



OVC Fact Sheet

NOVEMBER 2004

WHAT IS THE OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME?

Introduction

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) is a federal agency within the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Congress formally established OVC in 1988 through an amendment to the 1984 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) to provide leadership and funding on behalf of crime victims.

OVC provides federal funds to support victim compensation and assistance programs across the Nation. OVC also provides training for diverse professionals who work with victims, develops and disseminates publications, supports projects to enhance victims' rights and services, and educates the public about victim issues. Every year during National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), OVC's National Crime Victim Service Awards honor victim service providers and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to the field of victims' rights and services. To support NCVRW activities at the state and local levels, OVC funds the creation and dissemination of a resource kit that includes posters, model speeches, press releases, camera-ready artwork, and ideas for commemorative activities.

Funding for OVC's programs comes from the Crime Victims Fund (the Fund), which was established by VOCA to support victim services and training for advocates and professionals. Fund dollars are derived from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties, and special assessments collected by Federal Courts, U.S. Attorneys' Offices, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons from offenders convicted of federal crimes. The October 2001 Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required To Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA PATRIOT Act) expanded the possible sources of Fund deposits by authorizing the deposit of private gifts, bequests, or donations into the Fund beginning in Fiscal Year 2002.

OVC's Mission

The mission of OVC is to enhance the Nation's capacity to assist crime victims and to provide leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices to promote justice and healing for all victims. OVC accomplishes this work through five divisions that manage specific program areas:

- Federal Assistance Division (FAD), formerly the Federal Crime Victims Division (FCVD). This division includes American Indian and Alaska Native initiatives.
- Program Development and Dissemination Division (PDD), formerly the Special Projects Division (SPD).
- State Compensation and Assistance Division (SCAD).
- Training and Information Dissemination Division (TID), formerly the Technical Assistance, Publications, and Information Resources Unit (TAPIR).
- Terrorism and International Victim Assistance Services Division (TIVAS), formerly the Terrorism and International Victims Unit (TIVU).

Federal Assistance Division and American Indian/Alaska Natives

FAD enables victims of federal crimes to participate fully in the criminal justice process. It distributes funds to nonprofit

organizations, federal and military criminal justice agencies, and American Indians and Alaska Natives to support both training for service providers and direct services for victims, including crisis counseling, temporary shelter, and travel expenses incurred in going to court. FAD also supports services for U.S. citizens who are victims of federal crimes in foreign countries. In addition, the Children's Justice Act allows FAD to sponsor programs to improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse in Indian Country. These include establishing and training multidisciplinary teams to handle child sexual abuse cases.

OVC addresses the immediate needs of victims of federal crime by providing emergency funds to federal agencies through the Federal Crime Victim Assistance Fund. Funds are also distributed, via a contracting agency, to smaller federal agencies that lack their own source of emergency funds. Recipients of this fund, which supports services to federal victims when no other resources are available, include the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Department of Homeland Security—Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The fund covers a variety of expenses, including crisis intervention, food and clothing, legal assistance, emergency shelter or temporary housing, transportation to crisis intervention or medical services, and payment of forensic medical examination costs.

FAD also provides funding to federal agencies to develop, organize, and sponsor training tailored to meet their specific needs. The division meets with federal victim assistance personnel to coordinate training and technical assistance needs, identify emerging issues, and discuss resources. In addition, it sponsors the National Symposium on Victims of Federal Crime to help individuals in the federal, tribal, and military criminal justice

systems improve their ability to assist victims and offer services that foster healing and enhance a victim's satisfaction with and participation in the federal criminal justice system.

To improve the skills of service providers and criminal justice professionals working with victims in Indian Country, OVC awards a grant to plan, organize, and deliver an Indian Nations Conference approximately every 2 years. The conference provides skills-building training for professionals who respond to the rights and needs of American Indian and Alaska Native victims. Meanwhile, the District Specific Training Program is an ongoing effort designed to help U.S. Attorneys comply with federal victims' legislation and to improve the response of federal criminal justice personnel to victims' rights and needs.

Program Development and Dissemination Division

PDD develops national-scope training and technical assistance, demonstration programs, and initiatives to respond to emerging issues in the victim assistance field. It is also responsible for coordinating public outreach and awareness, including NCVRW.

PDD provides information and assistance on highly technical victims' issues, including services for trafficking victims, victims with disabilities, and victims of mentally ill offenders. The division also develops promising practices and training and technical assistance for implementing victims' rights. In addition, PDD works with non-governmental, community-based, and other organizations to identify promising practices in serving crime victims. As such, PDD prepares funding announcements and program solicitations, monitors grants, provides training and technical assistance to grantee organizations, and prepares literature and reports regarding

program development, implementation, evaluation, and impact.

State Compensation and Assistance Division

SCAD administers two major formula grants for state crime victim compensation and state-administered local assistance programs.

All states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have established crime victim compensation programs. These programs reimburse victims for crime-related expenses such as medical costs, mental health counseling, funeral and burial costs, and lost wages or support. Compensation is paid only when other financial resources, such as private insurance and offender restitution, do not cover the loss. Maximum awards generally range from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

All states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands are awarded victim assistance grants to support direct services for crime victims. Some 7,300 grants are made to domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, child abuse programs, and victim service units in law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, hospitals, and social service agencies. These programs provide services that include crisis intervention, counseling, emergency shelter, criminal justice advocacy, and emergency transportation.

In addition to monitoring the grants it awards, SCAD proactively develops and revises guidelines and policies regarding the implementation of VOCA victim assistance and compensation grant programs. The division also coordinates and hosts national training conferences with the National Association of Crime Victim

Compensation Boards and the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators to stay abreast of issues in the field. Finally, SCAD supports the delivery of training and technical assistance through the OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center.

Training and Information Dissemination Division

TID oversees the design, development, and dissemination of training and technical assistance to the field and OVC staff on program development and implementation issues. The division coordinates the dissemination of training and technical assistance efforts with the respective OVC divisions, manages the OVC professional development and state scholarship programs, and manages educational and training initiatives—such as the National Victim Assistance Academy and the State Victim Assistance Academies (SVAAAs)—through grants and cooperative agreements. The division also develops and disseminates information resources that support victim service providers and allied professionals. Topics include responding to victims of mass violence and terrorism, faith-based responses to crime victims, the legal rights of crime victims, promising practices in corrections that serve victims, and law enforcement’s critical “first response” role toward victims.

To further the dissemination of these resources, TID manages the OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center (OVC TTAC), the OVC Resource Center (OVCRC), education and outreach initiatives, and the publication and dissemination of OVC materials and grant products.

OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center

OVC TTAC was created in 1998 to provide training, technical assistance, and professional development resources that help the victim service community build its capacity to respond to increasingly complex demands. OVC TTAC offers victim service providers, allied professionals, and volunteers in local, state, tribal, and federal agencies essential tools to enhance their technical skills and improve the quality of services. These include training on victim-related topics and training and developmental support in areas such as needs assessment, program design and implementation, strategic planning, program management, quality improvement, and evaluation. In addition, OVC TTAC manages a professional development scholarship program; operates a speaker’s bureau for conferences, focus groups, and other meetings; and maintains a consultant pool of experts to support OVC’s initiatives nationwide. OVC TTAC also provides training and technical assistance for specialized programs, such as SVAAAs.

Through TID, OVC TTAC maintains the *Training Calendar for Victim Service Providers* that identifies educational and professional development opportunities offered throughout the year. For a list of current offerings or more information about OVC TTAC services, visit OVC TTAC’s Web site at www.ovcttac.org or call 1-866-OVC-TTAC (TTY 1-866-682-8880).

OVC Resource Center

OVCRC produces, collects, maintains, and disseminates information and resources for victim service providers and allied professionals. As a component of the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, OVCRC has access to the most comprehensive criminal justice library in the world. OVCRC information

specialists answer victim-related questions and tailor responses using regional and national victimization statistics, research findings, and a network of victim advocates and organizations. OVCRC staff attend local, state, and national conferences to publicize emerging victim issues and to provide the latest literature at an OVCRC exhibit table. OVCRC also provides publications and resource materials for training workshops, seminars, and conferences on request.

Education and Outreach

TID supports outreach initiatives and dissemination strategies that maximize access to OVC products and resources. The education and outreach component coordinates OVC’s marketing strategies to ensure the distribution of useful and timely information, organizes OVC’s conference support functions through OVCRC, and maintains a calendar of OVC-sponsored conferences on the OVC Web site. This component is responsible for OVC’s Web-based training initiative, the National and State Victim Assistance Academy initiatives, and OVC’s Professional Development Institute (an educational course for managers of victim assistance programs). It develops and maintains the OVC Web site and announces new OVC publications and products. For more information, visit OVC’s Web site at www.ovc.gov.

Publications

TID’s publications component produces publications and other products such as fact sheets, bulletins, brochures, speeches, articles, reports to Congress, announcements, and press releases written by OVC grantees and staff. This component also coordinates the printing and dissemination of OVC products. TID staff offer writing and editing services and other prepublication support, and provide OVC’s discretionary grantees with guidelines for submitting publications to OVC.

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

Office for Victims of Crime

Washington, DC 20531

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use \$300



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OVC publishes literature on emerging victim issues, studies of promising practices and demonstration programs with national impact, policy development guides, and technical assistance and skill-building tools. Recent publications include the *State Legislative Approaches to Funding for Victims' Services*, *Children's Justice Act Partnerships for Indian Communities*, *Children at Clandestine Methamphetamine Labs: Helping Meth's Youngest Victims*, and *State Crime Victim Compensation and Assistance Grant Programs*. OVC also provides videos and other resources that are designed to inform and assist victim service providers and allied professionals. For a complete list of OVC publications and products, visit OVC's Web site at www.ovc.gov.

Terrorism and International Victim Assistance Services Division

OVC created TIVAS to address emerging issues related to serving victims of violent crime, mass victimization, and terrorism both in the United States and abroad. TIVAS develops programs and initiatives to respond to victims of terrorism, mass violence, commercial exploitation, international trafficking of women and children, and other crimes involving

U.S. and foreign nationals. In this capacity, TIVAS coordinates OVC resources and funding for victims of terrorism and transnational crimes and administers the Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program.

The division also supports the development of products and literature describing OVC's response to terrorism and other international crimes, as well as training and technical assistance for victim service providers and allied professionals who work with victims. TIVAS serves as OVC's liaison to foreign embassies and consulates in the United States to inform foreign citizens who are victimized in the United States of the resources available to them.

Furthermore, TIVAS develops working relationships with other federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and international entities to improve the coordination of assistance and resources to help victims. The division also negotiates memorandums of understanding with other state and federal agencies outlining roles and responsibilities for assisting victims of terrorism and other crimes.

Finally, the division oversees the implementation of the International Terrorism Victim Expense Reimbursement Program, which reimburses eligible direct victims of acts of international terrorism that occur outside the United States for expenses associated with that victimization.

For More Information

For more information about the Office for Victims of Crime, please contact

Office for Victims of Crime

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810 Seventh Street NW., Eighth Floor
Washington, DC 20531
202-307-5983
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Web site: www.ovc.gov

For copies of this fact sheet and other OVC publications or information on additional victim-related resources, please contact

Office for Victims of Crime

Resource Center
P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
1-800-851-3420 or 301-519-5500
(TTY 1-877-712-9279)
Ask OVC: <http://ovc.ncjrs.org/askovc>
Web site: www.ncjrs.org

The Office for Victims of Crime is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.