplinary Victim Services Coordinating Council. The overall goal of the Council was to assist in evaluating the progress in the victim movement, determine future directions, to protect and promote victims' rights, and to ensure that appropriate services were provided.

Public Act 91-389 statutorily established the Victim Services Coordinating Council (VSCC), its power, duties, and membership. In 1993, Public Act 93-310 transferred the Office of Victim Services (OVS) to the Judicial Branch and made several changes to the VSCC appointing authorities and membership, as well as eliminating its budgetary tasks and its formal name.

The Advisory Council for Victims of Crime (Council), as it is known today, consists of 15 members from the judicial and executive branch agencies, involved with victims of crime; the chief Victim Compensation Commissioner; and community service-based members representing various victim populations.

Council members are appointed by the Chief Justice to a four-year term and charged with recommending to OVS programs, legislation, and other matters that would improve services to crime victims. The Council is statutorily required to meet at least four times per year and to report its findings and activities annually to the Judicial Branch Chief Court Administrator (Section 54-203 (b) (9) of the Connecticut General Statutes).

Victim quote on the services received from the Victim Compensation Program

"I never knew at one of the worst times in my life, there was such a supportive program that would have truly helped me. I thank Victim Services for the support, kindness, and help I received. At a time it was hard for me to believe anything but evil existed, Victim Services helped restore my faith in the good in the world. Thanks so much!"

Biennial Highlights

- Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson re-appointed the Honorable John A. Danaher, III, of the Litchfield Judicial District, and Attorney Susan Omilian, founder and facilitator of My Avenging Angel Workshop, to serve as co-chairs for the next term.
- A Council member organized an OVS presentation to the state's attorneys on the Victim Compensation Program and the Connecticut Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification program.
- A Council member researched the decline in court contributions to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund and reported the findings at a subsequent meeting.
- Council members presented on the services offered by their respective agencies and/or on subjects affecting services to crime victims.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

2018-2022

Co-Chairs

Honorable John A. Danaher, III,
Litchfield Judicial District, Judicial Branch

Susan M. Omilian, Esquire
Survivors of homicide victims

Chief Victim Compensation Commissioner

Joseph W. Bibisi, Esquire

Community-based Mental Health Services

Mikayla Green, Program Coordinator
Klingberg Family Centers

Community Services

Andrew Woods, Executive Director
Hartford Communities That Care

Domestic Violence

Geralyn O'Neil-Wild, Director of Legal Advocacy
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Drunk Driving

Bob Garguilo, Executive Director
Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Executive Branch

Brian Austin, Jr., Executive Assistant State's Attorney
Office of the Division of Criminal Justice

Melissa Conway, Planning Analyst
Office of Policy and Management

Kristin Mangiafico, Victim Services Unit
Department of Correction

Human Trafficking

Yvette Young, Human Anti-Trafficking Response
Team Coordinator
The Village for Families and Children, Inc.

Judicial Branch

Melissa Farley, Esquire, Executive Director
External Affairs

Low Income Communities

Deborah Witkin, Executive Director
Connecticut Legal Services

Sexual Assault

Beth Hamilton, Deputy Director
Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

Survivors of Homicide

Jessica Pizzano, Director of Victim Services
Survivors of Homicide

Former members who served during this biennium:

Antonia Cordero, Associate Professor, University of
Connecticut, School of Social Work

Laura Cordes, Executive Director, Connecticut
Alliance to End Sexual Violence

Lucia Goicoechea-Hernández, Senior Special Projects
Coordinator, Commission on Equity and Opportunity

Kristina M. Gonzalez, Planning Analyst, Office of
Policy and Management

Janice Heggie-Margolis, Executive Director, Mothers
Against Drunk Driving

Steven Hernandez, Executive Director, Commission
on Women, Children and Seniors

Karen Jarmoc, Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut
Coalition Against Domestic Violence

David Lawrence-Hawley, Director Klingberg Family
Center

Karen Martucci, Acting Director of External Affairs,
Connecticut Department of Correction

Josie Robles, Chief Executive Director, Hartford
Behavioral Health

Thomas J. Wydra, Chief of Police, Hamden Police
Department

ADMINISTRATIVE

860-263-2760

VICTIM COMPENSATION

888-286-7347

HELPLINE

800-822-8428



Office of Victim Services
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