

Center for Crime Victim Services

Long-Standing Support for Victims' Voices in
Restorative Justice Programming in Vermont

Historical Background

In 2002, CCVS worked with the City of Burlington to help establish the Parallel Justice Program in the Community Justice Center there. It was one of three pilot sites chosen nationwide. To date, it is the longest running of the three, and the most successful program nationwide.

Susan Herman is the visionary behind the Parallel Justice model. This model is based on the framework that in addition to holding people that commit crimes accountable, we have an equally important obligation to repair the harm that is created. So, in addition to the traditional criminal justice responses after a crime is committed, the Parallel Justice model offers a separate set of justice responses **for the victim**. These services involve immediate response, practical assistance, crisis intervention, safety and long-term assistance for the on-going needs that arise from the crime. This framework puts **our responsibility** to victims in the "justice," framework, rather than passing that responsibility on to charity or discretionary government programs.

Since 2002, CCVS has provided Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant funding to support the Parallel Justice Program housed at the Burlington Community Justice Center. In SFY 2023, the program is receiving a \$140,164 grant which helps to support two dedicated victim advocates; one housed in the Burlington Police Department and the other at the Community Justice Center. In SFY 22, the program reported serving 232 new crime victims.

The Voice and Choice Demonstration Project

Informed by State and National Strategic Planning

An unmet need to provide funding opportunities to Community Justice Centers to replicate the Parallel Justice Model and increase support and services to crime victims was identified nationally by the Department of Justice's [Vision 21](#) report, as well as [strategic planning conducted by the Center for Crime Victim Services](#). The following statistics from the Bureau of Justice statistics help to put this need in perspective:



CCVS Long Standing Support for Victims Voices in Restorative Justice

- Only 42% of serious violent crimes and 40% of property crimes are reported to law enforcement.
- Only 9% of violent crime victims receive direct assistance.

In 2018, as a result of the unprecedented increase in Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, the Center was able to establish the **Voice and Choice Demonstration Project**, with the following desired outcomes:

- Sustainably increase Vermont's capacity to serve people affected by crime at the community level.
- Better identify and address victim's self-defined needs, regardless of whether charges are filed.
- Increase opportunities for meaningful and voluntary victim involvement in restorative and parallel processes.
- Increase victim satisfaction and restore people's faith in their communities.

The Center initiated a competitive application process and received applications from nine counties. Given the funding, the Center was able to support the following five:

- BROCC Community Action (to establish a dedicated victim liaison)
- Franklin/Grand Isle Restorative Justice Center (to establish a dedicated victim liaison)
- Lamoille Restorative Center (to build Parallel Justice programming)
- Orange County Diversion Program (to build Parallel Justice Programming and establish a dedicated victim liaison)
- South Burlington Community Justice Center (to build Parallel Justice Programming)

The Center has supported these programs since October 1, 2018, with \$200,490 annually, which has remained level since 2018. **In calendar year 2021, these programs supported 842 new crime victims**, with 1,289 crimes indicated as some incidents of victimization involve more than one crime. 69% of the crimes fell into these top four categories; robbery, vehicular, identity theft/fraud, and adult physical assault. Victims received support in many ways; information about the criminal justice process ,referral to other services, information about victim rights and referral to other victim programs, advocacy in applying for public benefits, intervention with employers, creditors, landlords, or academic institutions, law enforcement interview accompaniment, or interpreter services.

The St. Josephs Inquiry

In SFY's 20 and 21 the Center supported the [St. Joseph's Inquiry](#) with \$34,106 in VOCA grants each year, to document and understand the events of the orphanage through the voices, experiences, and the stories of those most impacted (former residents). In SFY 22, the State supported the project with \$25,000 in General Funds.