



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

KWAME RAOUL
ATTORNEY GENERAL

December 1, 2022

RE: Annual Report of the Violent Crimes Advisory Commission

Dear Honorable Members of the Illinois General Assembly:

As Chairperson of the Violent Crimes Advisory Commission, I am pleased to provide this annual report in accordance with the Violent Crimes Victims Assistance Act (VCVA Act). [725 ILCS 240/5].

The Office of the Illinois Attorney General administers the Violent Crime Victims Assistance Program [725 ILCS 240], awarding grants to government and non-profit social service agencies throughout the state that provide services to victims and witnesses of violent crime. These services meet the statutory mandate by assisting criminal justice agencies in giving personal attention to victims and witnesses, sensitizing those working with crime victims, attempting to decrease the incidence of unreported crimes, assuring victims are informed of their rights as victims of crime, and encouraging public use of services. [725 ILCS 240/2]. Services include, among other things, assistance in obtaining orders of protection, civil no contact and stalking no contact orders, safe shelter, notifications related to criminal proceedings, accompaniment to court proceedings, counseling, assistance obtaining crime victim compensation, referrals to social service agencies, and the assertion and enforcement of crime victims' constitutional and statutory rights.

Overview of the VCVA Grant Program

In 1983, the Illinois General Assembly recognized the importance of victims and witnesses in the criminal justice process and passed the Violent Crime Victims Assistance Act. In doing so, the General Assembly found that "the single most important determinant of whether a case is resolved is the information and assistance provided to the victim or witness." [725 ILCS 240/2]. Intending "to provide ways of improving attitudes of victims and witnesses toward the criminal justice system and to provide for faster and more complete victim recovery from the effects of crime," the law established a grant program to provide services to victims and witnesses of violent crime. Fines assessed against defendants convicted of various criminal offenses fund the program, in addition to an appropriation provided through General Revenue Funds (GRF).

In 1985, the first year of the program, the Office of the Attorney General awarded 75 grants totaling \$586,170. For Fiscal Year 23, the current fiscal year, the Office of the Attorney General

awarded 252 VCVA grants totaling \$9,077,800.00.. With the additional funding made available for this year, 63 Special Project grants, totaling \$1,360,169.08, were awarded to fund one-time expenses for technology upgrades, training, outreach, and other expenses not normally included in the VCVA grants.

Eligibility for the VCVA Grant Program

Any public or private non-profit agency in the state that offers one or more of the following services for victims of violent crime may apply for VCA grant funding:

- ◆ coordinate volunteers to work with criminal justice agencies to provide direct victim services or to establish community support;
- ◆ provide assistance to victims of violent crime and their families in obtaining assistance through other official or community resources;
- ◆ provide elderly victims of crime with services appropriate to their special needs;
- ◆ provide transportation and/or household assistance to those victims participating in the criminal justice process;
- ◆ provide victims of domestic and sexual violence and sexual harassment with services appropriate to their special needs;
- ◆ provide courthouse reception and guidance, including explanation of unfamiliar procedures and bilingual information;
- ◆ provide in-person or telephone hot-line assistance to victims;
- ◆ provide special counseling facilities and rehabilitation services to victims;
- ◆ provide other services as the Commission shall deem appropriate to further the purposes of this Act;
- ◆ provide public education on crime and crime victims;
- ◆ provide training and sensitization for persons who work with victims of crime;
- ◆ provide special counseling facilities and rehabilitation services for child victims of sex offenses;
- ◆ when applicable, centers shall enter into written networking agreements to provide for the special needs of child victims of violent crimes;
- ◆ provide assistance in exercising rights provided in the Roadside Memorial Act for the families of victims of fatal injury crashes on roadways. [725 ILCS 240/8].

The selection of agencies to receive funding includes consideration of the following factors:

1. stated goals and services in the application;
2. commitment and ability to provide the stated services;
3. number of people to be served and the needs of the community;
4. evidence of community support;
5. organizational structure of the agency; and
6. maximization of volunteers where appropriate. [725 ILCS 240/7].

The Grant Award Process

Grant awards are made each fiscal year, and completed applications are due on the first Friday in February for the upcoming fiscal year. The VCVA staff in the Attorney General's Office review the applications and present recommendations to the Attorney General. After the Attorney General makes final decisions, the staff executes grant agreements reflecting the conditions of the award. Agencies are required to submit performance and expenditure reports to the VCVA Program on a quarterly basis. Grant Monitors review quarterly reports, conduct site visits, and ensure that victims are receiving the services outlined in the agreement. VCVA staff also provide technical and program development assistance when appropriate to new or existing programs throughout the state.

Again this year, VCVA staff utilized technology, such as video conferencing, and the new electronic grant management system (EGMS), to ensure that all necessary review meetings could take place in a safe manner, all the while ensuring that the VCVA grant process proceeded on schedule.

With the launch of the EGMS, all VCVA processes are conducted on line and are stored "in the cloud" and accessible to the Grant Monitors from any electronic device. This allows an efficient work flow, streamlined on-line filing of applications, reports, and other grant documents, and virtually eliminates our use of paper files. The EGMS is a secure portal and moves the grant life cycle into the 21st century.

Fiscal Year 23 VCVA Grant-Funded Programs

VCVA grant funds provide valuable support to the entire spectrum of victim services agencies represented in the State. Funds awarded to agencies are used for a variety of different services, such as domestic violence services, homicide survivor groups, rape crisis centers, community violence groups, children advocacy centers, other community-based organizations, and State's Attorney Offices. VCVA funds increase the ability of all funded agencies to serve more victims with compassionate, high quality services. Funds are also available to statewide coalitions to assist their member agencies in building capacity and implementing best practices to serve victims.

Outreach continues to identify programs that might benefit from VCVA funding. Targeted outreach includes violence prevention and community violence programs. Once again, VCVA staff provided training and instructions on the grant application process, in order for our grantees to navigate the new EGMS.

In FY23, agencies in 81 Illinois counties directly receive VCVA funds. Some of these agencies serve as regional centers and provide service through a number of adjacent counties. The 252 VCVA grants represent the following program categories:

Program Type	Number of Awards
CAC	30
CASA	23
Child Victimization	1
Community Violence	8
Domestic Violence	55
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault	7
DUI	2
Elder Abuse	8
Homicide Survivor	3
Legal Services	9
Police Based	3
Prosecution	72
Prosecution	1
Sexual Assault	24
Therapy	1
Total	252

Prosecution Based and Police Based programs fund Victim/Witness Coordinators in State's Attorney's Offices and Sheriff's Offices to ensure the rights of crime victims, help people understand the court process, provide notifications about court dates, assist with Crime Victims Compensation, and make referrals for appropriate victim services. Legal Services fund non-profit legal service agencies to assist victims of domestic violence and sexual assault with orders of protections, legal representation, and legal services for victims of human trafficking.

A complete list of the programs, by county, can be found on the Attorney General's website at: <http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/victims/vcva.html> and Exhibit A.

Fiscal Status

The operating costs for the VCVA Bureau are appropriated from the Violent Crimes Victims Assistance (VCVA) Fund and from GRF. The Violent Crime Victims Assistance Act imposes a

fine on persons convicted of criminal offenses and certain offenses listed in the Illinois Vehicle Code. These fines are deposited in the VCVA Fund for the benefit of victim service programs administered by the Office of the Illinois Attorney General. [725 ILCS 240/1 et. seq.]

With the generous addition of GRF to the VCVA funding stream, the entire program is able to expand and serve a wider population of victims in Illinois. The expansion of services includes funding for crime prevention and greater access to intensive Trauma Informed Therapy that not only helps the victims today but adds a component of violence prevention for the future. It is our strategic plan to move forward with outreach and enhance grass-roots programs that affect citizens at the community level.

The Violent Crimes Advisory Commission is grateful for the additional resources to expand this important work and looks forward to working with the Attorney General and the General Assembly in the coming year to continue to ensure high quality, consistent services for victims across Illinois. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at 312.814.1427, or by email at christelle.perez@ilag.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christelle Perez". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Christelle Perez

Chief, Violence Prevention and Crime Victim Services Division
Chairperson, Violent Crimes Advisory Commission