



## **Department Mission Statement**

**The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services** is mandated to administer the Victims Compensation Program, the Vermont Restitution Unit, and the Victim Assistance Program. In addition, per 13 V.S.A. § 5361, the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services is directed to:

- Strengthen and coordinate programs serving crime victims
- Promote the rights and needs of crime victims statewide
- Administer federal and state grant funds for crime victim services
- Serve as a clearinghouse for information regarding crime victims

## **UPDATED: Covid-19 Budget and Services Issues**

**Grantees:** The Center subgrants to non-profit and government agencies in order to provide a wide array of victim services throughout the state.

### **Network Programs**

By far, the domestic and sexual violence providers have been hardest hit with additional costs due to COVID-19, both for this fiscal year through June of 2021. Based on what the programs have seen over the last two months their increased costs cover the following services:

1. Shelter costs – Shelters are spending and anticipate spending additional funds on specialized cleaning, cleaning supplies, and the replacement of items, like sheets, which must be removed if a survivor tests positive. They are also purchasing masks and gloves.
2. Crisis Pay to Staff – Advocates have been named Essential Personnel by the State of Vermont, and member organizations will be paying staff who are venturing out into the community to meet the needs of survivors, including delivering food to hotels where survivors are now housed, attending RFA hearings in-person, meeting with people at shelters, etc.
3. Direct Aid to Survivors – Survivors' needs for safe housing, food security, gas cards, etc. has grown significantly. Survivors are beginning to move out into communities and seek help from member organizations.
4. Equipment for providing remote services – Member organizations need to purchase laptops, tablets and other equipment necessary for advocacy to be provided remotely. Additional software is needed to open on-line chat options for survivors. HIPAA-compliant Zoom accounts are needed for staff to communicate with each other, as well as conduct support groups.
5. Staff Health Insurance – Several of our members have gotten estimates for increases in health insurance premiums in the range of 25%. They are hearing that this increase is as a result of COVID-19.,
6. Core Services – Member organizations' ability to raise private funding through events has been severely impacted. They report that they will be forced to lay off many members of their staff and discontinue some core services without the funding needed to support their core functions.

The estimated COVID-related costs for member organizations totals \$756,700 for the period of March 2020 through June 2021, with an additional \$50,000 for the Network itself, due to increased costs for attorneys and costs related to working offsite. Taking into account federal COVID-19 emergency funds to Vermont to be used to offset some of these costs, the expected need for the Network and the programs is an additional \$623,690. The Center was notified this week that the expected FVPSA funding for shelter programs would be significantly less than originally thought. We now have the award documents and the Network programs will be getting \$128,000 less than originally thought. These COVID-19 FVPSA funds are for the cost of providing vital services to victims of domestic violence and increased costs associated with alternate housing and food because of COVID-19. Taking into account the reduction in federal COVID-19 emergency funds to Vermont to be used to offset some of these costs, the expected need for the Network and the programs is an additional \$752,190.

### **Human Trafficking Programs**

The Center supports Case Manager positions in two police departments (South Burlington and Rutland). These two programs are supported using VOCA Assistance funding. They too have seen an increase in costs due to COVID-19 including hotel, food, and transportation costs. We estimate needing an additional \$20,000 to cover direct client costs from March 2020 through September 2020 when additional Human Trafficking Funding will be available to these programs through subgrants from the federal Human Trafficking Cooperative Agreement that the Center and Vermont State Police oversee.

### **Advocate Program**

The Center supports Victim Advocates in the State Attorney's offices. Currently Compensation Special Funding and VOCA Assistance Funding support these 24 positions. With the reduction of deposits to the Compensation Special Fund, there will be an impact on support for this program. The Center has back filled these positions with federal funding. In the past, we saw increases over the last 4 years. Beginning last year there have been significant reductions on the federal funds, and any revenue loss from the special fund will result in reductions to the Advocate Program without additional state support. The Center estimates a \$400,000 need through June 2021. This reduction will see a loss of 4-5 FTE advocate positions in FY 21. COVID-19 funding would be used to sustain these positions until June 30, 2021.

### **Child Advocacy Centers, Supervised Visitation Centers, Anti-Violence Grants**

The Center has just been notified of a potential reduction of SGF in the amount of \$101,134. This is the 8% reduction over the course of the year. This represents all pass-through funds and goes directly to support services to victims. The Center is not sure how these reductions will be done but expect that some or all of these programs may see reductions that in prior years may have been back-filled with VOCA funding that no long is possible.

### **The Center**

The Center has not established the amount of funding that may be needed to support the Center itself. We are fine through June 2020 and anticipate the need will be for the 2021 budget.

The Center is looking at the impact of the reductions in revenue outlined below, and we are keeping close watch on the deposits. The Center had three open positions that remain open. Last month the Center furloughed 14 staff members. We are looking at cutting costs as needed, but anticipate a \$1

million to \$2 million decrease for 2021. That may be the best case scenario, but we will not know until we see how the deposits come in, at which time the Center will need either additional assistance or further reductions in operations. Thirteen staff work in the Compensation and Restitution Units and Special Funds support their positions. The grant program receives funding for administering the subgrants and while that will be slightly reduced because the funding is being reduced, the Center is only allowed 5% to go towards administrative costs.

The Center now has some direct costs associated with doing business during the COVID-19 crisis. We had five staff who could have worked remotely but did not have laptop computers. The Center purchased these for a cost of \$1,500 each. In addition, two ZOOM accounts were purchased for a total of \$300. As we are preparing to return to our offices, we are negotiating additional cleaning needs. Currently we have our offices cleaned twice a week, after hours. We will be increasing it beginning June 1 to five times a week for an additional \$2,000 a month. In addition, we are needing to purchase face masks, sanitizer, additional cleaning supplies, etc. for an increased cost, through June 30, 2021 of \$100 a month. The total identified COVID-19 related costs for the Center are \$35,100.

### **Anticipated Funding Losses**

The Center anticipates a dramatic loss of revenue from the three Special Funds that support programming. Federal VOCA Assistance Funding for victims of crime have not increased, nor have they been included in the COVID-19 legislative initiatives. The Center was already projecting a loss of over \$1,000,000 in federal VOCA Assistance funding, so there is no extra funding available to grant to the Network programs and cover the decreases in the Special Funds.

1. Compensation Fund: This fund is projected to finish this fiscal year 20% under budget (\$400,000). Going into 2021, the loss will be even greater, as fines and court fees continue to decrease. The Center had hoped that this fund would stabilize, but that seems an impossibility now.
2. Restitution Fund: This fund is projected to finish this fiscal year 15% under budget (\$333,000). We do not expect to see this stabilize and anticipate significant reductions in deposits during 2021.
3. DV/SV Fund: This fund is projected to finish this fiscal year 15% under budget (\$95,000). These funds are passed through to the Network member programs for direct services to victims. With increased costs for these programs already identified, this source of revenue may also require cuts due to the decrease in deposits.

### **Total Funding Need**

Based on the calculations outlined above, \$1,207,290 is the projected need to support the efforts outlined above. Additional adjustments may be needed as FY 2021 progresses.