

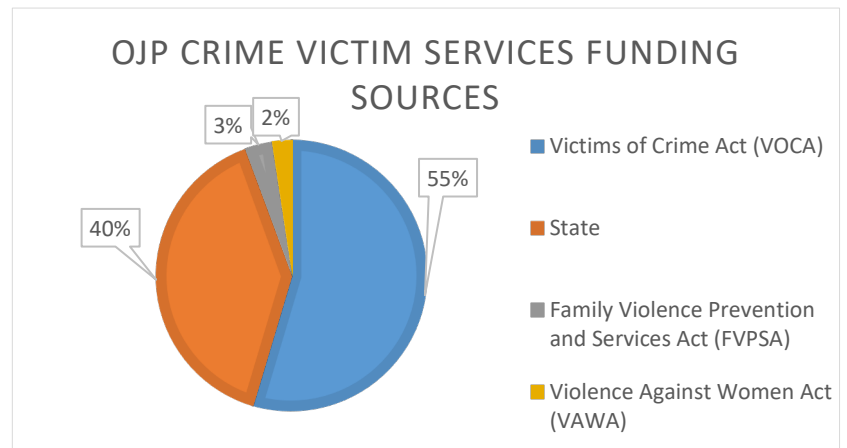
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funding Cut

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs (OJP) distributes approximately \$54 million annually in state and federal funds to programs across Minnesota providing services to crime victims. Due to how VOCA is funded at the federal level all states including Minnesota are receiving VOCA reductions when crime victims need it most. Reductions in funding will severely limit each program's ability to maintain current services and staffing levels, requiring them to lay off essential victim services staff. OJP requested funding as part of the governor's supplemental budget last legislative session. Unfortunately, the session ended without a public safety bill. OJP recognizes the vital work this funding allows and will continue to advocate for the needs of victims and survivors.

Background

- VOCA is the largest source of funding available to Minnesota crime victims.
- VOCA was created by Congress in 1984 and established the Crime Victims Fund (CVF).
- The CVF is financed by fines and fees from federal crimes, not tax dollars.
- Congress appropriates money from the CVF and the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) distributes the funding through a population-based formula to all states and territories.
- States fund a broad array of services and programs that help victims recover and heal from the immediate aftermath of crime by continuing to support them as they rebuild their lives. All services are free to victims.
- Over 136,000 Minnesotans impacted by crime received direct services from funded programs in FY21.



Minnesota Programs Funded with VOCA

- 45 Domestic Violence Community Advocacy Programs
- 24 Emergency Domestic Violence Shelter Programs
- 46 Sexual Assault Programs
- 78 General Crime Victim Programs
- 14 Parenting Time Centers
- 11 Child Advocacy Centers
- 24 Therapeutic Intervention for Youth & Children Programs
- 10 Tribal Nations providing victim services
- 6 Statewide Crime Victim Coalitions

Depending on the program, victim services may include

- Emergency shelter/housing
- Advocacy during forensic exams
- Crisis intervention & counseling
- Victim support groups
- Information & referrals
- Criminal justice system support
- Housing assistance & advocacy
- Civil & criminal legal remedies (no contact orders, harassment restraining orders)
- Emergency financial assistance
- Victim notification
- Transportation



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OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

The Problem

- Deposits to the CVF decreased dramatically from 2017-2021.
- Every state and territory has received reduced VOCA awards through FY21.
- The latest VOCA award (FY22) represents a shortfall of \$8 million annually for OJP to maintain the current level of services to crime victims. This is up from a \$15 million per year shortfall prior to the FY22 award.
- Passage of the VOCA Fix Act of 2021 directed fines from non-prosecution and deferred prosecution resolutions into the CVF. Minnesota's FY22 award increased from FY21, but the CVF balance will likely take two to three more years to recover to previous levels of funding support.
- OJP will conduct an open competitive funding process in 2023 for all crime victim services statewide. OJP plans to release the RFP for funding in February 2023 with funds available starting October 2023. This funding shortfall, in addition to the end of the one-time federal and state funds distributed over the past two years, will deeply impact the ability to fund programs at current service levels and expanding funding to organizations serving historically marginalized communities new to OJP funding.

VOCA Awards	FFY17	FFY18	FFY19	FFY20	FFY21	FFY22
(in millions)	\$31.2	\$56.3	\$38.2	\$28.3	\$17.7	\$24.4

The Impact

- This is the worst time to be reducing services due to the impact of COVID-19 and an increase in the demand for services. Additionally:
 - Violence has increased during the pandemic.
 - Social distancing and isolation increase the risk of violence.
 - Less funding is especially devastating to already historically marginalized, often disproportionately impacted by crime and COVID-19.
- Victim service programs are experiencing extreme challenges:
 - Providing both in-person and remote services has required costly technology upgrades.
 - To maintain social distancing, shelters continue to utilize alternative housing such as hotels.
 - The pandemic decreased volunteerism, a key element in running non-profit victim service programs.
 - Fundraising was greatly impacted and philanthropic support decreased during the pandemic.
 - Staff and client mental health has worsened as staff experience burnout and programs are struggling with hiring and retention.

Key Takeaways

- The state is receiving reductions in VOCA funding when crime victims and programs need it most.
- Reductions in funding will severely limit each program's ability to maintain current services and staffing levels, requiring them to lay off essential victim services staff.
- The latest VOCA award (FY22) represents a shortfall of \$8 million annually for OJP to maintain the current level of services to crime victims. This represents losing approximately 100-plus paid victim service jobs with benefits.

