

OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES



OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES
Focusing on a brighter future

BIENNIAL ACTIVITIES REPORT

October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2021

Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Pursuant to Section 54-203 (b) (16) of the
Connecticut General Statutes

Focusing on a brighter future



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH

CHAMBERS OF
PATRICK L. CARROLL III
CHIEF COURT ADMINISTRATOR

231 CAPITOL AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06106

January 15, 2022

Senator Gary A. Winfield, Co-Chair
Representative Steven J. Stafstrom, Co-Chair
Members of the Judiciary Committee

It is my pleasure to present this report outlining the activities of the Office of Victim Services for the biennium October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2021. This document is submitted in compliance with Connecticut General Statutes § 54-203 (b) (16).

I hope that you find this report helpful. Please let me know if I can provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick L. Carroll III".

Patrick L. Carroll III, Judge
Chief Court Administrator

PLC: sw

C: Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson
Hon. Elizabeth A. Bozzuto, Deputy Chief Court Administrator
Tais C. Ericson, Executive Director, Superior Court Operations
Linda J. Cimino, Director, Office of Victim Services

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Office of Victim Services

Focusing on a brighter future

The Office of Victim Services (OVS) has a long and proud history of providing supportive services, victim advocacy, financial assistance, and information to crime victims from the scene of the crime until services are no longer required. Legislatively enacted by Public Act 78-261, OVS has progressed from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, whose sole purpose was to assist crime victims with the financial impact of crime, to a multi-faceted agency that also provides:

- victim advocacy;
- victim notification;
- training to criminal justice professionals;
- public outreach and training;
- sexual assault forensic examinations; and
- funding to community-based nonprofit agencies, who assist in meeting the myriad needs of Connecticut's crime victims.

Office of Victim Services' Mission

To provide statewide leadership and the highest quality advocacy, services, and education guided by the individual crime victim's experience.

OVS has an important role in a crime victim's journey through the criminal justice system as OVS is the one agency that can be involved with a crime victim throughout the entire process. OVS offers services directly and indirectly to crime victims while collaborating with other state agencies and community-based victim service agencies to provide seamless services.

Included in this biennial report are quotes from crime victims, survivors, and service providers who interacted with OVS staff, benefited from the services offered, or attended OVS trainings. Their words from surveys, letters, and thank you notes reflect the quality of the services provided and the value the services hold for crime victims.

Biennial Highlights

- Crime Victims' Guide to the Adult Criminal Court was published in English and Polish with Spanish and Portuguese translations pending. Online guides are interactive allowing the user to easily navigate throughout the document.
- Victim Services Unit policies and procedures were revised and approved by the Chief Court Administrator. The Victim Compensation Program policies and procedures were revised and are pending final approval at the end of this biennium.
- The Judicial Branch issued a Request for Proposal to solicit proposals from qualified research organizations to conduct a public research project to assist the Office of Victim Services to understand the types of victimization experienced and victim services used statewide and to obtain feedback about needed services in historically underserved communities. Market Decision, Portland, Maine was awarded the contract. Results will be published during the next biennium.
- During this biennium, the ability of crime victims to receive services and assistance was compromised by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. OVS continued to meet the varied needs of crime victims throughout this difficult time.

Victim Compensation

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Overview

The Victim Compensation Program offers financial help to victims; family members of homicide, sexual assault, and domestic violence victims; child witnesses of domestic violence; and other eligible persons for certain unreimbursed expenses associated with violent crime.

Victim Compensation Program

The Victim Compensation Program may grant victim compensation on eligible claims for unreimbursed crime-related expenses not covered or eligible to be covered by other financial sources.

Eligible crime-related expenses include the costs for medical and mental health care, lost wages, expenses associated with attending court proceedings related to the crime, funeral expenses, and crime scene cleanup.

Victim quote on the services received from the Victim Compensation Program

“I will forever be grateful for the support I received during this traumatic time. All of your help was greatly appreciated”

Victim compensation applications filed by dependents and relatives of an eligible crime victim are processed as part of the crime victim’s claim and may not exceed the maximum compensation allowed by state law.

The maximum compensation allowed is \$15,000 for physical injury claims, \$25,000 for survivor benefits claims and \$5,000 for a victim who sought treatment because of an emotional injury resulting from the direct threat of either physical injury or death.

Claimants who disagree with the determination issued by the Victim Compensation Program have a statutory right to request a review of the determination by a Victim Compensation Commissioner.

The Office of Victim Services (OVS) has a statutory right to recover two-thirds of the compensation paid from monies a claimant receives as a direct result of the crime. If the court orders restitution to a claimant for expenses paid by the Victim Compensation Program, OVS is entitled to receive full reimbursement, unless the court orders differently.

Biennial Highlights

- Effective June 16, 2021, Public Act 21-104, An Act Concerning Court Operations, amended Section 54-209 of the Connecticut General Statutes by:
 - Expanding the statutory list of professionals to whom victims of domestic violence can disclose the incident to instead of reporting to law enforcement, and
 - Including employees of child advocacy centers to whom sexual assault, human trafficking, and domestic violence victims can disclose the incident to instead of reporting to law enforcement.
- Eligible expenses for emotional injury claims were expanded to include: replacement or repair of damaged locks, windows, and doors; security systems; and security cameras for a maximum of \$1,000.

Funding

OVS receives state and federal funding to compensate eligible persons for unreimbursed crime related expenses.

The Connecticut General Assembly allocates funds from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF) to the Victim Compensation Program. Deposits into the CICF are specified in the Connecticut General Statutes and include:

- defendant's contributions (Section 54-56h);
- court fines and fees (Sections 54-143, 15-140p, 53a-217e (g), and 54-56g);
- five percent of inmate work-release wages (Section 18-85 (b) (4));
- halfway house client wages (Section 18-101 (b) (4)); and
- escheated funds collected pursuant to Section 53a-30 (Section 54-215 (b)).

CICF Revenue			
Description	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	Total
Defendant's contributions	1,259,171	958,910	2,218,081
Court fines and fees	521,270	487,338	1,008,608
Subrogation Recoveries	37,376	49,586	86,962
Escheated funds	29,919	0	29,919
Other	139,168	91,164	230,332
Total	\$1,986,904	\$1,586,998	\$3,573,902

¹Escheated funds are restitution funds collected by the Court Support Services Division that have not been distributed within five years because the victim could not be located.

²Other category includes halfway house client wages, five percent of Department of Correction inmate work-release wages, Victim Compensation Program reimbursements from court orders, private donations, and investment interest.

OVS also receives federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Compensation funds. The Fiscal Administration Unit manages these funds.

The following table reflects the statistics as reported to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, in compliance with the VOCA requirements for this biennium.

VOCA State Performance Report			
	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	Total
App Received	1,415	2,083	3,498
App Approved ¹	980	1,194	2,174
App Denied ¹	205	238	443
Admin. Closed	168	374	542
¹ Decisions on applications may occur in a year different than the year received.			

Section 54-201 (6) of the Connecticut General Statutes defines emotional harm as "a mental or emotional impairment that requires treatment through services and that is directly attributable to a threat..." When a claimant submits an eligible emotional injury claim prior to seeking treatment or incurring any expenses, the claim is administratively closed. During this biennium, OVS administratively closed 542 emotional injury claims.

Victim Compensation Program Activity

During this biennium, \$4,335,088 in victim compensation was paid on 1,973 claims for expenses associated with medical and mental health care, lost wages for personal injury victims, funeral and burial expenses, loss of support, and lost wages to attend court proceedings.

Payments by Crime Type			
Crime	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	Total
Homicide	838,720	1,281,403	2,120,123
Assault	679,107	699,264	1,378,371
Child Sexual Abuse	238,523	207,462	445,985
Sexual Assault	104,379	137,998	242,377
All Other Crimes	60,959	87,237	148,232
Total	\$1,921,688	\$2,413,400	\$4,335,088

¹Payments on applications may occur in a year different than the year the application was received.

²Other crimes include DWI/DUI, other vehicular crimes, and human trafficking.

Victim quote on the services received from the Crime Victim Compensation Program

"Keep up the good work and giving people a voice. Thank you for all of your help"

Expenses Paid by Category			
	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	Total
Economic	538,727	858,919	1,397,646
Medical/dental	530,781	552,937	1,083,718
Funeral/burial	431,582	571,815	1,003,397
Mental health	399,026	410,020	809,046
Other	21,572	19,709	41,281
(replacement services, crime scene cleanup, and travel expenses)			
Total	\$1,921,688	\$2,413,400	\$4,335,088

Victim quote on the services received from the Victim Compensation Program

"The application for victim compensation was for my grandson's daughter. I am very pleased that the program benefits will be there for her in the near future to aid in her life to come. I would like to thank you and the organization for all that you do and stand for. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart"

Compromised Claims

The Victim Compensation Program's claims examiners advocate on behalf of claimants whose approved claims have medical expenses that exceed the statutory maximum compensation allowed. The claims examiners will negotiate with medical providers to reduce the amount owed and to accept the amount to be paid by the Victim Compensation Program as payment in full.

During this biennium, 9 claimants saved an average of \$25,000 in potential crime related expenses through the Program's efforts to compromise claims.

Filing-time Requirement

Section 54-211 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires a person seeking victim compensation to file a victim compensation application within two years from the date of the personal injury or death.

OVS may grant a waiver of the two-year filing requirement if:

- the claimant was a minor at the time of the criminal incident; or

- the physical, emotional, or psychological injuries resulting from the crime prevented the claimant from filing in time.

During this biennium, 308 requests to waive the two-year filing requirement were received with 293 requests granted.

Recovery Program

Section 54-212 of the Connecticut General Statutes allows OVS to apply a lien, not to exceed two-thirds of the amount paid by OVS, if a claimant brings an action against the person or persons responsible for such injury or death or if the claimant recovers monies from their own collateral sources.

Section 54-215 (b) of the Connecticut General Statutes allows OVS to recover full reimbursement of the victim compensation granted if the court orders restitution to a claimant for the compensation paid, unless the court orders differently.

During this biennium, more than \$216,000 was recovered from court-ordered restitution and settlements.

Recovered Funds			
	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	Total
Restitution	69,439	60,202	129,641
Subrogation	37,376	49,586	86,962
Total	\$106,815	\$109,788	\$216,603

Victim quote on the services received from the Victim Compensation Program

"[Claims Examiner] & coworker's, Thank you all so very much for all the amazing work that you all do & for all your support. You are all very much appreciated & cherished. I am eternally grateful & blessed to have you all in my life & for all the support you all give. I wish you all amazing blessings & fabulous fortune!"

Review of Determination

Section 54-205 (b) of the Connecticut General Statutes grants claimants the right to request a review of the determination made by the Victim Compensation Program on their claim for victim compensation. Claimants must file the review request within 30 days from the date the determination was mailed.

Victim Compensation Commissioners

Section 54-202 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires the governor appoints five Victim Compensation Commissioners (VCCs) to a four-year term to hear review requests on Victim Compensation Program determinations and to issue new decisions based on such reviews.

The following attorneys were appointed as VCCs during this biennium:

- Irene Mikol, chief victim compensation commissioner (appointed by the Chief Court Administrator);
- Stephanie Antone;
- James G. Clark;
- Rebecca Iannantuoni; and
- Thomas J. O'Neill.

Victim Compensation Program employees and the VCCs pivoted from in-person review hearings to virtual or telephone interviews due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

During this biennium, VCCs conducted 23 review hearings. The last in-person review hearing was held on February 27, 2020. Review hearings resumed in December 2020 with 17 review hearings conducted virtually or telephonically.

The VCCs issued 23 decisions; 14 of the VCC decisions affirmed the determination made by the Victim Compensation Program, while nine decisions reversed the determinations made by the Victim Compensation Program.

OVS would like to thank the following VCCs whose terms expired during this biennium for the exemplary years of service they provided to the

claimants that exercised their right to have a review of the Victim Compensation Program determination:

- Joseph W. Bibisi;
- Seth D. Feigenbaum;
- Lisa K. MacDonald; and
- Louis A. Spadaccini.

Operations During the COVID-19 pandemic

During this biennium, the Victim Compensation Unit continued to meet the on-going needs of crime victims during the evolving Judicial Branch's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working with reduced staffing levels and with staff working rotating schedules, all new applications for victim compensation were processed according to policies and procedures. Determinations continued to be made and requests for expense reimbursement were processed.

Agency Focused Training

During this biennial period, OVS worked with a subcontractor's Work Group to identify and address trends from the Compensation applications received from the subcontractor's employees.

OVS conducted 9 virtual trainings to intact working groups to address the groups specific questions and issues.

Participant quote from an Agency Focused Training Session

"The presentation was excellent. I felt free to ask any questions I needed and [presenter] easily answered all of them with thorough explanations. The content was very informative and beneficial to me as I learn more about my new position. I look forward to attending additional trainings from OVS."

Fiscal Administration

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Overview

The Office of Victim Services (OVS) receives state and federal funding for contracted services with nonprofit community-based agencies to provide information and services to victims of violent crimes and their families. Through the funding of these organizations, crime victims and their family members receive criminal justice support and advocacy, crisis counseling, therapy, individual and group treatment and support, personal advocacy, referrals, and assistance with filing victim compensation applications.

The Fiscal Administration Unit is responsible for ensuring that all grant and program specific funds distributed by OVS are expended in accordance with the grantors' guidelines, state guidelines, Judicial Branch regulations, and OVS policies and procedures, so that effective services to crime victims are provided.

Victim quote on the services received from an OVS subcontracted agency

"The advocate is a skilled and gifted woman who offered her ideas, support, and solutions. ... as a result, I have been able to find the strength to do what was needed and begin to move my family forward towards healing. I would not be here if it wasn't for her."

Funding

OVS' primary source of federal funding is the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which provides funds for the Victim Assistance and Victim Compensation Grant Programs.

In addition to the federal VOCA funds, OVS receives state funding to support programs such as victim advocacy services in domestic violence dockets and post-conviction sex offender supervision units, Spanish-language advocacy services in the Safe Connect domestic violence program, counseling for family members of homicide victims, and shelter services to victims of human trafficking.

Biennial Highlight

- In Fiscal Year 2020-2021, OVS issued a request for proposals for counseling services for family members of homicide victims for contracts starting July 1, 2021. Two new agencies were added that will provide services to victims in the Greater Hartford and Greater Willimantic areas.

Summary of OVS Revenues by Funding Source

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2021

Federal Awards	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	Total
Victims of Crime Act Victim Assistance	24,540,595	18,131,939	42,672,534
Victims of Crime Act Victim Compensation	814,000	970,000	1,784,000
Total Federal Funds Awarded	\$25,354,595	\$19,101,939	\$44,456,534
State Funds			
Alternative Incarceration Program	634,000	634,000	1,268,000
Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund			
Victim Compensation	2,025,000	2,025,000	4,050,000
Contracted Services	1,070,431	909,088	1,979,519
Forensic Sex Evidence Exams Account			
Forensic Evidence Collection	948,010	948,010	1,896,020
Forensic Interview Reimbursement	200,000	200,000	400,000
Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners	200,000	200,000	400,000
Victim Assistance Contracted Services	206,228	206,228	412,456
Victim Security Account	8,792	8,792	17,584
Total State Funds Awarded	\$5,292,461	\$5,131,118	\$10,423,579
Total Funding	\$30,647,056	\$24,233,057	\$54,880,113

Victim Assistance Program

The VOCA Victim Assistance Program provides funding to community-based victim service agencies to provide services at no cost to crime victims and includes:

- direct services to crime victims;
- improving victim access to services; and
- increasing victim's knowledge of the criminal justice system.

During this biennium, OVS issued contracts under the Victim Assistance Program totaling \$76,152,099 to 73 nonprofit victim services agencies, who provided services to 221,926 crime victims.

These funded agencies are in each of Connecticut's eight counties. The cities of Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, Stamford, and Waterbury have multiple programs that assist crime victims.

Types of Services Supported by Grant Funds

During this biennium, VOCA funds were used by subcontracting agencies to provide crime victims with a variety of services.

The largest percentage of awarded funds were used for advocacy-based programs; however, OVS provided funding for therapy programs for adults

and children, legal aid programs for legal assistance in criminal and civil courts, on-scene crisis response for child victims of crime, and translation and interpreting services for non-English speaking crime victims.

Advocacy programs provided services to victims in courts, shelters, specific towns, and neighborhoods, and on a statewide basis using regional offices. These programs provided victims with crisis counseling, safety planning, assistance with basic needs, assistance with completing applications for victim compensation, information and referral to other social service agencies, assistance in court, and translation and interpreting services.

OVS also awarded funding to agencies that provided therapy services to child and adult victims of crime. These services included the initial psychiatric evaluation, individual and group therapy sessions, follow-up, referral to other services, and assistance with completing applications for victim compensation. Most of the programs offered short-term therapy, and if the victim was eligible for victim compensation, they could receive additional therapy to be reimbursed or paid for by the Victim Compensation Program.

Grant Funded Priority Categories Total Victims

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2021

Categories	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	Total	%
Domestic Violence	67,294	85,137	152,431	68.7
Underserved ¹	16,602	19,321	35,923	16.2
Child Abuse	10,435	11,893	22,328	10.1
Sexual Assault	5,607	5,637	11,244	5.0
Total Crime Victims Served	99,938	121,988	221,926	100.0

Grant Funded Priority Categories Total Expenditures²

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2021

Categories	FY19-20	FY20-21	Total	%
Domestic Violence	14,546,488	14,762,129	29,308,617	42.2
Underserved	8,370,977	9,638,579	18,009,556	25.9
Child Abuse	7,465,121	7,429,662	14,894,783	21.4
Sexual Assault	3,824,595	3,493,886	7,318,481	10.5
Total Expenditures	\$34,207,181	\$35,324,256	\$69,531,437	100.0

Forensic Sex Evidence Exams Account

The Fiscal Administration Unit is responsible for processing payments to providers for sexual assault examination and evidence collections. Health care facilities may be reimbursed up to \$900 per case for forensic examination and evidence collection of adult and child victims of sexual assault. Providers or examiners working in conjunction with Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT), or Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) may be reimbursed up to \$250 per forensic interview for child victims of sexual abuse.

During this biennium, health care facilities were reimbursed \$1,597,592 for forensic examination and collection services provided to 758 adult victims and 1,413 child victims of sexual assault. Providers working in conjunction with MDT and CAC were reimbursed \$467,750 for forensic interviews of 1,866 child victims of sexual abuse.

VOCA Victim Compensation Program

The VOCA Victim Compensation Program provides federal funding to the OVS Victim Compensation Program to supplement state funds used to reimburse crime victims and other eligible persons for crime related expenses not covered by collateral sources.

Subcontractor Monitoring

To ensure that grant funds are expended in accordance with the grantor's guidelines, state guidelines, Judicial Branch regulations, as well as OVS policies and procedures, the Fiscal Administration Unit conducts contractor site visits.

The site visits are designed to ensure that the funded programs operate in accordance with the contract and to provide technical assistance, if needed. During this biennium, site visits were conducted in-person and remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In June 2021, OVS resumed in-person site visits. Ten in-person visits and fourteen remote visits were conducted during the biennium.

¹Underserved represents victims of various crimes including assault, robbery, hate and bias crimes, adults molested as children, DUI/DWI, elder abuse, family members of homicide victims, abuse of vulnerable adults, gang-related crimes, stalking, federal crimes, economic exploitation, and fraud.

²Total expenditures reflect total project expenditures of grant funds and subcontracting agency matching funds. Unexpended grant funds are reallocated in subsequent years for future victim service contracts.

Subcontractor List

(October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2021)

- | | |
|---|---|
| ❖ BHcare | ❖ Hospital of Central Connecticut |
| ❖ Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Hartford | ❖ Human Resources Agency of New Britain |
| ❖ Center for Family Justice | ❖ Human Services Council |
| ❖ Charlotte Hungerford Hospital | ❖ Klingberg Family Centers |
| ❖ Clifford Beers Clinic | ❖ LifeBridge Community Services |
| ❖ Community Child Guidance Clinic | ❖ LOVE 146 |
| ❖ Community Health Center | ❖ Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance Center |
| ❖ Community Health Resources | ❖ Mothers Against Drunk Driving |
| ❖ Community Mental Health Affiliates | ❖ NAFI, CT |
| ❖ Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence | ❖ Newtown Youth and Family Services |
| ❖ Connecticut Children's Medical Center | ❖ St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center |
| ❖ Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence | ❖ Survivors of Homicide |
| ❖ Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies | ❖ The Salvation Army |
| ❖ Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants | ❖ Town of Newtown |
| ❖ Connecticut Legal Services | ❖ United Services |
| ❖ Domestic Violence Crisis Center | ❖ Village for Families and Children |
| ❖ Family Centered Services of Connecticut | ❖ Waterbury Youth Services |
| ❖ Family Centers | ❖ Wellmore |
| ❖ Gilead Community Services | ❖ Yale University School of Medicine |
| ❖ Hartford Behavioral Health | ❖ YWCA Hartford Region |
| ❖ Hartford Interval House | |

Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners

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Overview

The Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) Program provides compassionate, patient-centered sexual assault forensic examination services to patients, 13 years or older, who report sexual assault and who present at a participating health care facility within 120 hours of the assault.

The SAFE Program also provides specialized training and education to qualified health care providers to perform knowledgeable and skilled medical-forensic examinations, securing the evidence collected (chain of custody), and providing expert testimony during criminal proceedings.

Patient quote on the services received from the SAFE Program

“My SAFE was very kind and told me what was happening. She was very professional.”

The SAFE Program is named after the late Gail Burns-Smith, a dedicated community and national advocate for victims of sexual assault.

Biennial Highlights

- In the Fall of 2019, a SAFE Program Training Manager was hired to administer the SAFE Training Program, continuing education activities, a Train the Trainer Program, and to assist with the Annual Competency trainings.
- In the Fall of 2019, the SAFE Program held meetings with the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence and the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence to explore ways to work more collaboratively.
- In the Fall of 2019, the SAFE Training Program conducted a class attended by 23 healthcare providers selected to train as SAFEs.
- In the Spring of 2020, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent resignations of SAFEs, the SAFE Program maintained over an 85% response rate to participating hospitals.
- In the Summer of 2020, the SAFE Program began to utilize a virtual platform for Quality Assurance meetings.
- In the Fall of 2020, the SAFE Training Program held its first virtual class with a record enrollment of 26 health care providers.
- In the Spring of 2021, the Office of Victim Services and the SAFE Program collaborated with the Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations (Commission) on the 2021 revision of the *Technical Guidelines for Health Care Response to Victims of Sexual Assault*.
- In the Summer of 2021, the Office of Victim Services and the SAFE Program participated with representatives from the Forensic Lab, Commission, and Division of Criminal Justice State’s Attorneys in a podcast hosted by the Forensic Technology Center of Excellence, led by RTI, about Connecticut’s journey to a standardized sexual assault kit.

Participating Health Care Facilities

The Judicial Branch has formal agreements with certain health care facilities in the Hartford, Middlesex, New Haven, and Windham counties to serve as designated sites for SAFE Program services.

As a SAFE designated site, the health care facilities agree to:

- screen patients for eligibility for SAFE services;
- activate the SAFE Program on-call system for eligible patients;
- have accessible the necessary equipment and supplies for sexual assault forensic examinations;
- maintain a locked refrigerator for the evidence collected;
- provide interpreter services for sexual assault patients who are not proficient in English; and
- perform sexual assault forensic examinations and evidence collection when a SAFE is not available.

During this biennium, the following health care facilities served as SAFE designated sites:

- Connecticut Children's Medical Center; (CCMC)
- Hartford Hospital;
- Manchester Memorial Hospital;
- Middlesex Hospital;
- MidState Medical Center;
- Saint Francis Hospital;
- The Hospital of Central Connecticut, New Britain (THOCC);
- Windham Community Memorial Hospital; and
- University of Connecticut (UConn) Student Health Services, Storrs Campus.

Patient quote on the services received from the SAFE Program

"Thank you hospital staff/police/SAFE/sexual assault advocates for helping me through everything yesterday. I really appreciate all of you so, so very much."

During this biennium, the SAFE Program responded to 286 cases at participating health care facilities.

Case Response by Health Care Facilities

Facility	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	Total
CCMC	15	19	34
Hartford	37	39	76
Manchester	16	10	26
Middlesex	11	9	20
MidState	10	11	21
St. Francis	34	18	52
THOCC	21	15	36
UConn	3	0	3
Windham	11	7	18

71.3% percent of the patients who received SAFE services reported the crime to law enforcement at the time of evidence collection, which is consistent from the last two biennial periods in the number of patients reporting.

Sexual Assaults Reported Versus Not Reported to Law Enforcement at Time of Evidence Collection

Report Status	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	Total
Reported	105	99	204
Not report	49	28	77
No Data	4	1	5

Collaborative Response

To minimize further trauma to patients who report sexual assault, the SAFE Program utilizes a coordinated, collaborative response for SAFE Program services.

Responding SAFEs contact a sexual assault counselor from the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence for accompaniment to the SAFE designated site.

While SAFEs conduct the medical-forensic examination and collection of evidence in a compassionate but objective manner, the sexual assault crisis counselor supports the patient's emotional and informational needs while providing

a personal connection that preserves the patients' confidentiality.

Training

OVS provides training to qualified health care providers, which enables them to perform knowledgeable and skilled medical-forensic sexual assault examinations and to ensure the integrity, preservation, and documentation of forensic evidence.

Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) Training Program

In the Spring of 2021, the SAFE Training Program was reapproved by the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN). The IAFN is an international, professional organization that provides leadership in establishing national benchmarks, standards, and best practices in forensic nursing.

The SAFE training curriculum was approved by the IAFN for 41.5 Continuing Nursing Education contact hours for SAFEs who successfully complete the didactic component of the training. The IAFN is accredited by the American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Accreditation as an accredited approver for continuing education. According to the IAFN website, the SAFE Training Program is one of only 23 IAFN approved training programs in the nation.

The training encompasses topics such as, the dynamics of sexual violence, victim response, victim advocacy services, the collection and handling of evidence, providing court testimony, as well as regulatory issues such as informed consent and confidentiality.

During this biennium, the Spring 2020 class was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Beginning in the Fall of 2020, SAFE Training classes were held virtually. Three training sessions were held virtual with 67 health care providers successfully completing all training

components. A number of these health care providers were awarded contracts with the Judicial Branch to serve as SAFEs in the SAFE Program. At the end of this biennium, there were 20 SAFEs who accepted awards to participate in the SAFE Program, with nearly 100 other SAFEs practicing in non-participating acute care facilities across Connecticut.

Health Care Facility Trainings

Trainings were conducted at both participating and non-participating health care facilities during this biennium. These training sessions were provided to emergency department staff to increase competency of care to the sexual assault patient.

Quality Assurance Meetings

SAFEs are required to attend monthly (in-person or virtual) quality assurance meetings, which provide continuing education, case review, program updates, and collegial discussion on current issues and practices. SAFEs working in non-participating hospitals are also invited to attend.

During this biennium, training topics included evidence collection, kit tracking, LGBTQIA care after assault, human trafficking, elder care after assault, advanced injury and trauma identification, vicarious trauma, legislative review, strangulation, case review, and documentation.

SAFE quote on why they are a part of the SAFE Program

"I am part of the SAFE program because I believe patients reporting sexual assault deserve the best care possible. The SAFE program provides specific training for this population and allows for dedicated nurses to be focused on the individual patient."

Training and Outreach

Focusing on a brighter future

Overview

The Training and Outreach Unit is responsible for training criminal justice system professionals and educating the public on Office of Victim Services' (OVS) programs and the rights and concerns of Connecticut's crime victims. This Unit is also responsible for distributing OVS printed materials to support these education and training activities and coordinates professional development activities that increase the knowledge of OVS employees.

Training

The Training and Outreach Unit provides training on the topics of victims' rights, services, and victim responses to crime to three primary audiences:

- the victim assistance community consisting of community-based agencies that provide services to crime victims;
- mandated audiences listed in Section 54-203 (b) (13) of the Connecticut General Statutes (judges; prosecutors; police; probation and parole personnel; bail commissioners; intake, assessment, and referral specialists; correction officers; and judicial marshals); and
- OVS staff.

Police officer quote from an OVS Police Academy Training

"Overall great presentation. Presenters were knowledgeable and enthusiastic."

Mandated Training Activity

During this biennium, the Training and Outreach Unit provided 27 trainings to 721 professionals in the criminal justice system. Most of these trainings were provided to law enforcement through the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC) Recruit Training Program, police academies, and police recertification classes. The information provided to this audience included the impact of crime on victims, law enforcement's role as a first responder to victims, and death notification.

Biennial Highlights

- During this biennium, the number of mandated trainings was significantly lower than the last biennium, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. From October 2019 – March 2020, 19 trainings sessions were held in person. From April – September 2020, no trainings were held and from October 2020 – September 2021, 8 virtual trainings were held.
- The Training and Outreach Unit staff researched and learned the skills associated with using the Microsoft Teams and Zoom platforms. This was necessary to continue to provide trainings virtually on OVS programs and services that are available to crime victims.
- Training virtually has allowed more participants to attend trainings as OVS was not limited by the space at our venue. Virtual trainings have also provided OVS with the ability to provide agency focused trainings. For example, OVS has provided compensation program trainings to the CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence member programs. These focused trainings allow member program employees to ask detailed questions.
- More than 30 publications and forms were revised during this biennium.

Victim Assistance Community Training

The Training and Outreach Unit coordinates trainings on behalf of OVS program managers.

Each quarter, the Training and Outreach staff collaborate with the Fiscal Administration Services Unit on planning and implementing trainings to subcontracted agencies' staff. The training topics include information on OVS services, victims' rights, victim notification, court orders of protection, and court process. During this biennium, 940 staff members from subcontracted agencies attended 43 OVS trainings.

Participant quote from a Contractor Training Session

"Very helpful to learn about this information – so many different opportunities available, services are easily accessible and are definitely going to be helpful when advocating for clients."

Community Education Activity

The Training and Outreach Unit offers a community education program designed to increase victim service providers and the public's awareness of the rights and services available to crime victims.

Presentations

During this biennium, community education activities included 14 presentations on OVS services and victim-related topics to 140 individuals from various community groups as well as high school and college students.

Resource Tables

During this biennium, OVS did not provide information at professional conferences, health fairs, college fairs, and other community events due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Distribution of OVS Materials

During this biennium, more than 34,180 copies of OVS materials were distributed to police departments, courthouses, law libraries, community-based programs, hospitals, and other service providers throughout the state.

Staff Development

The Training and Outreach Unit coordinates staff activities and trainings that meet OVS goals and values and develops core competencies and specialized work-related knowledge.

Staff Training

During this biennium, OVS staff attended 25 in-service and Judicial Branch trainings and 125 external trainings that included courses on leadership skill building, cultural competence, computer-based programs, domestic violence, sex offender management, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and active shooter training.

Staff Recognition

The Training and Outreach Unit facilitates the Staff Recognition Committee, which organizes two annual staff appreciation days that promote staff engagement, personal development, teamwork, and staff recognition.

During the event in 2019, one staff recognition award was presented to an OVS staff member for their dedication, exceptional service, and efforts to contribute to the OVS mission. Events were not held in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic.

Participant quote from a Staff Recognition Day

"I think the committee does a fantastic job with the entire day. I know it isn't easy planning the day, getting free speakers, but it is a wonderful day for us, and I really look forward to those days. Keep up the good work!"

Victim Services

Focusing on a brighter future

Overview

The Victim Services Unit is responsible for assisting crime victims throughout the criminal, juvenile, and civil justice process by informing crime victims of their rights and providing support and information to assist them in exercising those rights, referrals to community services, and victim notification.

Victim Services Advocacy Program

The Victim Services Unit has victim services advocates (VSAs) assigned to Judicial District courthouses throughout the state, the Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP), and to the Office of Victim Services' (OVS) Helpline to respond to the needs of crime victims within the criminal, juvenile, and civil justice systems.

As crime victims often are not familiar with the workings of the criminal, juvenile, and civil justice systems, OVS VSAs are uniquely positioned to assist them through all the stages of the process. VSAs serve as a liaison with criminal justice personnel and ensure that crime victims understand their rights at each proceeding, as well as accompany crime victims to proceedings and assist with the delivery of victim impact statements.

Victim quote on the services received from the Victim Services Advocacy Program

"Thank you, thank you, thank you!! You were the only person that believed me without a doubt... I want you to know that I am ok and will survive this and I will be stronger after all of this."

Biennial Highlights

- The pandemic impacted all facets of the criminal justice system presenting challenges, but also opportunities. The innovative use of technology resulted in increased access to justice for many victims that traditionally face challenges around transportation, childcare, and missed work when attempting to attend court proceedings. With virtual court options, victims could attend hearings without having to travel to court or be in the presence of the offender, while still receiving support and assistance from VSAs through virtual options.
- In March of 2021, the Victim Services Unit began a collaboration with the Appellate Bureau within the Chief State's Attorney's Office to assist victims in appellate matters.
- Public Act No. 21-32, An Act Concerning The Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP), provides for the erasure of certain criminal records when certain criteria are satisfied. This intersects with the work of both court-based VSAs and the advocates providing services to victims at the BOPP.
- Public Act 21-104, An Act Concerning Court Operations, allows a victim to designate an immediate family member, in addition to or in lieu of the victim, to receive certain notifications from the OVS and Department of Correction, and provides for an ex parte civil protection order to be extended fourteen days if service is unsuccessful to allow more time for service.

Victim Services Advocacy Program

Victim Services Advocates provide support and advocacy to physical injury victims and their families, surviving family members of homicide victims and applicants in civil protection order matters. This support and advocacy includes:

- Education regarding all stages of the criminal, juvenile, and civil justice systems;
- Safety assessments and recommendations regarding orders of protection;
- Notifying victims of their rights and assisting victims with exercising those rights;
- Coordinating victim compensation applications and requests for restitution;
- Developing and maintaining relationships with state and community agencies to provide appropriate referrals for services; and
- Coordinating victim attendance and participation at hearings, providing support during hearings, explaining the process, and presenting victim input on the record on behalf of the victim at the victim's request.

Court-based Advocacy

During this biennium, court-based VSAs assisted 31,856 crime victims.

Court-based VSAs Most Provided Services

Number of services provided: 49,941

Service	Total
Court Escort	4,511
Referrals	17,299
Safety Plan	19,082
VIS	9,049

During this biennium, VSAs assisted more than 9,000 victims with preparing and presenting victim impact statements (VIS). Providing a VIS to the court gives the victim the opportunity to speak directly to the court to explain how the crime has

Victim quote on the services received from the Victim Services Advocacy Program

"Thank you so much for all of your help and support over the last 2 years and today in court to be there for me when I read the Victim's Statement. Thank you for all you do."

affected them. Victims often view this opportunity as valuable and empowering.

In addition to assisting victims through the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems, and assisting civil protection order applicants, during this biennium, VSAs also began assisting victims in appellate matters, providing information about the process and coordinating attendance at hearings.

Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP) Advocacy

Two VSAs are assigned to the BOPP to assist crime victims during the parole and pardon process. This assistance included providing support and advocacy to crime victims when an inmate is being considered for parole release or clemency.

During this biennium the VSAs assigned to the BOPP assisted 4,534 victims.

BOPP VSAs Most Provided Services

Number of services provided: 8,284

Service	FY 19-20	FY 20-21	Total
Victim Rights	1,885	2,135	4,020
Referrals	761	808	1,569
Safety Plan	598	735	1,333
VIS Assistance	574	615	1,189
Assistance at Hearings	80	93	173

Victim quote on the services received from the Victim Services Advocacy Program

"Thank you for the follow up... It was a difficult message to receive but knowing that you took the time to find us meant the world to me."

Helpline

Two VSAs are assigned to the Helpline (800-822-8428) to provide callers with information on the criminal, civil, and juvenile justice systems, OVS and community-based programs and services, victim rights, victim notification, and referrals to public and private agencies. Victims also contact OVS through email at OVS@jud.ct.gov.

During this biennium, Helpline VSAs provided services to 14,730 victims and professionals. Most callers requested information on safety planning, the status of a criminal case, court information, referrals to supportive services, victim rights, and the Victim Compensation Program.

Helpline Most Provided Services

Total services provided: 14,730

Service	Total
Referrals	8,171
Safety Plan	2,701
Victim Rights	3,562
VIS	296
Sentence Review	224

The Helpline VSAs provided support to 224 victims and their family members in Sentence Review matters. Sentence Review hearings are held in response to a defendant's application for a review of the court-imposed sentence.

During this biennium, Sentence Review hearings transitioned to virtual proceedings offering victims the opportunity to participate without travelling to the court or seeing the offender.

Victim Notification

The Helpline VSAs are responsible for administering three victim notification programs that inform crime victims and other registrants about orders of protection, changes to the status of offenders in the criminal justice system and in the Department of Correction (DOC) custody.

These notification programs allow crime victims to exercise their constitutional right to be informed about, present at, and heard during criminal justice proceedings. These programs also serve as a valuable safety tool by informing crime victims of an offender's release or possible release from custody or when an offender absconds from prison or fails to appear in court.

Protection Order Registry Notification Program

The Protection Order Registry Notification program features automatic generation of notification letters to protected parties when protective orders terminate or five weeks prior to the expiration of restraining orders and civil protection orders.

Protected parties receiving notification are directed to contact the OVS Helpline for information on obtaining or extending restraining orders and referrals to social service agencies.

During this biennium, more than 39,000 protective order notification letters were mailed to crime victims.

Post-conviction Notification Program

Section 54-227 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires OVS and DOC to provide inmate status information to crime victims and other eligible individuals who have registered for notification.

Crime victims, parents/guardians and relatives of crime victims, inmate family members, and state's attorneys may register for notification by submitting the Confidential Request for Notification form (JD-VS-5) to OVS, DOC, or both agencies.

Registrants are notified when an inmate applies to the BOPP or DOC for certain changes in the inmate's status including potential changes to an inmate's sentence.

These changes in status include release other than a furlough, application to the sentencing court, judge or the Review Division for a change in their sentence, or when any person requests the court change their status on the Sex Offender Registry.

Crime victims who receive notification are informed that they can make a statement to the BOPP, DOC, or court regarding the impact the crime has had on them and their opinion on or concerns about the inmate's request.

During this biennium, there were 351 new notification requests and 4,973 post-conviction notification letters mailed to registrants.

Connecticut Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification

The Connecticut Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification program (CT SAVIN) provides confidential telephone, email, text, and in-app notifications in English and Spanish on criminal court events, modifications or terminations of orders of protection, and DOC events.

Crime victims and the public may register to receive notifications in English, Polish, Portuguese or Spanish by contacting the OVS Helpline at 800-822-8428, CT SAVIN at 877-846-3428, or by registering online at the CT SAVIN Web page accessed from www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim/.

CT SAVIN enhancement offered to registrants beginning in August of 2019 resulted in more than half of all registrations utilizing the newly available text messaging option to receive notifications.

During this biennium, there were more than 61,000 new registrations and more than 553,000 notifications delivered, with email being the most requested notification method.

CT SAVIN New Registrations

Total Registrations: 61,184

Type	Court	DOC	Total
Email	24,033	5,911	29,944
Phone	1,888	1,399	3,287
TTY	11	16	27
Text	19,082	8,012	27,094
In-App	526	306	832

Notification of criminal case events include:

- upcoming court hearings;
- change in bail;
- case transfers;
- failure to appear;
- plea hearings;
- the issuance, modification, or termination of an order of protection;
- case disposition;
- probation violation and violation decisions;
- sentence reduction decision; and
- appeal filed and appeal decision.

Notification of custody status events include:

- scheduled release or release from prison, parole, and to the community;
- escaped from and returned to prison; and
- transfer to a prison in another state.

CT SAVIN Notifications

Total Notifications: 553,400

Type	Court	DOC	Total
Email	312,619	19,888	332,507
Phone	42,176	6,133	48,309
TTY	18	21	39
Text	151,029	16,381	167,410
In-App	4,495	640	5,135

Advisory Council for Victims of Crime

Overview

The Advisory Council for Victims of Crime (Council) members represent judicial and executive branch agencies, who are involved with victims of crime; the chief Victim Compensation Commissioner; and members representing various victim populations.

Council members are appointed by the Chief Justice to a four-year term and charged with recommending to the Office of Victim Services (OVS) programs, legislation, and other matters that would improve services to crime victims. The Council is statutorily required to meet at least four times per year and to report its findings and activities annually to the Judicial Branch Chief Court Administrator (Section 54-203 (b) (9) of the Connecticut General Statutes).

During this biennium, the Council met eight times, with two meetings in 2020 cancelled due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Beginning in September 2020 the Council began meeting virtually.

During the meetings Council members discussed victim-related services, issues, and trends, including OVS' state and federal funding sources, OVS programs and services, legislative initiatives that would improve or affect services to crime victims, and trauma-informed service response. In addition, Council members provided presentations on their respective agencies' victim-related services and initiatives, including trauma-informed care services, domestic violence screening at health care facilities, and victim notification.

Biennial Highlights

- Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson appointed the Honorable Laura F. Baldini of the New Britain Judicial District as co-chair.
- The Council received updates on the efforts to enact the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund of 2021.
- The Council met all requirements as set forth by the Freedom of Information Act and the Public Access Task Force requirements regarding posting of meeting minutes (both draft and final), agendas, and meeting schedules.
- The Council discussed the short-term and long-term impacts of providing services to victims of crime during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Council received information on the CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence Dominant Aggressor Report.
- Council members were provided an overview of the *Connecticut Hospital Violence Intervention Program (HVIP) Collaborative* which included information about multidisciplinary programs, HVIP program model types and recommended staff infrastructure.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

(2018-2022 Term)

Co-Chairs

Honorable Laura F. Baldini
New Britain Judicial District, Judicial Branch

Susan M. Omilian, Esq.
Survivors of Homicide

Chief Victim Compensation Commissioner

Irene Mikol, Esq.

Community-based Mental Health Services

Amy Lupoli, Senior Director of Clinical Services
Klingberg Family Centers

Community Services

Andrew Woods, Executive Director
Hartford Communities That Care

Domestic Violence

Geralyn O'Neil-Wild, Director of Legal Advocacy
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Drunk Driving

Bob Garguilo, Executive Director
Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Executive Branch

Gail P. Hardy, Esq., Executive Assistant State's
Attorney
Division of Criminal Justice

Marc Pelka, Undersecretary
Office of Policy and Management

Ebonie Suggs, Victim Services Unit
Connecticut Department of Correction

Human Trafficking

Yvette Young, Human Anti-Trafficking Response
Team Coordinator
The Village for Families and Children

Judicial Branch

Melissa Farley, Esq., Executive Director
External Affairs

Low Income Communities

Deborah Witkin, Esq. Executive Director
Connecticut Legal Services

Sexual Assault

Beth Hamilton, Executive Director
Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

Survivors of Homicide

Jessica Pizzano, Director of Victim Services
Survivors of Homicide

Former members who served during this biennium:

Honorable John A. Danaher, III
Litchfield Judicial District, Judicial Branch

Joseph Bibisi, Esq., Chief Victim Compensation
Commissioner

Mikayla Green, Program Coordinator
Klingberg Family Center

Brian Austin, Jr., Esq. Executive Assistant State's
Attorney
Division of Criminal Justice

Sharmese Walcott, Esq., State's Attorney
Hartford Judicial District

Melissa Conway, Planning Analyst
Office of Policy and Management

Kristan Mangiafico, Victim Services Unit
Connecticut Department of Correction

Committees

During this biennium, Office of Victim Services (OVS) employees served on the following committees, councils, and multidisciplinary teams.

Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations is responsible for reviewing and revising the Technical Guidelines for Health Care Response to Victims of Sexual Assault and the design of the sexual assault evidence collection kit. Director Linda J. Cimino, member.

Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision Connecticut State Council is charged with overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision, a formal agreement between member states that seeks to promote public safety by systematically controlling the interstate movement of certain adult offenders. Former Deputy Director Valina Carpenter, member.

Interstate Compact for Juveniles Connecticut State Council is the rule-making authority of the Interstate Compact for Juveniles and has the statutory authority to enforce compliance between signatory states to promote the welfare protection of juveniles, victims, and the public by governing the states' supervision of juveniles and the return of runaways, absconders, escapees, and juveniles who have fled prosecution. Former Deputy Director Valina Carpenter, member.

Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee examines intimate partner homicides to identify systemic gaps and barriers to service and to recommend coordinated community responses that will enhance the safety of victims and accountability of batterers. Director Linda J. Cimino, member.

Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children oversees the need for greater coordination of Multidisciplinary Team agencies involved in the investigation, intervention, and prosecution of child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse cases. Victim Services Supervisor Koren Butler-Kurth, member.

Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team (HART) multidisciplinary teams that respond to the needs of victims of domestic minor sex trafficking. An OVS victim services supervisor and several OVS victim services advocates are members.

Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT) coordinate the prompt investigation and prosecution of suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to reduce the trauma of any child victim and to ensure the protection and treatment of the child. Several OVS victim services advocates are members of their local MDT.

Trafficking in Persons Council is responsible for determining what services are available to human trafficking victims and how to best coordinate a response. Director Linda J. Cimino, member.

Sexual Assault Kit Initiative Committee is a multidisciplinary group which includes representatives from both the criminal justice and victim advocacy community and is charged with making recommendations to standardize and facilitate the transfer, tracking and testing of sexual assault evidence collection kits as well as overseeing the process of victim notification for victims when evidence, once tested, may result in a CODIS hit or lead to a new investigation. Director Linda J. Cimino, member.

ADMINISTRATIVE
860-263-2760

VICTIM COMPENSATION
888-286-7347

HELPLINE
800-822-8428



Office of Victim Services
State of Connecticut Judicial Branch
225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, CT 06109
www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim