

The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services, established under 13 VSA §5361, administers the Victims Compensation Program, the Restitution Unit, and is statutorily responsible for the Victim Assistance Program, as well as several state and federal grant programs for direct service to all crime victims. The Center works with both businesses and individuals, regardless of the type of crime, and provides specialized services for eligible victims.

The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services serves as a voice within government for the needs of crime victims and survivors in Vermont. The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services serves the state by:

1. Providing **direct services** to victims of crime and strengthening and coordinating programs serving victims;
2. Organizing and providing **training** for volunteers, community members, advocates, allied professions, and others on issues related to working with crime victims; and
3. Soliciting and issuing **grants** for community and statewide programs working with crime victims, including assisting in developing and administering programs and services for victims and survivors.

1. DIRECT SERVICES

The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services provides two distinct direct services for victims of crime: Victims Compensation and Restitution Enforcement and Advancement. The Center is also statutorily responsible for maintaining the Victim Assistance Program, pursuant to 13 VSA §5304.

Goal: To help victims of crime rebuild their lives and to mitigate the financial, physical, and psychological impacts of crime.

Objective: Support victims by compensating uninsured financial losses (medical, counseling, safety, etc.) and providing trained advocates throughout the state

Performance Measure: Number of victims served and victim satisfaction.

The Victims Compensation Program is funded through the Center's special fund appropriation. The program provides limited financial assistance to victims who have experienced an uninsured financial loss as a direct result of a violent crime. Staff members verify claims through a comprehensive investigative process, and approved payments are made either to service providers or directly to the victim. The number of new claims received annually fluctuates, and there was a decrease in that number from SFY20 at 516 to SFY22 at 389. This reflects larger trends related to COVID's impact on the criminal justice system, and we are seeing the number of cases trend back upward as the court begins to reduce the backlog and return to "normal" operations. State special fund dollars paid to victims from the Victims Compensation Fund also leverage federal reimbursement at a rate of 75%.

The Victim Assistance Program had been funded through the Center’s special fund appropriation and Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds prior to this current fiscal year. Twenty-seven victim advocates working in State’s Attorneys’ Offices throughout the state assist victims through the criminal justice process. Advocates help ensure that victim rights established in statute are observed, including the right to be informed, to be present, to be consulted, and to be heard at sentencing. In the larger counties, specialized victim advocates work exclusively with victims of domestic violence, child abuse, or sexual assault to respond to their unique needs. For SFY23, the funding for that program was switched to General Fund dollars and is currently directly appropriated to the Department of State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs.

The Restitution Unit, authorized in 2003, is funded by the Center’s Restitution Special Fund. The Unit collects restitution owed to victims by criminal offenders, enforces restitution orders, and processes claims for Special Fund advancements of up to \$5,000 to eligible victims. The court sends Restitution Judgment Orders to the Unit, fund advances to victims are made as allowed by law, and the Unit collects from offenders to reimburse the Fund. Where the victim is not eligible for fund advancement, or the order exceeds the \$5,000 cap, the Unit collects on behalf of the victim (much like the Office of Child Support), so that victims do not have to undertake this difficult work on their own.

2. TRAINING

The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services provides basic and advanced training opportunities on issues related to crime victimization for advocates, community members, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers.

Goal: To provide a variety of training and technical assistance opportunities throughout Vermont to expand and enhance services for victims of crime based on national best practices and local law

Objective: Increase knowledge and skills of advocates, staff, and allied professionals to help ensure quality services and support for victims of crime

Performance Measure: Number of opportunities offered, number of people who participated, attendee satisfaction.

The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services staff works with consultants and seasoned victim service professionals designing and delivering training opportunities. In addition, staff provide facilitation and logistics for events and work cooperatively across the state to ensure basic and advanced training. With COVID protocols relaxing, the Center has been able to resume delivering the Vermont Victim Assistance Academy – a nationally accredited several-day training. Participants who complete the Academy are then able to achieve advanced certification.

Additionally, the Center is hosting its first annual “Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Institute” for all its subgrantees. This three-day Institute features nationally renowned experts and is provided at no cost. The goal of the training is to ensure that all victim service programs have meaningful, measurable, and time-bound IDEA plans in place. Also, the Center hosted a day-long all-advocate retreat and

regularly offers topic-specific informational networking opportunities. Annually the Center provides a leadership day for providers during National Crime Victims Rights Week. Our award-winning podcast “The Mend” continues to regularly provide specialized information from local and national experts.

3. GRANTS

The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services administers State and Federal grants to non-profits, prosecutors, law enforcement, and associated agencies.

Goal: To increase victim safety and ensure access to quality victim services statewide.

Objective: Identify and support agencies across the state and provide grant compliance, technical assistance, and monitoring.

Performance Measure: Number of agencies funded, number of victims served, number of services provided.

State and Federal Grants administered by the Center support a comprehensive, statewide network of accessible victim services. Our centralized model is efficient and maximizes geographic and demographic equity across program proposes. Center staff monitor all grant recipients for financial and programmatic compliance with state and federal guidelines – this includes over 67 subgrantees and 267 separate grant agreements. The Center provides technical assistance to non-profit victim service agencies and government partners to help them seek additional funding from outside sources.

State Grant Programs:

- State Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program
- The Supervised Visitation Grant
- Child Advocacy Center Program
- Act 174: domestic violence prevention

*** The Center does not receive any administrative funds for the administration of any state grants.

Federal Grant Programs:

- Victims of Crime Act Formula Assistance Grant
- Victims of Crime Act Compensation Grant
- STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant
- Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)
- FVPSA American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) - Mobile
- FPPSA ARPA – Sexual Assault
- Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Grant

- Sexual Assault Services Program Formula Grant