



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund

FY 22 Request:

- Pass the VOCA Fix to increase deposits and restore the Crime Victims Fund (CVF).
- Release steady funding from the CVF that reflects deposits and fund levels.
- Fund tribal services.
- No additional transfers.

The Crime Victims Fund was created by Congress in 1984 to provide grants to state and local programs that assist victims of crime. The Fund is derived entirely from fines and penalties paid by federal criminal offenders, *not taxpayer revenues*, and is the most essential and flexible source of funding for crime victim services across the nation.

From FY 2010 through FY 2014, the CVF collected an average of \$2 billion each year but disbursed only an average of \$700 million per year. Congress raised the cap significantly in FY 2016 and the next two years at the request of advocates and programs were able to invest in new staff and expanded services.

Tragically, these investments cannot be sustained because deposits into the CVF are at a historically low level. Deposits the last three years have been \$445 million, \$495 million, and \$503 million respectively—the lowest levels since 2003. This decrease is caused in part by an increase in the use by the U.S. Department of Justice of deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements which, unlike penalties from convictions, are deposited into the General Treasury rather than the CVF.

As a result of this trend, states are experiencing enormous cuts to their awards.

For example, victim services in Ohio lost \$55 million in 2020. Rape crisis programs specifically lost over \$7.5 million, with individual programs losing between 32% and 57% (as well as three 100% cuts) of VOCA funds. This will essentially cut services in half, reducing survivor access to pre-2000 levels.

Unless deposits into the CVF increase, there is a good chance that the entire Fund balance could be depleted within a few years. Congress must act now to avoid further devastating cuts to local programs and increased gaps in survivor services by:

Enacting the “VOCA Fix” language to increase deposits to the fund: Fund deposits should be supplemented with payments made pursuant to deferred and non-prosecution agreements.

Providing a steady stream of funding that can be relied on consistently: Large fluctuations in the cap do not benefit survivors or victim services providers.

Funding Tribes: NAESV fully supports funding tribal victim services from the Crime Victims Fund to meet the desperate needs of victims on tribal lands.

Waiving match: Many programs, especially those in rural areas, cannot apply for all the funds they need because of the match requirement. Sufficient local funding is simply not available in many communities. While some states have a streamlined process for match waivers, others do not. The match requirement should be waived to allow this funding source to have the maximum positive impact for victims.

Addressing red tape: Long delays in reimbursement, complicated funding requirements and inflexible processes tie the hands of programs and may lead to funds being returned and/or staffing crises. States need more direction and support in creating processes that work efficiently to meet the needs of victims.

Rape crisis centers rely on VOCA funds to provide direct services like crisis intervention, counseling, and court accompaniment to victims of sexual assault.

Over 4,000 agencies, including over 1,000 rape crisis centers, rely on VOCA assistance grants to provide critical direct services for over 3.4 million victims a year.

A 2020 NAESV survey of rape crisis centers revealed that 62% have a waiting list for counseling services; 35% don't have therapist on staff; and 62% of programs saw an increase in demand for services.

Biggest unmet needs according to programs:

- Therapy
- Services for teens
- Transportation
- Housing
- Access to SANE nurses

VOCA makes a difference.

Here's what rape crisis centers had to say about VOCA in our 2020 survey:

"Many survivors want/need therapy. I can provide counseling, support and resources but they need a good therapist - and we do not have one staffed at our agency doing therapy work." --an Iowa advocate

"Since we opened our SAFE Center, the number of rape victims coming forward for services has nearly doubled." --A Florida advocate

"VOCA is PAAR's largest funder at 40%. A significant decrease would result in layoffs and decreased services." — a Pennsylvania advocate

"The uncertainty of the funding is of grave concern especially when dealing with the pandemic and attempting to keep your organization running." —a West Virginia advocate

"The federal and state funding for the 20-21 year will not cover all the increases in expenses for our programs. This does NOT include the increase in expenses incurred due to COVID-related items. We may be forced to lay off people before the end of the fiscal year." — a California advocate

"...if its [VOCA] cut further, we will experience a decrease in services, especially in our small rural counties where access is crucial to survivors of sexual violence." -- a Florida advocate

Distributing steady funding to states from the VOCA fund in FY 2021 will allow rape crisis centers to eliminate waiting lists, improve trauma-informed responses, and assist more survivors to heal and thrive.

HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS? Contact Terri Poore, terri@endsexualviolence.org.