



CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH
OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES
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To: The Honorable Patrick L. Carroll, III
Chief Court Administrator

cc: Tais C. Ericson, Executive Director, Superior Court Operations Division
Linda J. Cimino, Director, Office of Victim Services

From: The Honorable Laura F. Baldini, Co-Chair
Yvette Young Co-Chair

Date: December 12, 2022

Subject: 2022 Report of the Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime

Statutory Charge

Connecticut General Statutes § 54-203 (b) (9) directs the Office of Victim Services (OVS) “[t]o provide staff services to a state advisory council. The council shall consist of not more than fifteen members to be appointed by the Chief Justice and shall include the Chief Victim Compensation Commissioner and members who represent victim populations, including but not limited to, homicide survivors, family violence victims, sexual assault victims, victims of drunk drivers, and assault and robbery victims, and members who represent the judicial branch and executive branch agencies involved with victims of crime. The members shall serve for terms of four years. Any vacancy in the membership shall be filled by the appointing authority for the balance of the unexpired term. The members shall receive no compensation for their services. The council shall meet at least four times a year. The council shall recommend to the Office of Victim Services program, legislative or other matters which would improve services to victims of crime and develop and coordinate needs assessments for both court-based and community-based victim services. The Chief Justice shall appoint two members to serve as co-chairpersons. Not later than December fifteenth of each year, the council shall report the results of its findings and activities to the Chief Court Administrator.”

The Advisory Council met five times, meeting its statutory requirement to meet four times per year via Microsoft Teams. The 2022 meeting schedule is attached hereto as Appendix A.

Council Structure, Membership, and Attendance Information

The 2022 - 2026 Council term began September 1, 2022 and will conclude on August 31, 2026. Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson appointed the Honorable Laura F. Baldini, Susan Omilian, Esq., (resigned as co-chair June 2022), and Yvette Young, to serve as co-chairs for the 2022 - 2026 term. The 2022 Council membership list is attached hereto as Appendix B.

The Advisory Council conducted its meetings via Microsoft Teams. The meetings were live streamed and are available for viewing on the Judicial Branch YouTube channel. The average meeting attendance rate in 2022 was 80%. This rate is slightly lower than the average attendance rate for 2021, which was 83%. The Council discussed the importance of consistent attendance to facilitate Council business. Next year, the Council has plans to meet in person at least once.

Activities

During this reporting period, the Council discussed legislative initiatives, OVS Victimization Needs Assessment, and how COVID-19 has impacted victim service delivery.

OVS Funding Sources

In February:

- The OVS Victim Compensation Program Budget statement for month ending 01/31/22 FY 07/01/21 - 06/30/22 and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund Contribution (CICF) Summary of Court Contributions (P.A. 06-152) through 12/30/2021 FY 07/01/21 - 06/30/2022 were distributed to Council members via email prior to the meeting. The discussion included the CICF balance and the variations in court collections.

In April:

- The OVS Victim Compensation Program Budget statement for month ending 03/31/22 FY 07/01/21 - 06/30/22 and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund Contribution (CICF) Summary of Court Contributions (P.A. 06-152) through 02/28/2022 FY 07/01/21 - 06/30/2022 were distributed to Council members via email prior to the meeting. The discussion included the CICF balance and the variations in court collections.

In June:

- No updates or reports were provided.

In October:

- Council members were provided information about the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding which included the following:
 - The U.S. Dept. of Justice Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) oversees the federal Crime Victims Fund (the Fund), which provides funding to numerous federal and state funded victim services programs including the VOCA Victim Assistance and VOCA Compensation grants.
 - Each of the 50 states and 6 U.S. territories receive VOCA funding from OVC to provide free services to victims of crime.
 - At the beginning of FFY 2018, the fund balance of the Fund was \$13.082 billion. Over the past four federal fiscal years deposits into the fund decreased, and at the start of FFY 2022, the fund balance was \$3.028 billion.
 - The decrease in deposits into the Fund and the declining fund balance necessitated reductions in the VOCA Assistance Grant award.
 - In FFY 21, the CT's Victim Assistance Grant was \$11.7 million, which was a reduction of 67% from the FFY 2018 award of \$36.4 million.
 - The reduction in VOCA funding and the negative impact on the provision of services to victims of crime in CT was the primary reason that the Judicial Branch included a \$14.5 million request for victim services funding as a part of its Federal American Rescue Plan Act request.
 - To address the reduction in receipts and funding, Congress passed, and the President signed a bill called The VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 (VOCA

Fix), which became effective 7/22/21. The VOCA Fix legislation was intended to direct (to the Fund) federal criminal settlements from non-prosecution and deferred prosecution agreements.

- When the legislation was passed, it was projected that the additional funding sources would add several billion into the Fund over the next several years.
- FFY 2022 ended on 9/30/22. As of 8/31/22, deposits into the fund totaled \$814 million. Over half of those deposits were from deferred prosecutions and non-prosecution agreements, so the VOCA Fix is starting to have an impact on the deposits.

In November:

- Council members were provided information about the VOCA funding which included the following:
 - The federal fiscal year ended on 9/30/22. Deposits into the Fund for the year totaled \$822 million. This is a 6% increase compared to the previous fiscal year; however, it should also be noted that only \$8 million was collected for the month of September 2022.
 - The fund balance in the Fund as of 9/30/22 was \$1.499 billion dollars. This is a 25% decrease compared to the previous federal fiscal year.
 - The President's requested allocation for FFY 2023 is \$1.75 billion, leaving a difference of \$250 million that will need to be covered by FFY 2023 current year revenues.
 - The federal budget for FFY 2023 is operating under a continuing resolution until mid-December and has not yet been finalized. It is not known if the FFY 2023 requested allocation will be changed based on the current fund balance, or if future grant awards will be impacted.

OVS Programs and Services

In February:

- Council members received the following information about the Victim Compensation Program:
 - 1,979 Victim Compensation claims were processed in calendar year 2021
 - 1,272 Personal Injury applications
 - 152 Survivor Benefits application
 - 555 Emotional Injury applications
- Council members received the following information about the Victim Services Program:
 - Nine victim services advocates have been hired and two victim services advocates transferred from Helpline to court-based positions in recent months.
 - Their training team consisted of internal and external presenters and utilized a combination of in-person and virtual presentations which included 100 classroom hours supported by courtroom observations. In addition, the training was offered to all OVS VSAs as a refresher on any training topic.
- Council members received information about the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) Program:
 - The SAFE Program has over 100 medical providers in the state of Connecticut that have completed the OVS SAFE training.
 - The SAFE program has 16 SAFEs compared to 26 SAFEs at this time last year due to the impact of COVID-19 and other factors on health care providers.
 - The Connecticut Hospital Association will host training classes for nurses and health care providers to demonstrate the elements and steps of the forensic evidence collection kits.

In April:

- Council members received information about the Victim Compensation Unit:
 - 443 applications were received through 3/31/2022 which is 30 more than the same period last year.
- Council members received information about the Victim Services Program:
 - Nine recently hired victim services advocates transitioned into their positions in the courts and Helpline.
 - An in-service day was held to allow the advocates the opportunity to discuss their experiences with their supervisors and network with each other. An evaluation was distributed, and the results will help ensure the best possible experience for future orientations.
- Council members received updated information about the SAFE Program:
 - The Spring training session had 22 medical professionals enrolled.
 - The training is a 6-day course of 42 ½ hours of classroom training, a 3-hour (evening) clinical session, an 8-hour (day) session, and an 8-hour mock exam session.
- Council members received information about National Crime Victims' Rights Week:
 - The theme is *Rights, Access, Equity, for all victims*.
 - In observation, a series of 6 informational banners were posted on the Judicial Branch website focusing on the rights of victims throughout the week of 4/24/22 - 4/30/22.
- Council members discussed an increase in referrals between the Victim Compensation Unit and service provider agencies connecting victims to the various services available.

In June:

- No updates or reports were provided.

In October:

- No updates or reports were provided.

In November:

- No updates or reports were provided.

Legislative Initiatives

In February:

- No updates or reports were provided.

In April:

- Advisory Council members were provided updates on the following legislative initiatives:
 - Senate Bill No. 5, *An Act Concerning Online Dating Operators, Online Child Grooming and Harassment, Domestic Violence Training and Protections for Victims of Family Violence and Domestic Violence*.
 - Raised Bill No. 5393, *An Act Concerning Court Operations*.
 - Raised Bill No. 434, *An Act Concerning Court Processes Associated with the Announcement of a Verdict in a Criminal Proceeding*.
 - Senate Bill No. 477, *An Act Concerning the Public Health of Residents of the State, Section 7: Establishing a Commission on Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention to coordinate the funding and implementation of evidence-based, evidenced informed, community-centric gun violence prevention and intervention programs and strategies*.

- Raised Bill No. 5238, *An Act Expanding Eligibility for the Victim Compensation Program*, which would include incidents of child abuse or neglect substantiated by the Department of Children and Families.
- Raised Bill No. 5154, *An Act Requiring the Provision of Information Concerning Children's Mental Health and Domestic Violence by Police Officers*, which would require emergency service providers to distribute information about resources available to children and victims of domestic violence.

In June:

- No updates or reports were provided.

In October:

- No updates or reports were provided.

In November:

- No updates or reports were provided.

OVS Victimization Needs Assessment

In February:

- The PowerPoint presentation, *Connecticut Victims Needs Assessment Project Update*, was distributed to Council members via email prior to the meeting.
- Council members were provided information on the current project status, survey results, victim service provider focus groups, in-depth interview summary, and the demographics of interview participants.
- Discussion included issues related to demographics and diversity amongst the participants of the survey and how it represents the state's population.

In April:

- Council members were informed that the analysis of the in-depth interview process with victims of crime had been completed. The final stage of data collection is underway with service provider focus groups. At this time six groups have or will be interviewed, and outreach is continuing for others who can participate.

In June:

- Market Decisions Research (MDR) presented the findings from the *Victims Needs Assessment* to the group.
- Council members were provided brief comments on the findings that were presented by MDR and the development of an implementation team at the OVS to explore opportunities identified through the assessment.
- A brief discussion of the findings followed the presentation, and an invitation was extended to meet in late July to allow an opportunity for additional comments and questions from council members and stakeholder group members after further review of the information presented.
- Council members were informed that the presentation slide deck would be provided to all council and stakeholder committee members.

In October:

- No updates or reports were provided.

In November:

- Council members were provided information regarding Phase One which deployed 11,990

surveys to residents across the state and 1,230 were completed. Data collected included demographics such as race/ethnicity, age, household income, gender, and education attainment and the results were compared to the American Community Survey. Discussion included the statistical data.

COVID-19 and the Impact on Victim Services Delivery

In February:

- Council members were informed that staff members from Hartford Communities That Care, and a Department of Public Health Deputy Commissioner, would be visiting victims of violent crime in Hartford to provide COVID-19 and trauma information, distributing masks and COVID-19 test kits, and raising awareness about services that are available.
- Council members were informed that the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence started a concentrated effort through its member organizations to reach out to survivors of domestic violence and underserved populations to provide COVID-19 information, vaccinations, and PPE.

In April:

- No updates or report were provided.

In June:

- No updates or report were provided.

In October:

- No updates or report were provided.

In November:

- No updates or report were provided.

Presentations and Miscellaneous Business

In February:

- The PowerPoint presentation, *Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Advisory Committee Report*, was distributed to Council members via email prior to the meeting.
- Council members received information on CT Public Act 21-35, Section 9, which establishes a committee to advise the Public Health and Human Services Committees of the General Assembly on the establishment of a Commission on Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention.
- Discussion included recommendations regarding findings of gun violence reduction strategies, ways to align support services, and funding resources.
- The PowerPoint presentation, *Understanding Coercive Control and Related Elements of Public Act 21-78* was distributed to Council members via email prior to the meeting.
- Council members were provided information on the concept of coercive control and the methods used which include emotional, psychological, technological, and financial controlling behaviors.
- Council members were informed that Public Act 21-78 amends and establishes the statutory definitions of domestic violence and coercive control. As a result, coercive control can now be used as eligibility criteria in an application for a restraining order.
- Council members discussed issues related to the challenges of coercive control and the civil remedies that the Court can utilize.

In April:

- No updates or report were provided.

In June:

- No updates or report were provided.

In October:

- Council members reported on the following topics:
 - The *My Avenging Angels* workshops and a *Train the Trainer* program.
 - The *Building Bridges with Survivors and the Criminal Justice System* conference on October 20, 2022, at the Marriott Hotel, Cromwell, sponsored by the Petit Family Foundation.
 - CCADV and its member programs have been collaborating with Rachel McKnight to share information about the OVS Victim Compensation Program.
 - New ways to collect and share data about victim services.
 - The Advisory Council meetings will continue to include presentations from various victim services providers and members will be contacted individually to share information about their agencies.
 - Advisory Council 2022 - 2026 Term, September meetings will be in-person at OVS, 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, and the other four meetings will continue to be via Microsoft Teams.
 - Survivors of Homicide (SOH) was awarded a grant from The MrBallen Foundation which provides solutions for victims and organizations that provide support to them through financial support and resources.

In November:

- Council members reported on the following topics
 - Initiating an ongoing conversation regarding data sharing about victimization and which information is important and ways to collect the data.
 - The Connecticut Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention and how input was being sought to include in a report to be delivered to legislators by 12/31/22.
 - OVS Victim Compensation Unit worked closely with three annuity companies to transfer \$140,000 of victim compensation funds that were invested by OVS on behalf of minor victims in the 1970s-1980s.

APPENDIX A

Office of Victim Services
Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime
Council Members
2022

Name	Affiliation	State Agency or Victim Population represented
Judge Laura F. Baldini, Co-Chair	Superior Court Judge New Britain Judicial District	Judicial Branch
Yvette Young, Co-Chair	Associate Vice President for Programs and Advocacy, The Village for Families and Children, Inc.	Victims of Human Trafficking
Lisa D'Angelo	Executive Assistant State's Attorney Office of the Division of Criminal Justice	Executive Branch
Gail P. Hardy (Resigned 9/2022)	Executive Assistant State's Attorney Division of Criminal Justice	Executive Branch
Melissa Farley, Esq. (Until 9/2022)	Executive Director External Affairs Judicial Branch	Judicial Branch
Bob Garguilo	Executive Director Mothers Against Drunk Driving	Victims of Drunk Driving
Beth Hamilton	Executive Director CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence	Victims of Sexual Assault
Amy Lupoli	Senior Director of Clinical Services Klingberg Family Centers	Community Based Mental Health Services
Irene Mikol, Esq.	Chief Victim Compensation Commissioner	Judicial Branch
Susan Omilian, Esq.	Founder and facilitator of My Avenging Angel Workshop ™	Surviving Family Members of Homicide Victims

Geralyn O'Neil-Wild	Director of Legal Advocacy CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence	Victims of Domestic Violence
Marc Pelka	Undersecretary Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division	Office of Policy and Management
Jessica Pizzano	Director of Victim Services Survivors of Homicide	Survivors of Homicide
Lee Ross	Deputy Director External Affairs Judicial Branch	Judicial Branch
Ebonie Suggs	Director of External Affairs Department of Correction Designee	Executive Branch
Deborah Witkin	Executive Director Connecticut Legal Services	Low Income Victims
Andrew Woods	Executive Director Hartford Communities That Care	Non-Profit

APPENDIX B

Office of Victim Services
Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime
2022 Meeting Schedule

Date	Meeting Platform	Time
Tuesday, February 8, 2022	Microsoft Teams	2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Wednesday, April 12, 2022	Microsoft Teams	2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday, June 28, 2022	Microsoft Teams	2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday, October 4, 2022	Microsoft Teams	2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday, November 15, 2022	Microsoft Teams	2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Reporter: Jean M. Weisbrod, Administrative Assistant, Office of Victim Services