



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund

FY 21 Request:

- Release steady funding from the Crime Victims Fund that reflects deposits and fund levels.
- Update language to increase deposits.
- Fund tribal services.
- No additional transfers.
- Address administrative hurdles.

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*.

From FY 2010 through FY 2014, the Crime Victims Fund 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 at the request of advocates.

Deposits to the fund began shrinking considerably in the past few years. However, the cap rose to an all-time high in 2018 to \$3.4 billion. Advocates warned the increase could not be sustained. Now the current health of the fund is greatly compromised.

Estimates suggest a **\$740 million cut to victim assistance grants to states in FY 2020 as a result of shrinking deposits to the fund.**

Programs need a steady stream of funding that can be relied on year in and year out. Large fluctuations in the cap do not benefit survivors or victim services providers. Congress must update language to increase deposits to the fund to avoid painful cuts to local programs and increased gaps in survivor services. Unless revenues into the Fund are supplemented, there is a good chance that the entire Fund balance could be depleted within five years.

Congress should provide steady funding in FY 2021 and address the following key issues:

Enact language to increase deposits to the fund: Fund deposits should be supplemented with payments made pursuant to deferred and non-prosecution agreements.

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

Eliminate 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 eliminated to allow this funding source to have the maximum positive impact for victims.

Address 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 1000 rape crisis centers, rely on VOCA assistance grants to provide critical direct services for over 3.4 million victims a year.

A 2019 NAESV survey of rape crisis centers revealed that over 50% have a waiting list for counseling services; 44% don't have therapist on staff; and 84% of programs saw an increase in demand for services.

"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

Largest unmet needs according to programs:

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

VOCA is making a difference.

As a result of the increases in the VOCA cap over the last several years, many programs have received an increase in VOCA funds. Programs have:

- Hired new advocates & increased wages to improve retention;
- Hired forensic nurses;
- Served more trafficking survivors;
- Opened satellite offices in rural areas;
- Reached more children;
- Started support groups for youth & elders;
- Provided transportation support and housing assistance to victims;
- Offered therapy to survivors; and
- Added text/chat counseling capabilities and other technological improvements.

Responses from our 2019 Rape Crisis Center Survey on the impact of VOCA funds:

"The VOCA increase has changed our program completely. We can now offer career-sustaining wages and benefits to all our employees. Now we have an emergency assistance fund for victims and this is life-changing!"—a Wisconsin advocate

"We've been able to increase direct services to victims that would NEVER have happened without VOCA funds. Now we can respond to victims via text/chat which enables more victims to seek help." --a Pennsylvania advocate

"The additional monies and match waivers have been extremely helpful. The slow movement of funds and strict regulations have been concerning."—an Alabama advocate

Distributing steady funding to states from the VOCA fund in FY 2020 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.