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# OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME FELLOWSHIP GUIDELINES

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## OVERVIEW

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Fellowships provide a valuable public service to the Nation while also providing individuals with an exciting, rewarding, and unique opportunity to work within the Office for Victims of Crime's (OVC) policymaking process onsite in Washington, D.C. This enriching experience allows Fellows to glean an insider's perspective on government decisionmaking that can contribute significantly to OVC's mission and vision as well as support the Fellow's professional development. The OVC Fellowship Program is designed to provide assistance and expertise in the development or enhancement of innovative programs and assist in the implementation of new approaches and strategies to serve victims of crime. Authorized by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 [42 USC § 10603(c)(3)], the Fellowship recipient provides direct operational assistance to OVC in designing and developing innovative or enhanced service initiatives, management systems, training programs, capacity-building initiatives, and program evaluation efforts.

Since 2002, many individuals have worked with OVC in the Fellowship Program on a variety of projects. OVC's first Fellow was assigned to the Terrorism and International Victims Unit (TIVU) to assist with the development and implementation of the International Terrorism Victim Compensation Program (ITVCP). This Fellow was chosen for their administrative background in criminal justice with state and local governments, educational and academic research interests focused on the broader issues of crime policy, and an interest in the national and international issues of societal mass violence and terrorism. During the process of finalizing regulations for ITVCP, OVC's Fellow worked with TIVU to collect names of eligible victims; to develop internal operating procedures for implementing the program; to identify compatible software with the necessary core competencies to make a recommendation to administrators; to create an ITVCP Web site; to establish the proper method of compensation payments to international victims; to develop the program application and literature; and to identify potential vendors that may be asked to conduct an external review of medical and mental health expenses submitted by victims.

Another Fellow began in March 2003. She brought to OVC experience as a program director for a comprehensive victim services program and as a social worker who provided services to families in crisis for more than 12 years. OVC selected her because of her work overseeing a program in a nonprofit organization, where her responsibilities included providing direct services such as court accompaniment, completing crime victim compensation claims, crisis intervention, telephone counseling, needs assessments and referrals, individual therapy, and support groups. She recruited, trained, supervised, evaluated, and supported victim advocates and volunteers, and conducted many in-services and trainings related to victim services, trauma, bereavement, and criminal victimization.

The primary focus of her fellowship was to understand and assess the needs of victim service organizations seeking to build capacity and institutionalize services within their communities. OVC was invested in a needs assessment process that guided the delivery of training and technical assistance to the field. The Fellow supported OVC's initiative by gathering data about capacity-building resources available to nonprofit victim service programs and the needs and problems experienced by executive directors and program managers nationwide. In addition, she was able to expand OVC's expertise and understanding of the mental health and service delivery needs of child and adult victims and co-victims of homicide.

Depending on the type of Fellowship within OVC, the recipient will focus primarily on one of the following objectives:

- Assisting OVC in enhancing its outreach and training and technical assistance activities that strengthen the ability of state agency grantees to effectively administer formula funding for crime victims' compensation and victim assistance programs in all states and several territories.
- Supporting the development and institutionalization of evidence-based, culturally appropriate victim service protocols that integrate critical multidisciplinary and multijurisdictional collaborative responses to increase services and support to crime victims in tribal communities.
- Working with discretionary grantees to develop evidence-based national-scope training, technical assistance, and models for programs and practices that build organizational and service provider capacity to serve crime victims; particularly those in populations that are underserved.
- Assisting federal employees and contractors to assess the national-scope training and technical needs of practitioners and organizations that serve crime victims to inform the development of an evidence-based national training and technical assistance strategy for OVC.

This document defines the parameters, based on OVC's experience, to help a prospective Fellow successfully meet the obligations of the OVC Fellowship Program and provide broad, innovative, balanced, and quality work during the Fellowship period. Inherent in the development of these guidelines is the knowledge that the prospective Fellowship recipient possesses the requisite background and experience to appropriately conduct and complete the program.

Fellowships are competitively awarded through the OVC grant process and are intended to benefit the Fellowship recipient, OVC, and the crime victims' rights and services field. Fellowship recipients carry out their project in close coordination with a victim justice program specialist. The Fellowship recipient will have an OVC victim justice program specialist (or other staff member) for guidance, assistance, and consultation during his/her residence at the agency. The Victim Justice Program Specialist will also ensure that the Fellowship recipient carries out the necessary requirements during his or her tenure.

## *Application Process*

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Applicants must be individuals (organizations are not eligible to apply) who demonstrate the financial and administrative capacity to manage the cooperative agreement, as well as the knowledge and skills to successfully execute the development of training, technical assistance, public awareness, and other informational resources to meet the needs of service providers and allied practitioners who serve crime victims. For the tribal Fellowship only, OVC will favor applicants who can demonstrate experience relevant to the unique demands of working with tribal communities, including experience living or working in tribal communities or Indian Country.

Applicants must register and apply online for the Fellowship. Access to the online system is found at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Applicants should begin the process a few weeks prior to the registration deadline, particularly if this is the first time using the system. Technical assistance for submitting the application is available 24 hours a day from the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 1-800-518-4726, but it is closed on federal holidays. Applicants are urged to have the funding opportunity number (application number) and specific area of concern available when contacting the hotline in order to help expedite the inquiry. Concerns can also be e-mailed to [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

## *Selection Procedure*

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In evaluating applications, the Solicitation Peer Review Committee first considers the basic eligibility requirements noted in the solicitation. After those requirements are met, the committee takes into consideration the applicant's educational background, professional experience, public service, public policy experience, volunteer activities, communication skills, proposed professional goals and objectives for the Fellowship, overall suitability for the Fellowship (i.e., flexibility, adaptability, open-mindedness, maturity, professionalism), and narrative response to the solicitation. OVC may elect to have a personal interview with the final candidate and will support the lodging, meals, and per diem of the applicant if travel to Washington, D.C., is necessary.

## *Fellowship Award Period*

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Fellowships are awarded for a 12-month period. The program is designed to span up to 3 years, contingent upon grantee performance and availability of funds to support the second and third years of the fellowship.

The cooperative agreements under the Fellowship Program are authorized by 42 U.S.C. 10603 (c)(1)(A) and (c)(3)(E), which authorizes funding for training, technical assistance, demonstration projects, and for fellowships. OVC will support allowable costs associated with the Fellowship. These costs, outlined in the solicitation, are categorized in the following budget categories: 1) Salary, 2) Fringe Benefits, 3) Travel, 4) Supplies, and 5) Other. Note that the salary depends on education, experience, and salary history.

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## REQUIREMENTS

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### *Security Process*

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By order of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), a background investigation will be conducted by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). At a minimum, OPM contacts references and close personal associates listed on the security form completed by the Fellow, as well as any former spouses and former employers. OPM also contacts the Fellow's current employer. Coworkers, past and present, are also interviewed. OPM conducts neighborhood checks on residences, interviewing landlords as well as neighbors. It verifies attendance at institutions of higher education. It also contacts regional credit bureaus covering areas where the fellow has lived and police departments for the jurisdictions in which the fellow has resided. If the fellow served in the military, OPM reviews military records. OPM also checks on any past or present use of controlled substances. Please note that it is the policy of the DOJ Office of Justice Programs (OJP) to achieve a drug-free workplace, and persons selected for the Fellowship program and all other forms of employment will therefore be required to pass a urinalysis test that screens for illegal drug use prior to appointment.

If the background check is successful, the Fellow is required to obtain an official identification (ID) badge. Two forms of ID will be required. The Fellow is photographed and fingerprinted to screen for prior arrest records. The screening is conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The ID badge expires at the termination of the Fellowship award period. The Fellow must obtain the ID badge before access is granted to the OVC building. Additionally, once the badge is received, the Fellow is granted access to the OJP computer network. Computer security training is required.

### *Audit Requirements*

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Federal grants are governed by the provisions of the Office of Management and Budget circulars applicable to financial assistance and OJP's *Financial Guide* found at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/financialguide/index.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/financialguide/index.htm). The *Financial Guide* includes information on allowable costs, methods of payment, audit requirements, accounting systems, and financial records.

### *Programmatic Requirements*

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This Fellowship is governed by several *Special Conditions*, subject to modification or change that provide specific programmatic and budgetary direction. Once the award is made, the Fellowship recipient will review these special conditions with his or her designated OVC Victim Justice Program Specialist. Please refer to the award documents for the current *Special Conditions* (**note that the term “recipient” or “grantee” refers to the “Fellow”**). Examples of Special Conditions include, but are not limited to the following:

- The Fellow agrees to comply with the financial and administrative requirements set forth in the current edition of the OJP *Financial Guide*.
- The Fellow agrees to comply with the organizational audit requirements of OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations, and further understands and agrees that funds may be withheld, or other related requirements may be imposed, if outstanding audit issues (if any) from OMB Circular A-133 audits (and other audits of OJP grant funds) are not satisfactorily and promptly addressed, as further described in the OJP Financial Guide, chapter 19.
- The Fellow understands and agrees that federal funds will not be used, either directly or indirectly, in support of the enactment, repeal, modification, or adoption of any law, regulation, or policy, at any level of government, without the express prior written approval of OJP.
- The Fellow may not obligate, expend, or drawdown funds until the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) has approved the Fellow's proposed budget and budget narrative and a Grant Adjustment Notice has been issued to remove this special condition.
- The Fellow agrees to comply with the requirements set forth in the current edition of the OVC Publishing Guidelines Handbook at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/publications/infores/pubguidelines/welcome.html](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/publications/infores/pubguidelines/welcome.html).
- The Fellow agrees that OVC retains the right to make final determination whether to publish or produce any grant-funded product as an OVC-sponsored product. Only after OVC decides against official publication can the Fellow independently release a publication or product for sale or dissemination, at his or her own expense. However, if the Fellow releases this information, it may not include use of OVC logo or other indicia that it is an official OVC publication.
- The Fellow acknowledges that OJP has the right to (1) obtain, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the data first published under an award or subaward; and (2) authorize others to receive, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use such data for federal purposes.
- The Fellow agrees not to make a profit as a result of this award or to charge a management fee for the performance of this award.
- Responsibility for general oversight and redirection of the project, if necessary, rests with OVC. OVC will review and approve all activities in the requirements under the various stages, as enumerated in the solicitation. This includes review and approval in a timely manner of all key personnel selections, consultants, assessments, plans, instruments, manuals, and documents developed or identified for use during the project, with suggestions for modifications.
- Responsibility for the day-to-day conduct of the project rests with the Fellow. This specifically includes operations, data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
- The Fellow authorizes OVC and/or OCFO, and its representatives, access to and the right to examine all records, books, papers, or documents related to this grant.

- OVC reserves the right to take appropriate action in instances when the grantee fails to initiate activity on the grant or misses multiple time-task lines. OVC action may include, but is not limited to, termination or suspension of the grant.
- Grant funds may be used only for the purposes outlined in the Fellow's approved application. The Fellow shall not undertake any work or activities that are not described in the grant application, and that use staff, equipment, or other goods or services paid for with OJP grant funds, without prior written approval from OJP.
- No federal funds shall be used to pay for any part of air travel that includes business or first class seating except as authorized for government travel (as described in OMB Circular A-122) and authorized by the [Victim Justice Program Specialist] prior to booking such tickets.

### *Administrative, Financial, Fiduciary Requirements*

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OJP requires Fellowship recipients to submit both Financial Status Reports and Programmatic Progress Reports online through the Grants Management System (GMS). These reports serve as documentation of the project's status, the status of the funds, a comparison of the accomplishments to the proposed objectives and activities, and other pertinent information. Additional information about these reports is detailed in the reporting section of this document.

When Financial Status Reports and Programmatic Progress Reports are delinquent, funds will be withheld from Fellowship recipients, requests for drawdowns will be denied, and any new awards from OJP programs will be prohibited or restricted. Drawdowns are requests made by the Fellow to seek payment from the grant for the amount of funds expended. Also, any Grant Adjustment Notices that releases funds to retire special conditions will not be approved until the Fellowship recipient is in administrative compliance (e.g., until financial and progress reports are current).

## *REPORTING*

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The *OJP Financial Guide* provides direction regarding reporting as required in the solicitation and the Special Conditions of the award. Reporting requirements include, but are not limited to, the following two types of reports:

### *Financial Status Reports (SF-425, formerly SF-269)*

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It is important that Fellowship recipients maintain accurate financial records during the tenure of the Fellowship. These records must include documentation of all Fellowship expenses, such as financial and payroll information, including hours worked, annual and sick leave taken, expenses, and drawdown amounts. Post-award instructions are provided to Fellowship recipients as a tool in response to the most frequently asked questions received by the Customer Service Center of OCFO. These instructions, found at



[www.ojp.usdoj.gov/funding/pdfs/post\\_award\\_instructions.pdf](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/funding/pdfs/post_award_instructions.pdf), also provide information on how to use the system to access funds (through drawdowns) from the award.

Fellowship recipients must submit quarterly financial status reports by the 30th day following the end of each calendar quarter, and a final report is due 90 days following the end of the award period. Fellows file the SF-425 through GMS (<https://grants.ojp.usdoj.gov/>). Fellows who do not submit financial status reports in a timely manner will have grant funds automatically frozen and will not be able to drawdown funds. Due dates for submission of the Financial Status Reports are:

#### Quarterly Financial Status Reports (SF-425)

Quarter	Reporting Period	Due Date*
First	January 1–March 31	April 30
Second	April 1–June 30	July 30
Third	July 1–September 30	October 30
Fourth	October 1–December 31	January 30

\*Due no later than 30 days after the end of the quarter

#### *Semi-annual Progress Reports*

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Progress Reports present information relevant to the performance of a plan, program, or project. They should include information regarding the status of the project, and should address performance measurements, goals and objectives, activities completed to date, activities in progress, and any deliverables. Fellowship recipients must also include copies of approved timesheets as documentation of time spent on the project. Progress Reports must be submitted by the Fellowship recipient online through GMS within 30 days of the end of the 6-month reporting period. Questions concerning GMS may be addressed to the GMS Helpdesk at 1-888-549-9901. Note that future awards, fund drawdowns, and grant adjustments are withheld if Progress Reports are delinquent.

#### Semi-annual Progress Reports

Reporting Period	Due Date*
January 1–June 30	July 30
July 1–December 31	January 30

\*Due no later than 30 days after the end of the quarter

A final Progress Report, which is an overall report of the entire grant period, is due within 90 days of the grant end date. It is highly encouraged that these reports are submitted in sufficient

time to allow for the system's approval process. A delinquent final report will result in an administrative closeout, which reflects negatively on the grant recipient.

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## *FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT*

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### *Training*

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DOJ's OCFO requires financial management training, the Regional Financial Management Seminar, to provide guidance on financial recordkeeping as well as the requirements for those who are responsible for the financial administration of discretionary or formula grants administered by the bureaus and offices within OJP. Specific information regarding in-person training, such as dates and locations of upcoming OCFO financial management training seminars, can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/training/fmts.htm>. Information regarding online training is located at: <http://gfm.webfirst.com/>.

### *Standards for Financial Management*

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The Fellowship recipient must establish and maintain an adequate accounting system and financial records system to accurately account for funds awarded and expended. These records shall include all funds as applicable.

### *Records Retention*

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In accordance with the *OJP Financial Guide*, all financial records, supporting documents, statistical records, and all other records pertinent to the Fellowship award shall be retained by the Fellow for at least 3 years following notification by the awarding agency that the grant has been programmatically and fiscally closed, or at least 3 years following the closure of its audit report covering the entire award period, whichever is later. Retention is required for purposes of federal examination and audit. Records may be retained in an automated format.

### *Commingling of Funds*

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Under the *OJP Financial Guide*, federal agencies shall not require physical segregation of cash deposits or the establishment of any eligibility requirements for funds that are provided to a Fellow. However, the accounting systems of all Fellowship recipients must ensure that agency funds are not commingled with funds from other federal agencies. Each federal award must be accounted for separately. Fellowship recipients are prohibited from commingling funds on either a program-by-program or project-by-project basis. Funds specifically budgeted and/or received for one project may not be used to support another.

## *SALARY, BENEFITS, AND BUDGET*

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The Fellowship salary is based on education, experience, and salary history. The Fellowship recipient is paid as an individual working for him or herself, rather than as an employee of another person or organization. The salary ceiling is set by the solicitation. No exceptions to the salary ceiling are granted. Benefits are not included as part of the salary ceiling. The Fellowship recipient must provide supporting documentation, including a copy of the last two federal tax returns as documentation of salary or consulting income history as part of the initial financial review.

Budget expenses allowable for Fellowship recipients include the following:

(1) Salary and benefits (life, health, and disability insurance; state workers' compensation; retirement plan; FICA; and a *public* transportation stipend [based on actual expenses] that does not exceed the current monthly level established by OJP).

(2) Travel to make site visits with other OVC or OJP staff, to attend conferences and meetings (both local and outside of the Metro Washington, D.C. area), and to participate in professional development training. See solicitation for current information on how to budget for trips and associated travel costs.

(3) Expenses to cover costs of a cell phone and BlackBerry to maintain communication with OVC staff.

(4) Expenses associated with professional development and training relating to the OVC project(s). Note: most training opportunities will be in the Washington, D.C. Metro area; however, final decisions are made in consultation with OVC management. Fellows should identify the types of training that they believe would be most helpful to them in carrying out Fellowship activities.

(5) Expenses to cover professional reference materials and resources relating to the Fellowship activities and for business cards. See solicitation for maximum amounts.

Consideration is given during the second and third years of the Fellowship for a cost of living (COL) increase (of salary and corresponding change to benefits), and potentially a pay raise above and beyond COL, depending on performance and availability of funds.

### *Budgetary Records*

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It is imperative that Fellows maintain precise records of all expenses and supporting documentation of those expenses. The following are examples of what a Fellow's record system should include:

- (1) Personnel
  - a. Official documentation of approved work schedule

- b. Timesheets reflecting hours worked for each 2-week pay period
  - c. Official documentation of leave requests, approvals, and denials
  - d. Official documentation of leave balance (annual and sick) after each 2-week pay period
- (2) Fringe Benefits
- a. Original documentation of each actual expense
- (3) Travel
- a. Original documentation of each actual expense
- (4) Supplies
- a. Original documentation of each actual expense

In addition to maintaining records of expenses, the Fellowship recipient must also maintain records of drawdowns.

### *Time and Attendance*

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“Time and Attendance” is broadly defined as the process by which staff members report work, vacation, and other leave. The standard work schedule has a basic work requirement of 80 hours for the biweekly pay period. Fellows must maintain and track their time and attendance, and submit timesheets on a biweekly basis to their Victim Justice Program Specialist, as well as submit all timesheets for the 6-month reporting period with each Semi-annual Progress Report (refer to [Semi-annual Progress Reports](#) in these Guidelines). Timesheets must show cumulative leave balances.

## *WORKING CONDITIONS*

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### *Work Site and Supplies*

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Fellowship recipients work onsite at OVC in Washington, D.C. (unless otherwise indicated in the fellowship solicitation). A workspace and equipment, including telephone, computer, Internet access, and office supplies are provided. Specialized supplies such as relevant publications and subscriptions are provided based on a justified need.

### *Tour of Duty*

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The regular tour of duty for Fellowship recipients is 8 hours (80 hours every 2 weeks), plus one half hour lunch period, every Monday through Friday, with a set starting and ending time. Typical duty hours are 9 a.m. through 5:30 p.m. Alternative work schedules are also available. The Victim Justice Program Specialist will discuss work schedules with the Fellowship recipient

and will set hours, accounting for the duties and requirements of the position as well as preferences with the concurrence of OVC management.

Fellows are expected to work exclusively on approved fellowship activities during the award period. Once an OVC Fellowship has been awarded, the Fellowship recipient is prohibited from accepting outside work from any source that creates an actual or apparent conflict of interest with the Fellowship. Additionally, Fellowship recipients cannot serve or act in any capacity as an OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) consultant. During the Fellowship, the OVC Fellow must obtain the approval of the OVC Director before accepting any offers of outside employment. For the purposes of this document, outside work includes peer review activities.

Fellowship recipients are permitted to work at alternate work sites for short term project-specific tasks at the discretion of the Victim Justice Program Specialist (or as otherwise defined in the fellowship solicitation). The Victim Justice Program Specialist will determine if the project is one that is appropriate for off-site work and will review both the content of the work and the performance of the Fellowship recipient.

Once the Fellowship recipient and the Victim Justice Program Specialist have agreed on the specifics of the teleworking arrangement, it must be determined whether remote access will be necessary. If remote access is appropriate, the Fellowship recipient must request an OJP-issued secure access laptop through the Victim Justice Program Specialist or the OVC Administrative Officer in order to access the OJP network. OJP laptops and handheld devices with secure access to the OJP network may also be issued to Fellowship recipients to be used while on official travel.

### *Leave*

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Annual leave is a period of authorized absence with pay from official duty. Annual leave may be authorized for vacation or for other personal reasons and can be taken by a Fellow in increments of 15 minutes. Fellowship recipients are allowed 15 days of annual leave and 13 days of sick leave during the 12-month period.

Fellowship recipients should always request annual leave as far in advance as possible. Although Fellowship recipients have the right to use their accrued annual leave, OVC management retains the right to determine when annual leave may be taken based on work or other appropriate considerations. Except in emergencies, Fellowship recipients must request annual leave in advance from OVC management. No leave is considered approved unless and until specifically authorized and approved by OVC management. If a personal emergency arises that requires the Fellowship recipient's absence from work and advance approval cannot be obtained, the Fellowship recipient must notify their Victim Justice Program Specialist or OVC management as soon as possible.

Sick leave is a paid absence from duty that can be granted to a Fellowship recipient to use for periods of incapacitation due to illness, injury, pregnancy, childbirth, or exposure to a

communicable disease, and to receive medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment. Additionally, under certain circumstances, a limited amount of sick leave may be used to care for a family member, make arrangements for or attend the funeral of a family member, or for other related purposes.

The Fellowship recipient is allowed paid time off for official federal holidays and other approved time off for federal employees. It is OVC's policy not to approve leave without pay unless there are compelling circumstances. Approval requires the concurrence of the OVC Director.

### *Monitoring*

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The Fellowship recipient's performance will be monitored by a victim justice program specialist or other OVC staff member within the assigned division, with ultimate oversight by the associate director, who oversees the division to which the Fellow is assigned.

### *The Fellowship Experience*

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The Fellowship experience is intended to be both a valuable learning experience and opportunity for both the Fellow and OVC.

A successful Fellow—

- Performs and acts professionally in the office environment
- Completes project requirements in a timely manner
- Articulates needs in a constructive way to his or her Victim Justice Program Specialist and OVC management
- Addresses challenges and demonstrates flexibility in working in a federal agency environment
- Attends division, office, and other meetings and events
- Takes initiative to obtain information to accomplish tasks and achieve Fellowship goals
- Works collegially with other OVC staff members
- Balances work/life time and displays emotional maturity

### *Fellowship Deliverables*

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The solicitation and the Fellowship award document set forth the goals, objectives, and activities for each Fellowship opportunity. The activities may be refined by OVC to reflect the needs of the office. Deliverables, which are the resultant measurable achievements and/or products, are project-specific and will be developed in collaboration with OVC staff.

### *Modification and Termination of the Fellowship*

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Modifications to the fellowship project will be determined in conjunction with OVC staff and senior management. Termination of the Fellowship may occur if the Fellow materially fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Examples include, but are not limited to, failure to file appropriate reports or to meet project deadlines, except for good cause. Refer to the Special Conditions of the award, and Part III, Chapter 14 of the *OJP Financial Guide* for specific guidance on termination. The Fellowship recipient should be aware that funding beyond the initial award of 12 months is not guaranteed and is contingent on performance and availability of funding.