

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Crime Victim Fund (CVF)



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

FY23: \$1.9 billion released
FY24: \$1.3 billion released
FY25: \$1.9 billion released

FY26 Request: Provide steady funding for the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Crime Victims Fund (CVF) at \$1.9 billion. If the CVF cannot sustain this level of funding, Congress must find other mechanisms to maintain steady funding for this vital program without cutting other victims services programs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Crime Victims Fund (CVF) was created by Congress in 1984 to provide grants to state and local programs that assist victims of crime. The CVF is derived entirely from fines and penalties paid by federal criminal offenders and is the most essential and flexible source of funding for crime victim services across the nation.

Deposits into the CVF had dipped to historically low levels creating a huge funding crisis for victim services. States are experiencing enormous cuts to their awards.

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.

We have essentially lost \$540,000 in the last two years due to VOCA cuts. We have cut back on all training and also cut two overall agency positions.

Kansas Rape Crisis Center

DEMAND IS HIGH FOR VICTIM SERVICES

A 2024 NAESV survey of Rape Crisis Centers revealed:

- 58% of programs saw an increased demand for services.
- 20% of rape crisis centers had a waiting list for trauma-informed therapy; 16% have a waiting list for support groups.
- 43% of programs experienced a reduction in staffing.
- 61% of programs lack a full time mental health counselor or therapist on staff.
- Of the 54% of respondents who answered salary questions, 64% reported the average direct service salaries to be \$49,000 or below.

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 could not be sustained.

We lost two employees, our counseling and our housing program. We no longer have any housing or mental health dollars internally and have to fully rely on community partners, who are also struggling with funding.

Oklahoma Rape Crisis Center

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SOME GOOD NEWS

The VOCA Fix Act is working but not sufficient. Congress passed the VOCA Fix Act in 2021 directing deposits from deferred prosecutions and non-prosecution agreements to the CVF resulting in increased deposits—over \$1 billion resulting from this change thus far. But this is not sufficient to fully restore the health of the CVF.

While we work to increase deposits into the fund, **states need a consistent and reliable funding stream:** Large fluctuations in the cap hurt victims and victim services providers.

Advocates aren't just waiting for the situation to get better. We're advocating with the U.S. Department of Justice, to ensure U.S. Attorneys understand how important negotiated fines and fees are to the health of the fund. Advocates are also working hard to ask states to help fill the gap in victim services and talking to federal prosecutors about the vital importance of the CVF.

[VOCA funding cuts have meant] we lost the ability to serve survivors in rural areas. However, our number of clients has increased as some surrounding centers have closed.

Alabama Rape Crisis Center

In order to stabilize the balance of the CVF and prevent further cuts to VOCA grants, NAESV and many victims services organizations are supporting the bipartisan **Crime Victims Fund Stabilization Act (H.R. 909)**, introduced by Representatives Ann Wagner (R-MO-2), Nathan Moran (R-TX-1), Debbie Dingell (D-MI-6), Stephanie Bice (R-OK-5), and Jim Costa (D-CA-21) AND Derek Schmidt (R-KS-2). This legislation adds excess funds from the False Claims Act to the Crime Victims Fund for five years. Companion legislation is expected in the Senate.

Funding Tribes: NAESV fully supports funding tribal victim services from the CVF 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 VOCA Fix Act helpfully eliminated the required match waiver during the pandemic.

VOCA MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The costs of operating the organization have increased, and when funding stays the same or decreases, we face the prospect of scaling back services. For standalone rape crisis centers, VOCA funds often help to cover the essential services that our organizations have been providing for decades, and it is challenging to secure local funding for these programs.

Texas Rape Crisis Center

Distributing steady funding to states in FY26 will allow rape crisis centers to continue providing essential services to victims.

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