

TO: Adam Greshin, Commissioner, Department of Finance & Management; Hardy Merrill, Deputy Commissioner; Will Anderson, Budget & Management Analyst
CC: Jaye Johnson, Esq., General Counsel to Governor Scott and Senior Staff
FROM: Jennifer Poehlmann, J.D. Executive Director, Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
Carol Brochu, Director of Finance & Administration, Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
RE: VCCVS Budget Considerations for FY25
DATE: October 26, 2023

Thank you for meeting to discuss the proposed Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services (VCCVS) budget for FY25, our budgetary needs, and requests. We have two specific subgrants for which we are requesting a small amount of general funding, which, if provided, promises to reduce pressure on our declining federal funds and provide more stable funding for core victim service positions.

1. VCCVS requests that funding for the Victim Advocate position located within the Attorney General's Office be fully supported by General Fund dollars.

Currently, one Victim Advocate works on all the criminal cases that the Attorney General's Office handles statewide. General Funds partly fund her position through the Attorney General's Office; the other half is funded by VCCVS with Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) dollars in the amount of \$43,500. This position is a state position.

VOCA is currently projected to have a 40% deficit for FY25. This will have an impact on countless direct service programs in our state, as well as on staffing levels at VCCVS. A core state position that Vermont statutes charge with providing many rights and services to victims should not be subject to the vagaries of grant funding; rather, it should be funded entirely with General Fund dollars.

This would stabilize funding for this position and alleviate some of the pressure on our VOCA funds in the hope that we can minimize the impact of cuts to VOCA funding.

2. We are requesting an increase in the amount of the full 3% to our base General Funds.

This amount would total \$44,180. As noted above, our federal VOCA funding is currently projected to decrease by 40% for the upcoming fiscal year. We intend to use this increase in our base as a direct pass-through to support Vermont's 13 Child Advocacy Centers – which, in conjunction with Vermont's Special Investigation Units, provide support to victims of child abuse and sexual assault, coordinating the response and intervention on the over 1900 cases that are reported to law enforcement in our state each year.



These programs had secured a general fund appropriation over the years that totaled \$290,000. When VOCA funding was strong, we could better “protect” and resource these programs by leveraging VOCA funding over General Funds. The anticipated cuts in VOCA funding will put these direct service programs at risk. We wish to restore general fund dollars to these programs, which is in keeping with the original legislative intent supporting state funding for this core service.

As with the above request, in this way, we would not only stabilize funding for these programs by honoring the original legislative intent. It would also alleviate the significant pressures on our declining VOCA funds.

It should be noted that recently, we have used some of our base funding to support our rent for VCCVS. We have decreased our rental expenses by consolidating our space significantly, moving our main administrative operations to our space at 60 South Main Street. The decrease we have achieved makes it possible for us to shift any increase to our base to actual direct services.

Please do not hesitate to contact us in the future if you have any questions or need additional information. We are grateful for the support the Administration has shown VCCVS and for its commitment to victims/survivors in Vermont.