

Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services: **FY26 Budget Narrative**

Mission: Established under 13 VSA §5361, the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services (CCVS) offers support, advocacy and services for those impacted by crime, and works to hold those who have caused harm responsible.

Activities and programs we are funding:

Per Vermont statute, CCVS: promotes the rights and needs of crime victims statewide; develops, strengthens and coordinates programs serving victims; administers state and federal grant funds for victim services; oversees the State of Vermont's Victims Compensation Program and Restitution Unit; and serves as a clearinghouse for information regarding victimization.

Through State General and Special Funds, CCVS supports: the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and its 14 member programs, Vermont's 13 Child Advocacy Centers, Supervised Visitation, domestic/sexual violence prosecutors, the Victims Compensation Program and the Vermont Restitution Unit.

CCVS uses federal funds to support the agency itself along with the programming noted above. Additionally, federal funds are used to support Vermont's Legal Partnership for Crime Victims, Restorative Justice Programming, Human Trafficking case managers, the Vermont Judiciary, Attorney General's Office and the Forensic Nursing Program, among others. Federal funding supports grants to multiple programs that assist underserved populations.

Who do we serve:

CCVS provides assistance to and supports services for Vermonters who are victims of crime. Most services that exist are not dependent upon the existence of a conviction for a crime.

How do our programs work:

CCVS' Victims Compensation Program works directly with victims, advocates and service providers to make direct payments to eligible victims for certain crime-related losses and expenses. The Program conducts frequent training for our partners and outreach events to communities.

The State of Vermont Restitution Unit is operated by CCVS, and the Unit works directly with offenders, victims, advocates, corrections, diversion and the judiciary to ensure efficient and timely collection and payment of restitution to victims as ordered by a court. Unit staff provide regular training for advocates,



diversion, probation/parole and court staff.

CCVS' Grants' Program administers over 260 individual subgrants to over 60 subgrantees. CCVS staff work with subgrantees to identify programming needs and gaps, and provides technical assistance with budget development, narratives and reporting. Staff conduct site visits, review programmatic and financial data for compliance, and report regularly to federal and state grantors and funders. Grant Program staff also conduct trainings, focus groups, statewide strategic planning and facilitate regular meetings with subgrantees. Our grants management system, GEARS, was customized by our Program Staff and requires regular maintenance and updates.

Changes to ensure more efficient and effective service delivery:

The Victims Compensation, Restitution and Grants Programs all have invested in IT solutions to increase efficiencies, improve accessibility and enable a timely response that is still victim-centered, compassionate, and responsive to the needs of our subgrantees. We anticipate the utilization of these systems will also save money in the future.

New Initiatives:

At this time, CCVS is unable to propose new initiatives, despite existing gaps and the need for additional positions, due to the very significant constraints on our budget and the budgets of our 60 plus subgrantees. Currently, programming within CCVS and that offered by our subgrantees is facing funding cuts.

Programs/Issues posing most significant challenges:

- Changing complexion of crime and victimization
 - Increase in violent crime/homicides in Vermont
 - Victims are presenting for support with more complex needs, who in addition to significant trauma, frequently experience mental health, substance misuse, and housing challenges, among others.
- Sustainable and sufficient funding for CCVS and Vermont victim services, which rely heavily upon uncertain and declining revenue sources. As noted above, while caseloads have increased, and victims are presenting with increasingly more complex needs, providers and advocates continue to work in positions that have been level-funded for over a decade; funding does not exist to provide cost of living increases nor to add additional positions.

CCVS bears the same burden as other state agencies relative to increases in health insurance and other benefits and the costs of necessary IT systems. Unfortunately, these costs are proportionally greater to a small agency such as CCVS, which must "go it alone" as it cannot participate in existing plans established for state employees.

What have we done to address challenges:

- Level-funded programs for 15 years to avoid "cuts"
- Utilized vacancy savings and consolidated office space
- Adopted IT solutions that promise to improve efficiency and lower costs long term

- Requested a JFO study of our declining revenues and worked with the Legislature to implement some recommendations
 - Successfully advocated for state positions that CCVS had supported with Special or Federal Funds to shift to General Funds.
 - Obtained funding for an additional grants position at CCVS
- Financial and grant administration by our 60 plus subgrantees requires an enormous amount of training and technical assistance from the Center, some of which is provided without funding for administrative support. CCVS currently administers over \$2.3M in state grant funds with no financial support for the work required.

What have we done to address challenges:

Our Senior Grants Manager and Finance Director have been developing a financial training for all our subgrantees; we expect this training will be available by late Spring 2025. Additionally, CCVS has customized, established and trained our subgrantees on the utilization of GEARS, a grants management system. Staff support for subgrantees to utilize this system is ongoing, especially due to frequent turnover in positions.

Significant Financial Changes:

CCVS is unique as a state agency in that most of its funding and the funding we administer is dependent upon grants and surcharges. The available funding streams operate on different fiscal years. Our grants and special fund revenues are uncertain and volatile, making it even more challenging to build a budget for CCVS and the programs that rely on the funding we provide.

Loss of Federal Funds for Programming:

Our sources of federal funding are detailed in the dedicated section below. There are two significant changes we will highlight here.

- 1) The largest victim services grant Vermont receives, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant, has been in a decline for the past several years. For this coming fiscal year, the grant declined in one year from \$3M to \$1.9M – resulting in a \$1.1M loss to programming in Vermont.
- 2) Three federal grants provided under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) are ending on September 30,2025. Currently, those grants provide \$777K to support victim services.

Loss of State Special Funds for Programming:

CCVS administers 3 Special Funds that are supported by a surcharge on civil violations and criminal convictions, per 13 VSA §7282. This has been a declining revenue source for over a decade.

There are two identified primary factors for this decrease. The first relates to changed behavior among law enforcement officers. The issuance of traffic tickets has declined steadily over the past decade-plus, as staff shortages and the rise in crime have caused changes in practice and priority. The other primary factor has been criminal justice reforms that have resulted in changes such as decriminalization of acts or increased diversion from the criminal justice system.

Victims Compensation Special Fund (Compensation) 13 VSA §5359

The Compensation Fund provides financial assistance to victims that have experienced a financial loss

as a direct result of a crime, to include medical, loss of wages, funeral, counseling, housing and relocation, sexual assault mental and health services, crime scene clean up, and others. The Fund has experienced a 50% decline in revenues over the past five years and is **currently projected to have a deficit in SFY 25 in the amount of \$562K.**

Crime Victims Restitution Special Fund (Restitution) 13 VSA §5363

The Restitution Fund aims to address the financial loss and hardship caused to victims of crime. The Fund provides advancements to individuals for crime-related losses ordered by a court and supports the operation of the Unit. The Unit collects restitution from offenders on behalf of their victims and enforces outstanding orders. The Fund has experienced a 33% decrease in revenues over the past five years and is **currently projected to have a deficit in SFY 25 in the amount of \$324K.**

Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund (DV/SV) 13 VSA §5360

The DV/SV Fund provides funding for programs that address domestic and sexual violence and stalking. Funding is passed through CCVS to support the Network and its 14 member programs, the Domestic Violence Council Coordinator, and The Pride Center of Vermont. In addition to the surcharge, this Fund also relies on marriage license fees, as established under 32 VSA §1712(1). The Fund has experienced a decline in revenues and is **currently projected to have a deficit in SFY 25 in the amount of \$93K.**

Source of Federal Funding:

Approximately half of the funding CCVS receives and administers is provided through federal grants. The current grants and funding amounts are as follows:

Services Training Officers and Prosecutors (STOP) \$859,024, STOP supports communities in their efforts to develop and strengthen effective responses to sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking.

Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA) \$803,024, supports emergency shelters, and domestic violence programs throughout Vermont.

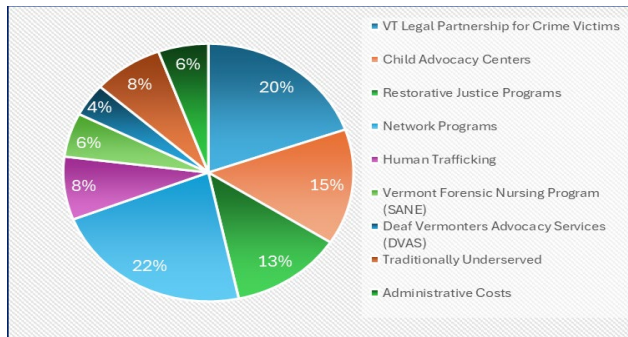
Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP) \$771,191 supports Vermont's two stand-alone rape crisis centers to serve victims of sexual assault with legal advocacy, crisis intervention, hospital/clinic/other medical response, case management and 24/7 hot line.

Rural Grant Program \$316,667 Provides funding and support to children and families who live in isolation and whose lives have been impacted by violence.

Family Violence Prevention Services Act: (ARPA Funds) \$777K was provided by the federal Agency of Health and Human Services, due to the impact of the COVID pandemic on victim services programming. *This funding ends September 30, 2025.*

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) \$1,938,654 In SFY26, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant decreased from \$3M to \$1.9M, *resulting in a loss of \$1.1M* to Vermont.

This is the largest grant that CCVS receives, supporting 46 programs as follows:



****Direct services to Vermont crime victims will be cut without the appropriation of additional funding.**

Date Collection and Performance Measures:

The Victims Compensation Program collects data on the number of claims, types of crimes, and the amount of money paid by case type and by expense/loss; the collection of demographic data is also attempted. This information is reported to our Board, established under 13 VSA §5352, monthly; our funders also receive this data.

The Restitution Unit collects data on the number of victims paid, the amounts paid, and the number of individuals versus businesses reimbursed. The Unit also tracks the number of restitution orders issued by county and has established monthly benchmarks for the number of offender contacts that must be made and the amount of restitution collected. This data is shared with the CCVS Board and with the state of Vermont.

In SFY 25, the Center for Crime Victim Services (CCVS) distributed \$9,554,341 in federal and state grant funds, to 60 agencies in Vermont that provide core services for crime victims. Each funding stream has unique, complex and lengthy performance measures that are collected either annually, semi-annually or quarterly to reporting platforms with different data sets. These platforms all collect information on demographics and types of victimization and services offered. Additionally, some funding streams expect more specific reporting on data points tailored toward the purpose of the grant. More detailed information is available on request and examples can be found on page 5 of CCVS' Budget Overview.

Support Requested:

The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services is seeking an additional \$2,539,000 in General Funds for SFY26:

- \$1.5 M to support VOCA core victim services
- \$600K to address the projected deficit in the Victims Compensation Special Fund
- \$324K to address the projected deficit in the Restitution Special Fund
- \$115K = 5% of the \$2.3M of the General Funds and Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Funds to support administrative requirements

*** The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence has submitted a separate funding request over and above CCVS' request to address their funding challenges and programmatic needs.