

Innovative Practices for Victim Services

REPORT FROM THE FIELD

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Message from the Director

Since its establishment by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA), the Crime Victims Fund has served as a major funding source for victim services throughout the United States. VOCA victim assistance grants are awarded each year to all U.S. states and territories, which in turn competitively award funds to local community-based organizations and public agencies that provide services directly to victims of crime. VOCA compensation grants are awarded annually to states and territories to provide direct reimbursement to, or on behalf of, crime victims for crime-related expenses. Compensation and assistance grants touch victims throughout our Nation and play a critical role in supporting victims immediately following a crime and as they rebuild their lives.

VOCA funding supports many innovative programs and protocols that reach and serve victims more effectively. This e-bulletin discusses such cutting edge programs in states and localities around the country. To identify these practices, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) Fellows traveled to 49 states to visit VOCA assistance and compensation programs representing a broad mix of geographic locations, sizes, population demographics, and service delivery models. We would like to thank the many administrators and program staff who contributed the valuable input and data discussed in this *Report from the Field* and their ongoing commitment to providing victims with the support they need. We would like to emphasize that this e-bulletin provides a snapshot of the innovative practices happening in 25 states. Our intention is to update this *Report from the Field* periodically to reflect innovative victim service programs that are developing throughout the entire Nation.

The programs described in this e-bulletin focus on six key areas: needs assessment, systems advocacy and coordination, compensation, underserved populations, victims' rights and services, and technology. We hope that an examination of the areas relevant to your own programs proves beneficial, and that you consider replicating the most applicable practices in your state or locality. By continuing to improve state and local victim assistance programs through innovative methods, we can meet the emerging challenges to best support victims along their path to healing.

Introduction



This e-bulletin provides brief descriptions of some of the innovative practices used by VOCA victim assistance and compensation programs. It draws on the firsthand experiences of state administrators and program staff in responding to victims' needs, addressing gaps in services, and promoting awareness of crime victims' rights. It is designed to spark dialogue among states and localities and encourage them to replicate these innovative practices.

About This e-Bulletin

The Crime Victims Fund (the Fund), established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA), is a major funding source for victim services throughout the Nation. VOCA victim assistance grants are awarded annually to local community-based organizations and public agencies that provide services directly to victims of crime. VOCA compensation grants are awarded to all states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to supplement state funds for reimbursing victims of violent crimes for out-of-pocket expenses that result from the crime.

This e-bulletin comprises information collected during visits to VOCA assistance and compensation programs in 25 states. The program sites represent a diverse mix of geographic locations, sizes, population demographics, and service delivery models. Additional information was gathered from internal and external program documents.

Identifying Innovative Practices

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) improves the national response to crime and violence by enhancing the capacity of service providers and allied professionals to better meet the emerging needs of victims. OVC staff review victim service providers and programs to identify innovative models, practices, and protocols. They examine—

- Victim demographics.
- Victims' rights laws.
- Compensation program statutes, policies, and rules.
- Victim notification.
- State funding trends.

What Makes a Practice Innovative?

For the purpose of this e-bulletin, a practice is considered innovative if it—

- Is based on research.
- Incorporates technology to improve access or efficiency.
- Uses new resources or techniques.
- Can be replicated.
- Increases efficiency, productivity, or quality.
- Enhances services.
- Reduces costs.
- Improves consumer satisfaction.
- Generates revenue.
- Is borrowed from another field and adapted to meet the needs of victims.
- Reaches a new population.

Key Themes

Needs Assessments

VOCA assistance and state compensation programs conduct needs assessments for a number of reasons. A needs assessment can help a program—

- Identify the types of services crime victims currently receive.
- Pinpoint gaps in services.

- Reveal factors that discourage victims from accessing services.
- Document new or developing needs related to changing demographics.
- Coordinate funding decisions across multiple state and federal funding streams.

Surveys, interviews, and focus groups are among the most common techniques used in needs assessment.

Program Spotlight

Arizona

The Arizona Criminal Justice Commission requested an independent review of the Arizona Crime Victim Compensation Program by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University. The review looked at factors influencing a decrease in the number of new claims submitted by victims and a corresponding decrease in the total amount of compensation benefits paid annually. The Morrison Institute's **findings** and recommendations were among several influential factors prompting the commission in 2012 to draft new **rules** for the Arizona Crime Victim Compensation Program. Rule changes were based on recommendations that—

- A state agency be developed to train members of county-based compensation boards, which should be professionalized or meet state training requirements. New program rules require board members to complete state training within 6 months of appointment.
- English and Spanish versions of the application should appear on the same page. The current application includes Spanish and English text in a single document.
- Each county attorney's office should staff a dedicated compensation position to assist victims with compensation claims and provide updates on the status of their cases. The commission is reviewing the current allocation of state administrative funds and matching county funds to determine if they are sufficient to support dedicated victim compensation positions at the county level.

Colorado

Through strategic planning efforts and discussions with partners, the Colorado Office for Victims Programs explored ways to reduce administrative work and the number of meetings taking program managers and executive directors away from their organizations. Ultimately, three statewide advisory boards that recommended funding for services to crime victims were merged into a single **Crime Victim Services Advisory Board**. As a result, victim services programs, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, tribes, and other organizations that serve victims of crime need to complete only one application for all types of funding. The state's **consolidated grant funding** process enables these entities to apply for VOCA, STOP Violence Against Women Act, Sexual Assault Services Program, and state Victim Assistance and Law Enforcement funds with a single application.

District of Columbia

A needs assessment prompted **DC SAFE** in the District of Columbia to use noncommunal dispersed shelters to assist victims of domestic violence. The SAFE program leases condominiums and apartments for 1 to 2 years at a modest rate. The program, which has a

presence at the courthouse, offers 20 days of immediate crisis shelter for families who are at the highest risk of being killed or seriously injured by their abuser. The safe, quiet, confidential units are fully furnished and provide the basic necessities for a family coming to SAFE immediately following a violent incident. The program also maintains a 24/7 response line. If a caller scores high on a lethality assessment, program staff respond within hours to get the victim to safety, even in the middle of the night. Wraparound services such as relocation into safe housing and enhanced counseling for the victim and her children then start the next morning.

Iowa

In 2011, the Crime Victim Assistance Division (CVAD) in the Iowa Office of the Attorney General faced significant reductions in both federal and state funding for victim service organizations. Rather than reduce grant amounts and fund services on limited budgets, CVAD worked with sexual assault and domestic violence coalitions, service providers, and community members to **reassess** whether the service delivery system still met victims' needs. It found that programs were reaching only about 8 percent of all estimated sexual assault victims; 40 percent of the total funds allocated to shelter-based services were being used by only 11 percent of the victims served. Shelter vacancy rates were about 42 percent statewide, resulting in roughly \$3.3 million in unused emergency shelter beds annually. With assistance from the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and others, CVAD is working to modernize Iowa's victim services to be more cost-effective, sustainable, and client-focused. They also are addressing inequitable distribution of funds statewide, the quality of services for both urban and rural areas, and victims' needs for permanent and long-term housing options.

Michigan

The Sexual Assault Resource Analysis (SARA) Project was funded by the Crime Victim Services Commission of the Michigan Department of Community Health. Its affiliation with Michigan State University gives the SARA Project access to resources for conducting systematic analyses of Michigan's sexual assault services, including medical forensic exams, and providing updates on services to state policymakers. The project team includes professional researchers and graduate students, which helps reduce costs. The team uses resource mapping and other advanced techniques to identify areas in Michigan that do not have adequate sexual assault programming. The SARA Project has made recommendations for improving services and shifting how services are delivered, and developed and provided evidence-based training. It also published a guide to additional evidence-based training for law enforcement, medical staff, and victim advocates.

Minnesota

Staff at the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs (OJP) monitor programs for compliance with **Best Practices Guidelines for Crime Victim Programs**. Grantees conduct a self-assessment based on the guidelines, meet with Minnesota OJP staff to set goals, and report regularly back to the staff. Indicators of a healthy organization include—

- A strong volunteer program.
- Robust strategic planning.

- Strong relationships with the community and the criminal justice system.
- Well-trained staff .

Washington

Similar to efforts in Minnesota, Washington's Office of Crime Victims Advocacy developed **Indicators of Successful Programs** as benchmarks of healthy victim services organizations for VOCA-funded programs

Systems Advocacy and Coordination

Communication with and support for victims from law enforcement, prosecution, and courts are essential to providing quality victim services throughout the criminal justice process. States use training, technology, and creativity to coordinate resources with all components of the criminal, juvenile, tribal, and military justice systems on behalf of victims.

Program Spotlight

Florida

The Florida Attorney General's Office addresses human trafficking with extended outreach, originality, and a partnership with the **Center for the Advancement of Human Rights** at Florida State University. The partnership has led to a new initiative aimed at engaging Florida's business community to increase awareness of human trafficking and encourage reporting to law enforcement. From restaurants to lodging and trucking to retail, businesses are uniquely positioned to identify human trafficking within their supply chains and to train employees to recognize and report its signs. The partnership also developed a toolkit of educational materials to help businesses create and implement their own zero-tolerance human trafficking plans. Since 2007, Florida has mandated that all law enforcement recruits be trained on human trafficking. Recently, a 2-hour **online training video** was added to help frontline officers recognize and respond to human trafficking.

Idaho

The **Idaho Coalition on Domestic and Sexual Violence** (ICDSV) coordinates a 1- to 2-day State Victim Assistance Academy with Boise State University. After Idaho determined that it already offered adequate fundamental training for victim services staff, ICDSV changed the traditional academy format. Now, hundreds of participants from law enforcement, prosecution, courts, and other professions attend annual advanced evidence-based trauma training.

Louisiana

The Louisiana Crime Victims Reparations Board considers applications for **emergency awards** for several reasons:

- Claimants do not yet have all the bills to file a regular claim, and a medical provider insists on payment before continuing treatment.
- The victim cannot work due to injuries.

- The victim is deceased and the claimant needs funds for funeral expenses.
- The victim in a domestic violence case needs funds to relocate, and waiting to complete and process a regular application would cause undue hardship.

Through partnerships with sheriffs' departments in each parish, eligibility is often determined within hours, and awards up to \$500 are available to families and victims within 1 to 2 days to meet their immediate needs.

Maine

The Office of the Maine Attorney General loans voice-activated radio dispatch alarms (VARDAs) to local law enforcement. In domestic violence cases, VARDAs are installed at no cost in the homes of victims who fear the offender will return and harm them.

New Hampshire

Since 2009, the **New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence** has implemented the Open Doors to Safety Project, which offers intensive training and technical assistance for programs and community providers that are members of the coalition. The training is designed to improve services for victims of domestic violence who experience mental health or substance abuse issues. Training recently moved to a Web-based format to allow local program staff 24/7 access to materials. Mental health care providers, child protective service workers, and medical personnel are among those who have participated in training on trauma-informed care.

South Carolina

Nearly two decades ago, South Carolina created **pocket cards** citing Miranda rights and victims' rights. The pocket cards are a simple, convenient way to encourage officers to talk to victims about their rights, just as they are required to administer rights to suspects in custody. The cards are distributed to officers when they graduate from the police academy, building awareness of victims' needs, and of the services available to meet them, right from the beginning of their law enforcement careers.

Compensation

State compensation programs are continually finding ways to reach more victims, determine claims more efficiently, gain information from law enforcement, and expand benefits to eligible victims.

Program Spotlight

Delaware

Delaware processes compensation claims quickly. Compensation investigators can retrieve information instantly from police reports in DELJIS, the information system used by all law enforcement, justice, and corrections agencies across the state's three counties. If the relevant information is available, urgent matters, including requests for funeral and burial benefits, are decided in hours rather than days.

Also in Delaware, the **Child Counseling and Assessment Program** offers up to \$1,200 toward the cost of psychological assessments and short-term outpatient therapy to meet the mental health needs of child victims younger than age 18 at the time of the crime. A police report is not required for program eligibility. This benefit helps—

- Reduce the long-term traumatic impact of crime for child victims.
- Identify symptoms of trauma that might not be recognized by family members.
- Potentially reduce the need for mental health care and other social services later in life.

District of Columbia

The District of Columbia Compensation Program works in an urban, high-crime, high-population-density jurisdiction. In the District, victims can meet with officers at one of two separate locations for personalized assistance with filing a claim or to pick up a check. The one-to-one assistance helps ensure that victims receive all applicable benefits and reduces errors that can slow down processing time. A satellite office is located in a hospital in a section of the District with a high rate of domestic violence protection orders. There, victims can speak with compensation program staff after being treated in the emergency room or following a video conference protection order hearing. By working face to face with victims, staff can provide food cards and transportation vouchers to those in immediate need. The program has agreements in place with local businesses such as neighborhood pharmacies that allow victims to quickly obtain medicines and other necessities.

Iowa

Rather than deny incomplete applications, the Crime Victim Assistance Division in Iowa designates eligible applications that are missing only administrative or technical details, such as a signature, as “**eligible-no-pay.**” These applications are held for an indeterminate time and paid once the applicant provides the missing information. The eligible-no-pay designation also is used if a victim has no uncovered expenses at the time of approval. This designation recognizes that a victim could have crime-related expenses at a later time.

Minnesota

The Minnesota Crime Victims Reparations Board was using significant staff time to determine loss of support for dependents of murdered victims. The board found that many victims were unemployed at the time of the murder, so their children were not receiving any benefits. Beginning in 2007, each child of a homicide victim receives \$350 per month until age 18, regardless of whether or not the murdered person was employed at the time of the crime. Although victims still must apply and be approved for benefits, this approach eliminates concerns about the victim’s employment status at the time of death and contributes to long-term healthy child development at relatively low cost. In state fiscal year 2013, 19 percent of the board’s total expenditures were for loss of support benefits.

New Mexico

The New Mexico Crime Victims Reparation Commission builds trust with victims at a time when their trust may be low as a result of the crime. Within 5 days of an application for

compensation being submitted, a special advocate from the compensation program contacts the victim. The advocate reviews the application, assesses whether an emergency award is applicable, and triages additional needs that can be addressed by external agencies, community organizations, and advocacy groups. The reparations officer assigned to the case also contacts the victim to explain the compensation process and answer questions, ensuring that the victim is contacted personally by at least two program staff, even before eligibility is determined.

South Carolina

The South Carolina Victim Compensation Program requires mental health care providers to be trained in evidence-based treatment to meet the needs of these young victims. South Carolina is using community-based dissemination, training, and implementation to increase the capacity of every community in the state to deliver evidence-supported mental health treatments to abused and traumatized children who need them. **Project BEST** is sponsored by the Medical University of South Carolina, a member of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The project teaches clinicians how to deliver evidence-supported treatments and monitor the child's progress. Through training and ongoing consultation, Project BEST also builds the knowledge and skills of mental health service providers so they may better plan, administer, and manage evidence-based treatment. The project and state office Web sites feature a list of professionals who have completed training. Victims can search by county to find trained mental health providers in their area.

Washington

State law requires the Washington Crime Victims Compensation program to cover the costs of sexual assault forensic medical examinations. To expedite the reimbursement process, the program consolidated **billing** into a one-page form and eliminated the use of CPT® (Current Procedural Terminology) codes. CPT codes are the most widely accepted medical nomenclature used to report medical procedures and services under public and private health insurance programs.

Underserved Populations

Many victims of crime are underserved or unserved, often because of language barriers, economic limitations, disabilities, or location. Advocates, criminal justice professionals, mental health providers, allied professionals, and others confront unique challenges in ensuring that all victims have access to comprehensive and effective services.

Program Spotlight

Arizona

Adults age 50 and older who are victims of domestic violence face unique challenges in attempting to protect themselves and leave their abusers. The **DOVES program** in Arizona, operated in partnership with a housing community, assists late-life domestic violence victims with emergency, transitional, and interim housing. The program also offers the following services:

- Case management.
- Support groups.
- Job readiness and search activities.
- Transportation.
- Help applying for Social Security or other benefits.

Connecticut

Since 2005, the Connecticut Office of Victim Services (OVS) has spearheaded an effort to transition all materials that victims receive to plain English. This initiative ensures that information is communicated at a fourth- or fifth-grade reading level and is clear, respectful, and supportive. Each OVS unit has a letter review committee. The committee supervisor works with the head of the Quality Assurance Unit and subject matter experts to review materials and draft revisions that remove jargon and Latin phrases (e.g., replacing the term “pro se” with “self-represented”). When claimants’ reports revealed that it was difficult to see their loved one’s names on every communication from OVS, victims’ names were removed from the headers of acknowledgment letters. To date, OVS has revised more than 150 letters and forms using plain English and striving for a consistent look and feel.

Florida

In Florida, when an offender is set for execution, a DVD, “Witnessing an Execution,” is mailed to victims and family members to watch in the privacy of their own homes, providing the details they need to make an informed decision regarding whether to attend. The video addresses topics such as media, last-minute stays, and the range of possible emotional responses. Family members, who have a statutory right to observe an execution, get tips about wearing wigs and sunglasses to disguise themselves and avoiding media detection of comments in the observation room.

New York

According to the 2010 Census, more than 13 percent of the population of New York has limited English proficiency. Executive Order 26, issued in 2011, required all state agencies to provide services to those with limited English proficiency in the same manner in which an English-proficient person might access services. To enhance communication with victims, claimants, and family members who struggle to speak, read, write, or comprehend English, the New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS) conducted a language proficiency survey of all victim assistance programs. The programs reported the capacity to communicate in more than 40 languages. Many programs also have “I Speak” cards available at their locations so victims can identify their preferred language. If no staff at the program speak their language, the program can contact OVS for assistance on behalf of the victim. OVS can access the survey information to determine if there is a trained victim advocate who speaks that language and understands the culture at another New York program. They then can contact that advocate to assist with services, compensation applications, and referrals.

North Carolina

Research from the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill School of Social

Work found that women are less likely to be revictimized by an abusive spouse or partner when they have completed a program designed to increase their families' safety, strengthen their self-esteem, and enhance their parenting skills. The study, supported by **The Duke Endowment**, was one of the first to focus on domestic violence victims who become entangled in the courts or with child protective services. The UNC study evaluated the success of the Mothers Overcoming Violence through Education and Empowerment (MOVE) program. Begun in 2007, MOVE is a collaboration between nonprofits InterAct of Wake County and **SAFEchild**. Through weekly group meetings, MOVE offers women 13 counseling sessions on safety and parenting. Given that violence in the home can affect a child's emotional, academic, and social well-being, participants' children also receive therapeutic group counseling.

Vermont

In recent years, Vermont has welcomed a growing immigrant and refugee population—more per capita than any other northern border state. Because many immigrants, refugees, and asylees cannot read in their native language, the **New Neighbors Project** created a video about victims' rights. The video features leaders from each main cultural group, and was produced in six languages. The videos were broadcast on local television networks and distributed to immigrant and refugee service providers. Vermont also created a Spanish-language novella, using a format popular in Mexico, to educate migrant farm workers about their rights, and translated the **Victims Compensation Application** into French, Spanish, Bosnian, Somali, and Vietnamese.

Washington

The Washington Office of Crime Victims Advocacy (OCVA) developed the **Language Bank Program** to help grantees meet the language needs of victims seeking advocacy services, including those victims with limited English proficiency. Agencies receiving victim advocacy grants through OCVA or the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services are eligible to apply for awards of \$1,000 to \$15,000 to cover interpretation costs directly related to advocacy, outreach, therapy, support groups, or other direct advocacy services.

Victims' Rights and Services

States across the Nation are unwavering in their efforts to promote victims' essential rights. These include the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity; the right to be informed; the right to apply for compensation; and the right to receive restitution from the offender. Beyond statutes, court rules, and administrative codes, advocates have taken various innovative steps to uphold and enforce victims' rights.

Program Spotlight

Colorado and Minnesota

The Colorado Division of Criminal Justice maintains a **Victim Rights Act (VRA) Compliance Program** to ensure victims of crime are afforded their constitutional and statutory rights. The program's goal is systemic change, either through collaboration with criminal justice agencies or as a result of a VRA complaint. A VRA specialist conducts an

initial review of formal complaints, which are then submitted to the VRA Subcommittee for final determination on whether a violation of the VRA has occurred. Each year, more than 200 victims contact the program and an average of 16 file formal complaints.

Similarly, the **Crime Victim Justice Unit** in Minnesota is a victims' rights compliance office. The unit works to ensure that crime victims' rights are upheld and promotes high standards of competence and efficiency for its staff, and justice for crime victims. The unit has the authority to investigate complaints from crime victims about the decisions and actions of criminal justice professionals.

Florida

Florida's free and confidential victim notification system, **Florida VINELink**, automatically registers all victims for automated notification. Notifications are available in English, Spanish, and Creole, 24/7, and can be sent by phone, TTY, and e-mail. Anyone who does not want to receive notifications about inmate release, transfer, or escape must sign a form specifying they want to opt out. With this opt-out system, Florida has a much higher number of victims registered to receive notices. Although it requires additional work to keep track of so many people, it increases victim and public safety.

Idaho

The Idaho Crime Victims Compensation (ICVC) program has collected restitution since December 1998. The program regularly mentors other states that want to build their internal capacity to collect restitution. ICVC collects restitution payments through its **Web site**. In August 2012, Idaho implemented a monthly billing system. Offenders are notified when they have outstanding restitution payments due. Idaho has successfully collected large sums of money from many offenders who simply were unaware they owed restitution. The offender's probation or parole officer receives a copy of the notice so he or she can assist offenders in paying their restitution. The notices direct offenders to make payments to the Clerk of the Court in their district. As a result, many victims receive restitution payments as offenders begin to satisfy their outstanding debt.

Maryland

The Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention provided more than \$680,000 to expand the state's hospital-based domestic violence programs from four to eight. Program services include screening for and documenting abuse, mandated reporting, crisis intervention, safety planning, emotional support, danger assessments, and referrals to community resources such as shelters and counseling. Maryland's programs also assist hospitals in training medical staff to recognize domestic violence and conduct proper screening procedures. Screening programs are likely to decrease hospitalizations, workplace costs and liability, misdiagnosis, and the high cost of specialty care. In addition, hospital staff are more likely to screen all patients for abuse when identifying abuse results in a simple in-house referral.

Mississippi

"A Victim's Guide" gives victims in Mississippi a comprehensive overview of all aspects

of the justice process in an easy-to-understand format, and provides tips and resources for coping with the emotional and financial aftermath of crime. The guide was created by the Office of the Attorney General, which operates the Crime Victim Compensation Division/Bureau of Victim Assistance.

New Hampshire

The New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence has received funding from the federal Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). In addition, more than 25 **AmeriCorps Victim Assistance Program** volunteers work at the state's crisis centers, prosecutors' offices, and child advocacy centers, where they serve up to 5,000 victims every year. AmeriCorps mobilizes volunteers for intensive service at nonprofit organizations, schools, public agencies, and community- and faith-based groups across the country. The volunteers who provide victim services in New Hampshire are coordinated at the state level, with funding for the coordinator's position coming from the AmeriCorps grant and a state victim assistance fund.

New Jersey

New Jersey victims of crime can retain an attorney for help not only with filing a compensation claim but with legal matters related to the victimization specified in the claim, as well. Payment for services, up to \$1,000, is deducted from the maximum claim benefits. This gives victims access to legal expertise on their behalf in a criminal matter and ensures victims' rights are protected. New Jersey pays attorney fees at the rate of \$125 per hour, with a required affidavit of work performed. In 2012, this victims' rights benefit cost only \$23,722 of the \$9.9 million awarded.

Vermont

Vermont's approach to **restitution** puts the victim's needs first by paying victims up to \$10,000 of what they are owed up front and then pursuing collection from the offenders for the remaining amounts owed and to reimburse the Special Restitution Fund. Checks to eligible victims typically are released 40 days after a judge orders restitution. From 2007 to 2012, the Vermont Restitution Unit saw \$10.5 million in revenue from the 15-percent surcharge on criminal and traffic fines to support the fund, and \$5.6 million was collected from offenders. Payouts to victims totaled \$8.2 million.

Wisconsin

The **Crime Victim Rights Board** in Wisconsin is a five-member body created by the state legislature in 1998 to enforce crime victims' rights. The board is a quasi-judicial authority, under the administration of the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Office of Crime Victim Services. The board reviews and investigates complaints filed by victims of crime alleging a violation of statutory or constitutional victims' rights by a public official, employee, or agency. The board can issue private or public reprimands for violations and seek relief on behalf of a victim. The board also can bring civil action to assess a forfeiture of up to \$1,000 for an intentional violation or refer cases to the Judicial Commission. Since 1999, the board has received 39 cases for review. It has issued 8 private reprimands and 21 reports and recommendations.

Technology

New technologies are changing the shape of victim services, enabling states to process compensation claims more quickly, track grantee activities and progress, and capture data that informs decisionmaking and programming.

Program Spotlight

Arizona and Missouri

Crime Victim Services in the Arizona Department of Public Safety uses a Web-based automated system that reduces long-term grant management costs. Through the system, the state can—

- Accept applications.
- Conduct peer reviews.
- Create contracts.
- Collect data.
- Reimburse grantees.
- Measure outcomes.
- Track progress toward project goals, including delinquencies.

Peer review comments and scores are entered directly into the system. Both successful and unsuccessful applicants can see reviewers' feedback specifically for their application. This feedback is valuable to grant writers for improving future applications.

Missouri customized a similar Internet-based grant management system to include salary information for service providers who are funded by VOCA through grants. The system enables Missouri to compare victim services salaries to equivalent positions in other nonprofit sectors.

Colorado

The Crime Victim Compensation Program for the Seventeenth Judicial District in Brighton, Colorado, has gone almost entirely paperless. Reports are now scanned, queued until they are assigned to victim files, and managed from a central storage drive. To convey case files to board members for review, program staff load case summaries and relevant documents into an encrypted online document management system. Board members use their district-issued tablets to access the documents, review claims, and prepare for monthly meetings.

Illinois and Washington

InfoNet is a Web-based data collection and reporting system of non-identifying client service data. InfoNet collects service data per client and meets the reporting requirements for VOCA, the Violence Against Women Act, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, and state funding sources. Both **Illinois** and **Washington** have InfoNet systems. Client-identifying data, such as name and date of birth, are kept outside the system to ensure confidentiality. The database facilitates data entry for local providers through dropdown menus, check boxes, and automatic calculations, when possible. The system is designed to ensure that program sites can easily comply with reporting guidelines that vary widely

while avoiding duplicative data collection. The system tracks services provided to a wide variety of crime victims, including clients who might have been victims of multiple crimes and services provided to secondary victims. User agencies also run internal reports analyzing staff workload for administrative purposes.

Conclusion

VOCA administrators, victim service providers, and allied professionals eagerly pursue opportunities to improve systems and services for victims. While some of the initiatives highlighted here involve upfront expenditures and significant time to implement, others are simple, low-cost strategies that can be adapted and replicated easily.

For More Information

OVC would like to thank the following programs and individuals for their substantial contributions to this report and dedication to meeting the needs of victims of crime. These programs join OVC in supporting the continuous exchange of information and a better understanding of the challenges faced and lessons learned. They welcome opportunities to connect with other state VOCA victim compensation and assistance administrators as they plan and launch innovative practices.

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