

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) 2015 -2019 State Plan

- A. VOCA Funding Strategies
- B. VOCA Percentage Allocations
- C. Context
- D. What We Heard: Input Received through the VOCA Planning Process

A. VOCA Funding Strategies:

Maintain the statewide vision of services throughout the state for victims of all crimes:

The VOCA 2015-2019 State Plan is designed to address the needs of crime victims within the frameworks provided by state plans for services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes. While retaining the framework of the three plans, the VOCA 2015-2019 State Plan also recognizes that certain critical victim service needs can best be met through integrated program models (serving victims of multiple types of crime) through designating an administrative home for such integrated program model funding agreements.

1. A. Funding for provision of specific services including but not limited to:

- a) Civil legal services including a portion allocated for a regional approach to providing emergency legal services across the state
- b) Sexual assault nurse examiner services (such as personnel and training costs)
- c) Therapy

B. Funding for victims of specific crimes including but not limited to:

- a) Assault
- b) Burglary
- c) Child abuse and neglect (includes child sexual abuse)
- d) Child pornography
- e) Domestic violence
- f) Drunk or drugged driving
- g) Elder abuse
- h) Hate crimes
- i) Homicide
- j) Identity theft
- k) Robbery
- l) Sexual assault
- m) Stalking
- n) Trafficking
- o) Vehicular victimization

2. Set-aside portions of the increased funding to address key recommendations regarding the needs of crime victims:

a) Programs operated by and for historically marginalized populations:

Support the enhancement and development of additional services for historically marginalized populations. Support “By and for” culturally specific services for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes in historically marginalized populations. Marginalized populations can include, but are not limited to, organizations or groups composed along racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, and gender lines.

b) Tribes:

Support the enhancement and development of additional services for tribal members. Engage in a process with Tribes to identify the most effective methods for addressing needs of crime victims, including use of strategies which integrate services for multiple crime types when appropriate.

c) Programs serving child victims of abuse and neglect:

Support the enhancement and development of additional services for child abuse and neglect (includes child sexual abuse) including a portion allocated for child centered services (case management, forensic interviews, therapy and medical social work) provided by child advocacy programs (such as Child Advocacy Centers).

d) System based victim witness assistance programs:

Utilize a portion of the VOCA funds for development and/or enhancement of systems based **victim witness assistance services** allowable within federal requirements for the use of VOCA funding.

3. Support maintenance of effort (for current services):

a) Invest in staff retention:

Provide funding to improve service quality and stability within existing VOCA supported services through investing resources to **improve staff recruitment and retention**.

- i) Direct a portion of the increased VOCA dollars to improve recruitment and retention of staff through improving compensation (especially compensation for direct service staff) and/or increasing the number of FTE positions available to assist victims.
- ii) Require providers to submit an organizational policy and strategy for improving compensation and/or adding full-time equivalent staff positions (FTE) which identifies the positions within their organization for which compensation will be enhanced, or FTE will be increased, and the rationale for awarding the increased compensation or increasing the FTE positions.
- iii) Award increased financial support for compensation enhancement and/or FTE increase plans that appear reasonable and appropriate in relation to the goals of ensuring the availability of high quality services throughout the state.

b) **Enhance current services:**

Provide funding to **enhance current programming** and **address critical needs** identified in the planning process, including, but not limited to:

- i) Supporting needed direct emergency financial assistance to meet crime victim needs to the fullest extent permissible within VOCA funding requirements.
- ii) Encouraging development and testing of service delivery strategies that meet the needs of crime victims who may have difficulty accessing currently available services.

4. Establish a **VOCA Reserve Fund**, within the limitation of the federal requirements:

a) **Emergent and unanticipated needs** (such as the needs of victims of mass violence).

b) **Establish training bank:**

Provide funding for staff training utilizing a clear “use it or lose it” expectation including the requirement that funds may be used only for staff training expenses (e.g. registration, travel costs). Encourage providers to request adequate funding for staff training.

c) **Expand language bank:**

Provide increased funding for **interpretation** to pay for third party interpretation with “use it or lose it” expectations including the requirement that funds may be used only for interpretation costs.

B. VOCA State Plan*

Purpose	% of VOCA funds
Grants for specific services or crime types:	20%
Including but not limited to the following examples:	
Services: civil legal assistance (including a portion allocated for a regional approach to providing emergency legal services statewide); SANE programming; therapy	
Specific crimes: assault; burglary; child abuse & neglect; child pornography; domestic violence; drunk or drugged driving; elder abuse; hate crimes; identity theft; kidnapping; sexual assault; vehicular victimization	
Set-asides:	25.5%
By & for programs	9.2%
Tribal Governments	7.4%
Child services: abuse & neglect [including a portion allocated for child centered services (case management, forensic interviews, therapy, medical social work) provided by child advocacy programs (such as Child Advocacy Centers)]	6.4%
Victim Witness assistance (system based)	2.5%
Investment in current services:	51%
Maintenance of effort	29.5%
Compensation & FTE improvements	15.0%
Enhancement and expansion	6.5%
Reserve Fund:	3.5%
Emergent issues & emergency response	1.0%
Training bank	1.5%
Language bank	1.0%
*Anticipate awarding up to the percentage listed. OCVA reserves the right to move funding between areas when underutilized.	

C. Context:

The Office of Crime Victims Advocacy (OCVA), located within the Washington State Department of Commerce, serves as the Administrator of federal VOCA Assistance funds. Historically the amount awarded to Washington State for pass-through funding has been between \$7,000,000 and \$10,000,000 per year. Early in 2015, Congress permitted a much larger amount to be withdrawn from the VOCA fund which is comprised of federal fines and property seizures. This congressional change has resulted in an increase in Washington State's award for pass-through funding, with total funds available for Washington pass-through funding anticipated to be approximately \$40,000,000 per federal fiscal year.

OCVA established the VOCA planning group to conduct a statewide planning process to guide the development of the 2015-2019 VOCA State Plan and formulate recommendations to guide the use of VOCA funds through 2019.

The VOCA planning group launched a statewide planning process which included opportunities for input from crime victims, victim service providers, law enforcement, the courts, and other interested parties. The process included a series of five in-person discussions, an online electronic survey, a feedback session at the WomenSpirit Coalition Conference, and opportunities to submit additional comments. OCVA received input from over 160 participants in five discussion sessions held in Spokane, Yakima, Shelton, and Seattle (two sessions held), as well as input from 141 respondents to the online survey, and six comment submissions. While discussion participants, survey respondents, and commenters offered differing perspectives, the input process yielded substantial consensus on key unmet needs of those hurt or harmed by crime and major challenges confronting crime victim service providers.

D. What We Heard: *Input Received through the VOCA Planning Process:*

Respondents identified retention and enhancement of current crime victim services as the highest priority for the 2015-2019 VOCA State Plan. Respondents also identified key crime victim service gaps which should be addressed through the Plan. Comments throughout the input process focused on 9 key areas (*please note: these are not in priority order*):

1. **Historically marginalized populations:**

Respondents noted that while all crime victim service providers should be expected to be culturally responsive, services provided by and for members of historically **marginalized populations** have particular value to crime victims. Respondents emphasized the need to establish a dependable base amount of funding to ensure continuity and capacity development within “by and for” organizations serving marginalized populations.

2. **Tribes:**

Respondents highlighted the needs of **crime victims in Tribal communities**; the importance of culturally specific services provided by and for Tribal members, by Tribes and affirmed the framework of government-to-government relationship between Washington’s Tribes and state government. Respondents called for consultation with Tribes to determine how best to utilize VOCA funds to assist victims of crime in Tribal communities.

3. **Child abuse and neglect:**

Respondents requested that OCVA utilize a portion of the increased VOCA funding for additional availability of services for **child abuse and neglect (including child sexual assault)** and non-offending families and caregivers of child victims.

4. **Training:**

Respondents noted the need for more, and more effective **training** for both crime victim service providers and for community resource persons who work with crime victims. Specifically the need for trauma informed training, advanced level service training, and working with complex cases training.

Washington State has received VOCA funding specifically for training and will be working to address some of the training issues through that grant. Planning for the grant will take place in the fall of 2016.

5. **Capacity building:**

Respondents strongly urged the VOCA planning group to utilize additional funding to improve the effectiveness of crime victim services through building the capacity of existing crime victim service providers to **recruit and retain highly competent staff**. Respondents noted that VOCA funded organizations currently providing crime victim services are experiencing significant barriers to service continuity and depth due to lack of capacity to provide appropriate compensation to their staff, especially to direct service staff. Concerns about inadequate staff compensation spanned all parts of the state, all types of crime, and all types of service providers. Respondents also noted that both recruitment and retention of quality staff were

negatively impacted by inadequate staffing levels which results in creating unsustainable workloads.

6. Victim witness assistance:

Respondents requested that OCVA utilize a portion of the increased VOCA funding for additional availability of system based **victim witness assistance services** throughout the state.

7. Transportation:

Respondents noted that many crime victims confront significant **transportation barriers** to obtaining the victim services they need. Respondents urged more attention to mobile service delivery strategies that would bring needed services to victims rather than requiring victims to travel to obtain services.

Grantees will be reminded that they may utilize current and increased funding to create and support responsive services.

8. Emergency financial assistance:

Respondents requested more flexibility in the use of VOCA funding to meet crime victims' essential needs including but not limited to **emergency financial assistance**. VOCA funding requirements permit the use of federal funds to meet victim emergency needs which impact the victim's immediate health and safety, subject to any restrictions on the use of federal funds. Respondents noted that VOCA service providers need greater clarity regarding the allowable uses of VOCA funds to meet victim emergency health and safety needs to ensure that victims receive assistance with essential needs within the context of permitted uses of VOCA funds.

Grantees will be urged to earmark VOCA funds for emergency financial assistance and to develop policy and protocols for spending. Grantees will be provided with guidance on allowable costs.

9. Legal services:

Respondents highlighted the need for additional funding for legal services for crime victims. Funding should be available for emergency legal services. In addition, other costs associated with helping victims participate in the criminal justice system may be allowable. These services may include emergency representation, advocacy on behalf of crime victims, and accompaniment to criminal justice offices and court.

VOCA funds cannot be used to pay for non-emergency legal representation such as for divorces, or civil restitution recovery efforts.