



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

KWAME RAOUL
ATTORNEY GENERAL

November 18, 2020

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 service providers are intended to further the statutory goals of assisting criminal justice agencies in giving more 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, but are not limited to, 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. [Id.]. Fines assessed against defendants convicted of various criminal offenses fund the program. [725 ILCS 240/10].

In 1985, the first year of the program, the Office of the Attorney General awarded 75 grants totaling \$586,170. For Fiscal Year 21, the current fiscal year, the Office of the Attorney General awarded 245 VCVA grants totaling \$ \$7,491,090. The average grant was approximately \$30,575.

The Violent Crimes Advisory Commission, created in the VCVA Act, advises the Attorney General's office on the VCVA process. [725 ILCS 240/4]. The Commission meets periodically to review the status of the program and discuss legislation, issues, and practices that affect victims and the service providers that assist them.

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 the final decisions, the staff executes grant agreements reflecting the conditions of the award. Grant recipients are required to submit fiscal and programmatic 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.

The Fiscal Year 21 grant review process occurred in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Along with the entire Office of the Attorney General, VCVA staff adapted its process to ensure the health and safety of the team during the pandemic. VCVA staff utilized technology, such as video conferencing, 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.

Fiscal Year 21 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 programs, such as domestic violence services and homicide survivor groups, and are used to support a variety of different services offered at rape crisis centers, 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.

Before the start of the Fiscal Year (FY) 21 grant cycle, VCVA staff engaged in outreach to encourage new organizations to apply for VCVA grants. This included community violence and violence prevention programs who do important work in underserved, high crime target neighborhoods. This effort resulted in 10 new organizations receiving funding to conduct important neighborhood outreach to crime victims, trauma-informed services in area hospitals, and direct services to homicide survivors. VCVA staff also provided training and instructions on the grant application process.

In FY21, agencies in 80 Illinois counties directly receive VCVA funds. Some of these agencies serve as regional centers and provide service through a number of adjacent counties. The 245 VCVA grants represent the following program categories:

Program Type	Number of Awards
Bias Violence	1
Child Advocacy Center	27
Court Appointed Special Advocate Service	22
Child Victimization	2
Community Violence	6
Domestic Violence	56
Domestic Violence And Sexual Assault	4
Driving Under the Influence Victim Services	2
Elder Abuse	9
Homicide Survivor Services	3
Legal Services	8
Police Based	3
Prosecution	71
Sexual Assault	24
Technical and Training	4
Violence Prevention	3
Total	245

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>

Fiscal Status

The operating costs for the VCVA Bureau are appropriated from the Violent Crimes Victims Assistance (VCVA) Fund. The VCVA 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.]

Public Act 100-0987, effective July 1, 2019, made changes to the funding mechanism for the VCVA Fund. This law restructured the fines, fees, and costs assessed in criminal cases in Illinois, including the amounts deposited in the VCVA Fund. We continue to monitor the impact of Public Act 100-0987 on the VCVA Fund, including any additional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the VCVA funding stream. As was the case for FY 20, the Attorney General's Office has shifted operating costs of the VCVA Fund to other special funds for FY 21. Continued, sufficient funding to support VCVA objectives is essential in order to preserve the legislature's intent of creating the VCVA and the continuity important programs and services for victims and witnesses of violent crime.

How Legislators Can Help

Members of the General Assembly can help victims of violent crime in their districts by making sure agencies providing victims' services in your district know about the VCVA program. Please feel free to refer victim service providers to the Attorney General's Crime Victim Service Division for more information. Call toll-free – 800.228.3368 – or visit the website, <http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/victims/index.html>, for more information.

The Violent Crimes Advisory Commission 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 skimbro@atg.state.il.us.

All my best,



Sharisse Kimbro
Chief, Crime Victim Services Division
Chairperson, Violent Crimes Advisory Commission