

MINUTES
Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime
February 9, 2021

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

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

OVS Staff in Attendance:

Tina Bouchard, Valina Carpenter, Linda J. Cimino, James Morgan, Michelle Thomas-Phillip

Guests in Attendance:

Alison Chandler

Agenda:

1. Welcome
Susan Omilian opened the meeting at 2:05 p.m. Council members introduced themselves.
2. Approval of the November 10, 2020 meeting minutes
Susan asked for a motion to accept the November meeting minutes. The motion was moved and seconded; the minutes were accepted as presented.
3. Roundtable discussion on legislative proposals and issues on state and federal level

Council members reported on the following Legislative proposals and issues:

Beth Hamilton:

- Support legislation to build pathways to safer colleges and universities
- Support legislation to bar unauthorized pelvic and prostate exams for patients under deep anesthesia
- Define and codify the definition of consent in sexual assault
- Support legislation, in partnership with CCADV, requiring landlords to change, or allow a tenant to change, locks upon their tenant's receipt of a protective or restraining order
- Monitor and support legislation that protects child victims of sexual abuse
- Support victim-centered criminal justice reform

Gerrie Wild:

- Incorporate language on coercive control for restraining orders
- Access to police reports by family violence victim advocates
- Property and Causality Insurance companies cannot discriminate against policyholders because of domestic violence

Melissa Farley:

The Judicial Branch is requesting the following statutory changes in its court operations bill, which impacts victims:

- To allow remote applications for temporary restraining orders. During the pandemic this was permitted via Executive order, but statutory change is needed once the order expires
- To allow victims access to the private proceedings of juveniles being tried on the adult criminal docket to mirror the access available to victims of cases on the juvenile docket
- To allow child victims of sexual assault to potentially be compensated if their disclosure is made to certain individuals associated with Child Advocacy Centers
- To allow a victim to designate an immediate family member in lieu of the victim to receive certain notifications from the Office of Victim Services and the Department of Correction

Yvette Young:

- HB 5557 - The Act would change the language of existing legislation regarding sexual abuse of a minor from “for a fee” to “in exchange for anything of value”. This bill would also create a focus on affirmative defense for trafficking victims
- HB 5019 - The Act would prohibit places of lodging from offering hourly rates and require operators to ask for proper identification from those who rent rooms

Jessica Pizzano:

- To allow juvenile proceedings in adult court

Bob Garguilo:

- Requesting Congress to mandate that all auto manufacturers include technology to combat impaired driving into all new vehicles through passage of the Ride and Halt Act

Andrew Woods:

- HB 5677 - An Act Concerning Medicaid Violence Preventative Services which could make violence preventative services provided by a qualified violence prevention professional a covered benefit under the Medicaid program, subject to utilization controls

Deborah Witkin:

- Government executive orders which could make it easier for victims of human trafficking and domestic violence to be granted a hearing with or without notarization

Gail Hardy:

- HB 5557 - Discussions with the Trafficking in Persons Council which would make it easier for victims to have a conviction erased if their case is related to victimization due to human trafficking
- Closure of Juvenile courts which would allow victims to be present for these hearings

Ebonie Suggs:

- Northern Correctional Institution in Somers CT closing in July 2021

Melissa Conway:

- Governor Lamont's budget address Wednesday, February 10, 2021

4. OVS Report

- a) The OVS *Victim Compensation Program Budget statement for month ending 01/31/21 FY 07/01/20 - 06/30/21* and the *Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund Contribution (CICF) Summary of Court Collections 07/01/20 - 12/31/20* were distributed to Council Members via email prior to the meeting.

James Morgan reviewed the *OVS Victim Compensation Program Budget Statement for month ending 01/31/21 FY 07/01/20 - 06/30/21*. Jim reported total disbursements through 01/31/21 are \$1,261,493, which is \$200,000 below total disbursements through 01/31/20. Jim stated that federal VOCA compensation grants are being used to supplement state funding to offset declines in revenues into the CICF. Jim reported that there is sufficient state and federal funding to make compensation payments for this year.

Jim reviewed the *Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund Contribution (CICF) Summary of Court Collections 07/01/20 - 12/31/20*. Jim reported court contributions through 12/31/20 are \$378,361 which is \$422,600 below total collections through 12/31/19. Jim stated that collections have been averaging \$63,000 per month for the first six months of the current fiscal year compared to \$133,500 per month for the first six months of last fiscal year. Jim reported that the majority of collections continue to be through the Centralized Infractions Bureau E-Pay system for cases that are disposed of online.

Jim provided updates on Federal VOCA Funding:

- Efforts made at the national level to increase deposits into the federal Crime Victims Fund which is the source of funding for each state's VOCA Victim Assistance and Victim Compensation grants were not successful prior to the end of the last congressional session. However, the national victim organizations will be working with the new Congress in the hopes of getting changes passed in the current session.
- Due to declining revenues, the fund balance in the federal Crime Victims Fund has declined from \$13 billion at the end of calendar year 2017 to \$4.4 billion at the end of calendar year 2020.

- As a result of these decreases, the amount of victim assistance grant funding received by OVS has declined each year from FFY 2018 as follows:
 - FFY 2018 Grant Award \$ 36,452,243 (ends 09/30/21)
 - FFY 2019 Grant Award \$ 24,540,595 (ends 09/30/22)
 - FFY 2020 Grant Award \$ 18,131,939 (ends 09/30/23)
- The FFY 2021 grant award has not yet been determined, however Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) is anticipating further reductions from the FFY 2020 awards.
- There is sufficient VOCA funding to maintain our current contracts for FY 20-21 and FY 21-22 using the FFY 2018 and FFY 2019 grants before they expire.
- In March 2021, a contract extension process for current service providers for FY 21-22 will begin which will be the third and final year of the current contract.
- In the fall of 2021, OVS will be going out to bid for services starting July 1, 2022. It is unknown at this time the exact amount of funds that will be available under the next solicitation, but we are anticipating a reduction from prior years.

b) OVS Update Report

Linda reported:

- The hiring process for an Administrative Assistant has been completed which fills a vacant position.
- Approval has been received from the Judicial Branch to add a fifth claims examiner.
- The Victimization Survey was published on January 14, 2021, and the response deadline has been extended from February 16, 2021 to February 23, 2021.
- The SAFE Program will be conducting the clinical training days for the students who completed the 42 hour didactic portion of the class in the fall. The access to the Clinic use was impacted by COVID-19.

5. Roundtable discussion on how COVID-19 has impacted victim service delivery

Melissa Farley:

- The court system is handling all matters, except jury trials, either in person or virtually. Orders of protection and arraignments are in person. Criminal matters are using a block schedule. Family matters are heard mostly remotely but tablets will be available in dedicated spaces beginning in March.

Beth Hamilton:

- No significant changes to report since the last Council meeting.

Gerrie Wild:

- No significant changes to report since the last Council meeting.

Gail Hardy:

- The Chief State's Attorney's office is combining efforts with CCADV to make police reports available to advocates. In addition, efforts are in place to ensure victims are notified of proceedings if they should want to attend.

Ebonie Suggs:

- Victims are reporting frustration regarding lack of GPS monitoring if offenders are not incarcerated.

Andrew Woods

- Responding to a high number of gun violence incidents.
- Providing basic needs to victims of violent crime in the Hartford area through a COVID grant and VOCA funds are helping with vaccine.

6. New Business

No new business.

7. Adjournment

Susan adjourned the meeting at 3:44 p.m.

Jean M. Weisbrod, Recorder