

Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services

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TO: Adam Greshin, Commissioner, Department of Finance & Management; Hardy Merrill, Deputy Commissioner, Will Anderson, Budget & Management Analyst

CC: Jaye Johnson, General Counsel to Governor Scott and Senior Staff

FROM: Jennifer Poehlmann, Executive Director, Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services (CCVS)

RE: VCCVS Budget Considerations for FY24

DATE: October 26, 2022

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the proposed budget for the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services for FY24, our budgetary needs, and requests. As indicated during our meeting, we offer **three primary recommendations** that we believe will reduce pressure on our limited special funds and federal grant funds and provide more stable funding for both the Center's budget and for core positions within state agencies that rely upon volatile federal and special funds.

Option 1: Dedicate the entirety of the existing \$47 surcharge to crime victim special funds

The \$47 surcharge on traffic tickets and criminal convictions, as established in 13 V.S.A. §7282, is allocated in three ways:

- \$29.75 to the Victims Compensation Fund;
- \$10.00 to the Domestic and Sexual Violence (DV/SV) Fund; and
- \$7.25 to the General Fund.

It should be noted that this was a recommendation presented in the report "Vermont's Criminal Justice Revenues", completed in February 2022 by the Joint Fiscal Oversight Office. To quote:

"It is recommended that the \$7.25 that currently goes to the General Fund instead be allocated to one of the other two funds. This reallocation would add anywhere from \$300,000 to \$400,000 in annual revenues for the two special funds over the next three fiscal years, 2023 to 2025. The General Fund would lose this funding under this proposal."

Splitting the \$7.25 between the two victim services special funds would go a significant way toward helping with anticipated shortfalls and mitigating continued declines in special funds.

Option 2: Fund the Domestic Violence Trainer position, mandated under 20 VSA §2365 and located within the Vermont Criminal Justice Council, with General Funds.

Per statute, the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services is required to fund 50% of this state position. The amount the Center is currently obligated to pay for FY24 for this state position is \$61,525; those funds come from the declining DV/SV fund, which has a projected shortfall of \$300,000 for FY24.

Option 3: Shift the funding for two state positions within the Vermont Department of Public Safety from grant funding to general funds.

The Vermont Department of Public Safety currently employs two victim advocate positions that work with the Major Crimes Unit as first responders to serious crimes and ALL deaths in the state, regardless of whether the death is due to a suspected criminal act.

The Victim Services Director position is funded by the VCCVS with federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) dollars in the amount of \$137,100 annually.

The Victim Services Specialist position is funded through a \$400,000 three-year discretionary grant from the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) that goes directly to the Department of Public Safety. This grant funding ends in FY23. Currently, CCVS has no options to pick up funding to support the continuation of this position.

These advocates are funded entirely with federal funds. These positions have been extremely successful from all reports and provide support for both victims and law enforcement officers. Local law enforcement agencies have also reached out to these advocates for support on serious cases. As state positions, our suggestion is that they should be funded and supported with state funds rather than dependent upon the vagaries of federal funds.

Additionally, we are requesting an **additional 3% increase to our base** for FY24. We did not receive a 3% increase for FY23 and respectfully hope that consideration will be given to granting this as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or need additional information.