

Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime

2024 Activities Report

Submitted to:
Judge Elizabeth A. Bozzuto
Chief Court Administrator

From:
Judge Chaplin and Yvette Young
Advisory Council Co-Chairs

December 2024



Prepared with staff support from
Office of Victim Services
State of Connecticut Judicial Branch

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I. Advisory Council Roster

Honorable Courtney M. Chaplin, Co-Chair,
Superior Court Judge, Hartford Superior Court, GA14

Yvette Young, Co-Chair,
Associate Vice President of Programs and Advocacy
The Village for Families and Children

Lisa D'Angelo
Executive Assistant State's Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice

Emily Burnett
Planning Analyst, OPM Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division

Bob Garguilo
Executive Director, Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Beth Hamilton
Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

Amy Lupoli
Senior Director of Clinical Services, Klingberg Family Centers

Irene Mikol
Chief Victim Compensation Commissioner

Susan M. Omilian
Founder and Facilitator, My Avenging Angel Workshop™

Geralyn O'Neil-Wild
Vice President of Operations, Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Jessica Pizzano
Director of Victim Services, Survivors of Homicide, Inc.

Lee Ross
Deputy Director, External Affairs Division

Ebonie Suggs
Counselor Supervisor, Victim Services Unit, Department of Correction

Deborah Witkin
Executive Director, Connecticut Legal Services

Andrew Woods
Executive Director, Hartford Communities That Care, Inc.

II. 2024 Meeting Schedule

Date	Location	Time
February 6	225 Spring Street Wethersfield, CT	2:00 to 4:00 pm
April 23	225 Spring Street Wethersfield, CT	2:00 to 4:00 pm
June 4	225 Spring Street Wethersfield, CT	2:00 to 4:00 pm
November 12	225 Spring Street Wethersfield, CT	2:00 to 4:00 pm

III. Statutory Charge

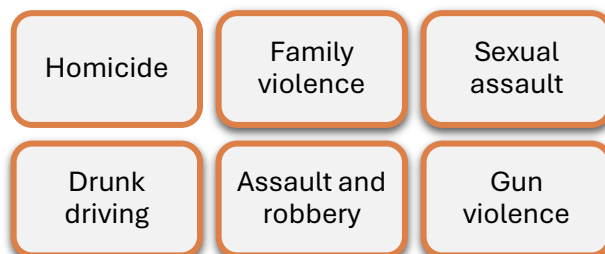
The Advisory Council for Victims of Crime (“Advisory Council”) is established pursuant to Section 54-203(b)(9) of the Connecticut General Statutes:

The council shall consist of not more than fifteen members to be appointed by the Chief Justice and shall include the Chief Victim Compensation Commissioner and members who represent victim populations, including but not limited to, homicide survivors, family violence victims, sexual assault victims, victims of drunk drivers, and assault and robbery victims, and members who represent the judicial branch and executive branch agencies involved with victims of crime. The members shall serve for terms of four years. Any vacancy in the membership shall be filled by the appointing authority for the balance of the unexpired term. The members shall receive no compensation for their services. The council shall meet at least four times a year. The council shall recommend to the Office of Victim Services program, legislative or other matters which would improve services to victims of crime and develop and coordinate needs assessments for both court-based and community-based victim services. The Chief Justice shall appoint two members to serve as co-chairpersons. Not later than December fifteenth of each year, the council shall report the results of its findings and activities to the Chief Court Administrator.

In conformance with the statute, the Judicial Branch Office of Victim Services (JB-OVS) provides the Advisory Council with staff services, including assistance with developing and distributing meeting agendas and minutes, hosting meetings at JB-OVS Central Office, contributing presentations, providing updates, and assisting with this report and other materials as requested.

IV. Structure

Figure 1 Victim populations statutorily assigned to the Advisory Council pursuant to CGS 54-203(b)(9)

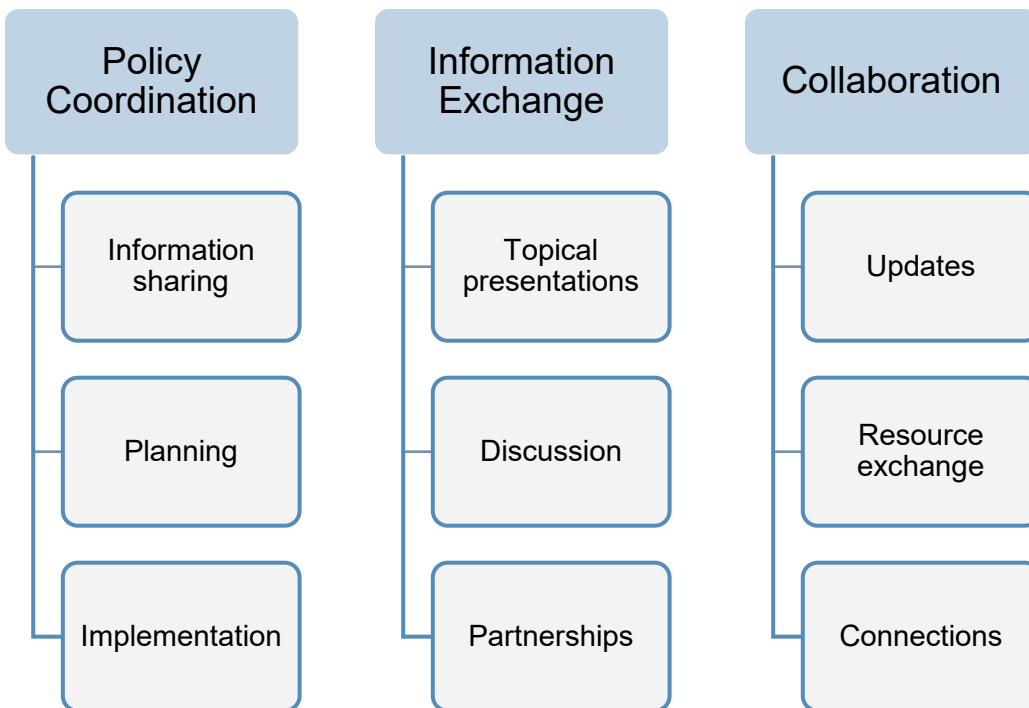


The 2022 to 2026 Council term began September 1, 2022, and will conclude on August 31, 2026. Judge Chaplin and Yvette Young, both appointed by then Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson, serve as Advisory Council co-chairs.

An Act Concerning Court Operations and Administrative Proceedings (Public Act 24-108), signed into law on June 4, 2024,

increases the Council membership from 15 to 20 individuals. It also expands the victim populations represented on the council pursuant to the statute to include victims of gun violence — joining homicide, family violence, sexual assault, drunk drivers, and assault and robbery.

Figure 2 The Advisory Council's major activities and their components



V. Activities

In 2024, the Advisory Council held four meetings, all in person. Requirements set forth by the Freedom of Information Act and the Public Access Task Force Requirements regarding the posting of meeting minutes (both draft and final), agendas, and meeting schedules were fulfilled.

The Advisory Council contains a wide cross-section of victim service providers, advocates, criminal justice professionals, and stakeholders. It features representatives who are system- and community-based. While each agenda is responsive to priority and emerging topics, three items generally occur at each meeting: policy coordination, information exchange, and collaboration. An overview of each is provided below.

A. **Policy coordination**

Advisory Council meeting agendas generally include policy updates, planning, and implementation. This helps members: increase their collective awareness and understanding of pending legislation, plan for successful implementation, and coordinate with one another on the implementation of enacted policies. With objectives that include increasing the collective understanding of potential impacts on victim and survivor populations, level of advanced planning among victim service organizations, and efficient allocation of resources to implement policy changes successfully.

B. Information exchange

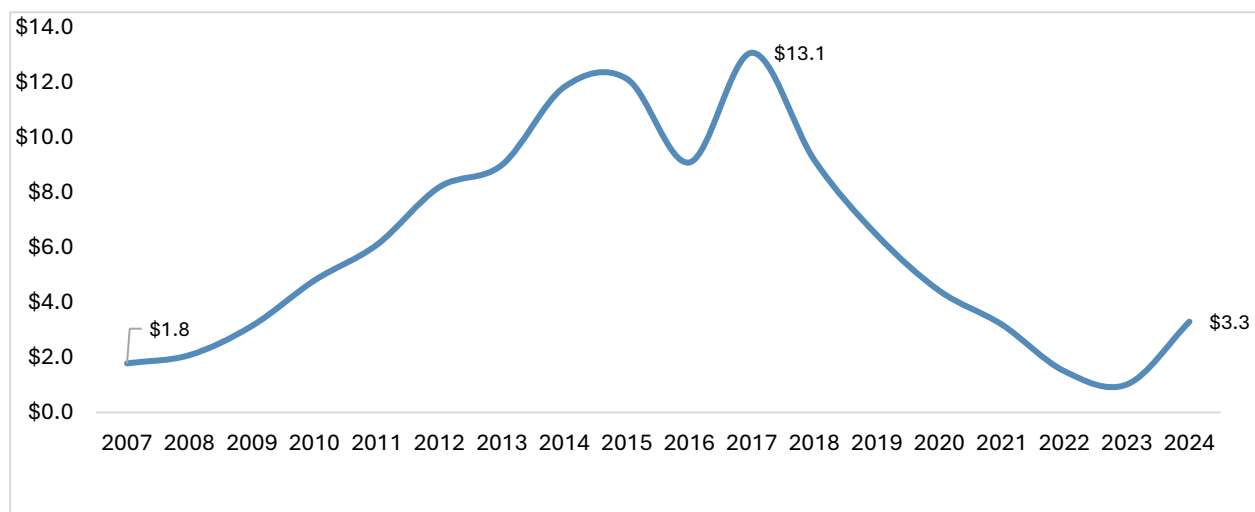
Advisory Council meetings generally also include members or invited guests delivering topical presentations and updates regarding priority or emerging issues. Members discuss material in detail, providing insights from their areas of subject matter expertise and forge tighter partnerships as part of collaborative efforts to address the needs of victims and survivors. Three highlights of such presentations are provided below.

First, JB-OVS provided a federal overview of the Crime Victims Fund (CVF), monies from which are deducted, in accordance with a cap set by Congress through the appropriations process, every year to provide grants to states as part of the Victims of Crime Act Assistance (VOCA Assistance) grant program and other financial obligations pursuant to federal statute. The presentation also covered historical and current VOCA Assistance allocations made to Connecticut and the impact of funding levels on its victim service providers.

In Connecticut, JB-OVS administers the VOCA Assistance grant program. Because of its size and the diverse allowable expenditures, VOCA Assistance helps form the bedrock of victim services across the states. The recent significant reductions in the level of federal funding provided to states were of paramount concern to Advisory Council members.

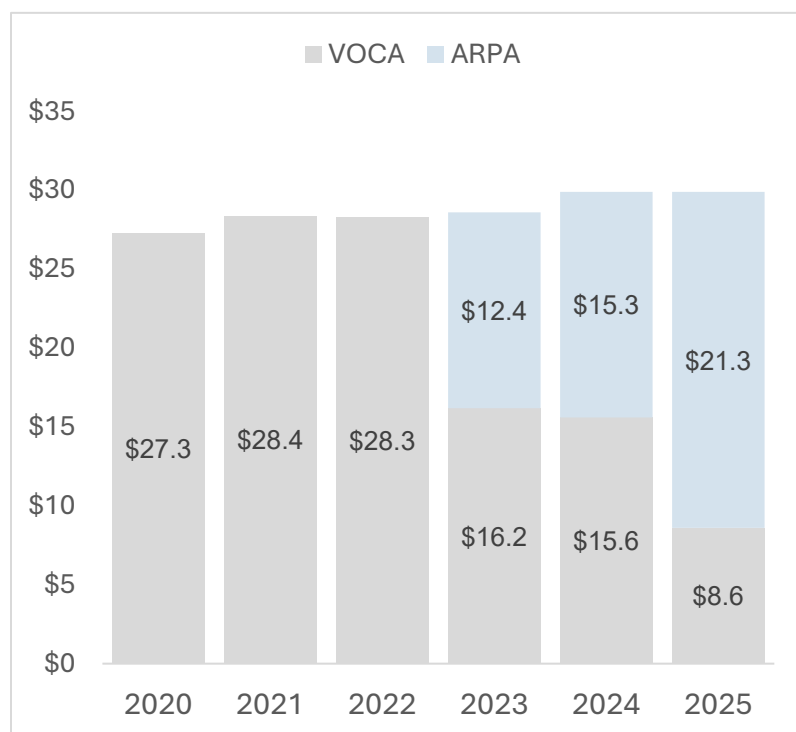
The CVF is financed by fines and penalties paid. Receipts vary widely each year because they depend on the dispositions of a small number of cases that may involve massive settlements to generate deposits into the CVF. Between 2007 and 2024, the CVF balance forms a bell curve that substantially rises in the middle with comparatively smaller amounts to the left and right. Over this period, the CVF balance grew \$11.3 billion between 2007 and 2017 before decreasing by \$9.8 billion between 2017 and 2024, erasing most accumulated gains.

Figure 3 Federal Crime Victims Fund balance FY 2007 to 2024 (through July 31, 2024) in \$billions



Despite the steep decline in Connecticut's VOCA Assistance allocation, so far, the state's VOCA-funded contractors have been largely shielded from reductions in their VOCA Assistance grant awards. Two major factors help to explain. First, most significantly, Connecticut state policymakers have authorized a total of \$48 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds over FYs 2023, 2024, and 2025. JB-OVS has used these ARPA funds to maintain the size of available grants to contractors at \$29 million annually,

Figure 4 Connecticut's committed and expended federal VOCA and ARPA Allocations in Millions (FY 2020 - 2026)



the approximate average between 2020 and 2025. Second, JB-OVS has spread its VOCA Assistance allocations over multiple, often three, years to help buffer against the volatility of annual federal grant allocations. Between FY 2023 and 2025, JB-OVS utilized the two factors to administer funding in a way that preserves VOCA Assistance funds and leverages temporary ARPA funds according to the contractual grant period for each. Thus, there is no expected change in contractor funding for FY 2025, the third year of JB-OVS' current contracts.

There are continued concerns at the federal level regarding VOCA Assistance that coincide with the December 31, 2024, US Treasury deadline for states to commit ARPA funds. Contractors have a longer period, beyond December 31, to expend the funds. The approaching deadline removes an alternative funding source that has helped keep funding whole for VOCA-funded contractors in Connecticut.

In 2025, the Advisory Council anticipates requests for continued regular updates from JB-OVS and for presentations and discussions as needed among members.

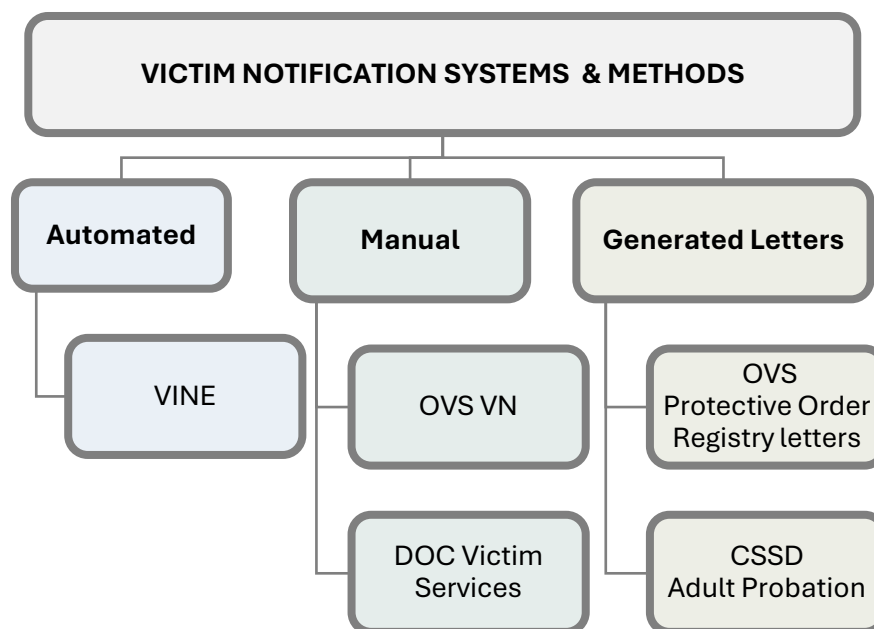
Second, to gain greater understanding of the administration of other federal grant programs in Connecticut, Advisory Council member Emily Burnett from the Office of Policy and Management Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division provided an overview of US Department of Justice grants it administers. The grants highlighted in the presentation appear below.

- Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG)

- Bryne State Crisis Intervention Program (Byrne SCIP)
- National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP)
- Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program (RSAT)
- Office on Violence Against Women Formula Grant Programs
 - STOP Violence Against Women Program (STOP)
 - Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP)

Third, JB-OVS provided an overview of Connecticut victim notification programs. The victim notification programs help victims receive information regarding developments in a criminal case, changes in inmate status and other criminal justice events. Notification allows victims to exercise their state constitutional and statutory rights including participating in hearings, and seeking advocacy and services, including the development of a safety plan.

Figure 5 There are three categories of victim notification in Connecticut: automated, manual, and letter generation.



In Connecticut, victim notification is fragmented, with multiple systems, operated or contracted by different agencies, providing information to registrants: Automated (VINE), manual (JB-OVS Victim Notification and Department of Correction Victim Services Unit), and generated letters (e.g., notification regarding an expiring order of protection). The presentation covered the patchwork of criminal justice events

for which notification may be provided by different systems. A victim pursuing comprehensive notification may register for two or three systems and receive duplicate or triplicate notification.

The presentation and discussion explored opportunities to provide greater clarity, consistency, and simplicity to victims regarding notification programs.

C. Collaboration

Advisory Council meetings present opportunities for members to announce upcoming events for the awareness of other members, to share resources, and to promote collaboration. For example, throughout the year there are weeks or months that recognize victims and survivors: April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, June Gun Violence Awareness Month, October Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and November 20 to December 20 Survivors of Homicide Awareness Month. Additionally, since 1981 National Crime Victims' Rights Week has been recognized one week each April.

For 2024 National Crime Victims' Rights Week, JB-OVS announced that between April 21 and 27 virtual spotlight sessions would be held. At the spotlight sessions VOCA Assistance-funded contractors delivered presentations containing information about the services they provide, victims they serve, and impacts made that help victims recover from crime's many profound impacts.

It is common at Advisory Council meetings for members to highlight ad hoc events occurring throughout the year. Especially considering the breadth of representation among Advisory Council members, the updates present opportunities to exchange resources as well as establish or reengage connections.

VI. Conclusion

The Advisory Council chairs and JB-OVS, in its role providing staff services, expresses its gratitude to members for their contributions provided throughout 2024 and prior years. They look forward to further accomplishments in 2025 as members work collaboratively to improve services and supports for victims and survivors. The 2025 meeting schedule has been established: February 11, June 10, September 16, and December 9.

Figure 6 2024 National Crime Victims' Rights Week theme and artwork

