

How OAG Works With Local Crime Victim's Groups



Violent crime can strike anyone, anywhere. Adult or child, male or female, crime invades the lives of Texans in every corner of our state.

Last year my office, which administers the Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Program, provided almost \$73 million to help many of these victims shoulder medical and other expenses related to the crimes committed against them.

But financial assistance alone can't heal all hurts, and in many cases help and recovery are found through caring and compassionate partnerships with local, community-based organizations.

For 25 years, my office has partnered with scores of programs that walk through the recovery process with victims in their communities. We worked with the Legislature to protect more than \$30 million in annual grants to many of them.

Of that amount, \$8 million went to Children's Advocacy Centers. The 59 CACs across Texas are critically important in helping thousands of children who have been victimized by sexual, emotional or physical abuse.

These centers meet the needs

of abused children and their families in a warm, nonthreatening environment. When a child is victimized by physical or sexual abuse, protective agencies can gather at the CAC to conduct evidence gathering, forensic medical exams, counseling and intervention during the investigation and prosecution of abuse cases. This one-stop shop saves the child from having to re-live the trauma of his or her experience to several different agencies.

In fiscal year 2004, for example, Texas CAC's served more than 30,000 children, providing forensic interviews, medical exams, counseling and other services. Seventy-eight percent of the children served were younger than 13.

The help they provide is life-changing. One CAC worked with a 6-year-old girl who had been sexually abused, providing her with medical and psychological services, as well as toys for Christmas gifts. Intervention and advocacy by the center's trained staff not only saved this little girl's life, but they also saved her future and gave her hope.

My office also partners with local law enforcement and prosecutors' offices across Texas by providing money for them to hire victim assistance coordinators or liaisons. These caring people help crime victims in their areas find counseling, emer-

gency shelter or funds to cover expenses they have incurred as a result of the crime.

A prime example of the help victim coordinators provide happened not long ago when a mother of four walked into the Caldwell County District Attorney's Office to report that her husband assaulted two of her daughters. The victim assistance coordinator in the office worked with the woman to obtain a protective order, a Crime Victims' Compensation application, counseling referrals for her children, and a safer tomorrow.

Last year, we awarded grants to fund more than 70 of these positions, enabling law enforcement and prosecutors to assist nearly 24,000 victims of crime.

My office is continuing to partner with these and other victims' groups in the current legislative session. In an environment of intense competition for limited resources, I am working with the Legislature to ensure these organizations get the funding they need to help crime victims.

I look forward to another 25 years of partnership with this impressive coalition of crime victims' advocates. Together, we are helping victims become survivors.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Crime Victim Services

The Office of Attorney General provides crime victim assistance via grants and contracts to local and statewide victim assistance programs. Services made possible by these partnerships:

- Crisis intervention
- Counseling
- Victim hotlines
- Emergency shelters
- Accompaniment during court proceedings

In fiscal year 2004, the Crime Victim Services Division administered more than \$30 million in funding for local and statewide victim assistance programs, such as prosecutors' offices, Child Advocacy Centers, rape crisis centers and family violence shelters. The money helped these groups fund more than 1,300 victim assistance positions and served 180,000 victims.

For More Information about Crime Victim Services:

E-mail: crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us

Or call: (800) 983-9933

www.oag.state.tx.us



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

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Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General's Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.