



CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH
OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES
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To: The Honorable Elizabeth A. Bozzuto, Chief Court Administrator
From: The Honorable Courtney M. Chaplin, Co-Chair
Yvette Young, Co-Chair
Cc: The Honorable Laura F. Baldini, Superior Court Judge, New Britain Judicial District
Tais C. Ericson, Executive Director, Superior Court Operations Division
Mary E. Kozicki, Director, Office of Victim Services
Date: December 15, 2023
Subject: 2023 Report of the Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime

Statutory Charge

Connecticut General Statutes § 54-203 (b) (9) directs the Office of Victim Services (OVS) “[t]o provide staff services to a state advisory council. The council shall consist of not more than fifteen members to be appointed by the Chief Justice and shall include the Chief Victim Compensation Commissioner and members who represent victim populations, including but not limited to, homicide survivors, family violence victims, sexual assault victims, victims of drunk drivers, and assault and robbery victims, and members who represent the judicial branch and executive branch agencies involved with victims of crime. The members shall serve for terms of four years. Any vacancy in the membership shall be filled by the appointing authority for the balance of the unexpired term. The members shall receive no compensation for their services. The council shall meet at least four times a year. The council shall recommend to the Office of Victim Services program, legislative or other matters which would improve services to victims of crime and develop and coordinate needs assessments for both court-based and community-based victim services. The Chief Justice shall appoint two members to serve as co-chairpersons. Not later than December fifteenth of each year, the council shall report the results of its findings and activities to the Chief Court Administrator.”

The Advisory Council met five times, meeting its statutory requirement to meet four times per year. The 2023 meeting schedule is attached hereto as Appendix A.

Council Structure, Membership, and Attendance Information

The 2022 - 2026 Council term began September 1, 2022, and will conclude on August 31, 2026. Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson appointed the Honorable Laura F. Baldini (resigned as co-chair September 2023), the Honorable Courtney M. Chaplin, and Yvette Young, to serve as co-chairs for the 2022 - 2026 term. The 2023 Council membership list is attached hereto as Appendix B.

The Advisory Council conducted the majority of its meetings via Microsoft Teams. The meetings were televised via the CT-N network. The last two meetings of the calendar year were held in person at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield. The average meeting attendance rate in 2023 was

73%. This rate is lower than the average attendance rate for 2022, which was 80%. The Council discussed the importance of consistent attendance to facilitate Council business. Next year, the Council has plans to meet more frequently in person.

Activities

During this reporting period, the Council discussed the Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant funding, which is the Office of Victim Services' (OVS) primary source of federal funding for the Victim Assistance and Victim Compensation Grant Programs.

In addition, the Council discussed various legislative initiatives that would improve or affect services to crime victims and held discussions about victim service community collaborative efforts and the community-based programs and services available to crime victims.

1. Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant Funding

In February:

- OVS Program Manager James Morgan provided a VOCA funding update, including:
 - In the first quarter of Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022-2023 deposits into the Crime Victims Fund (Fund) totaled \$465 million.
 - For FFY 2023, Congress authorized \$1.9 billion for OVC programs, including VOCA Victim Assistance and VOCA Victim Compensation grants.
 - To offset the decrease in VOCA funding, the Governor's 2024 State Fiscal Year (SFY) budget allocated \$13.1 million in American Rescue Plan Act relief funds for victim service providers.

In April:

- OVS Program Manager James Morgan provided a VOCA funding update, including:
 - Deposits into the Fund as of February 28, 2023, were \$544 million with a Fund balance of \$1.92 billion.
 - On April 6, 2023, OVC released the state victim assistance grant allocations for FFY 2023. Connecticut's allocation was \$14.7 million, which was a 5.6% reduction from the FFY 2022 award.
 - President's FFY 2024 budget request included an appropriation of \$1.2 billion from the Fund for OVC programs. This represented a 37% decrease from the FFY 2023 appropriated amount.
 - Senate Bill No. 5 *An Act Strengthening The Protections Against and Response to Domestic Violence* included funding requests of \$13.1 million in FY 2024 and \$20 million in FY 2025 awarded to OVS for services to crime victims to offset continued reductions in VOCA funding.

In June:

- OVS Program Manager James Morgan provided a VOCA funding update, including:
 - Deposits into the Fund as of April 30, 2023, were \$838 million with a Fund balance of \$2.39 billion with \$1.74 billion deducted for FFY 2023 grants.
 - The FFY 2024 budget request included an appropriation of \$1.2 billion from the Fund for OVC programs. This represented a 37% decrease from the FFY 2023 appropriated amount.
 - The State budget for FY 2024 and FY 2025 included additional American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funding to the Judicial Branch to maintain existing services to OVS contracted service providers.

- FY 2023-2024 contracts were funded at the same award levels as the current year, and in accordance with the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 the VOCA match requirement was waived for the upcoming year.

In September:

- OVS Director Mary Kozicki provided a VOCA funding update, including:
 - OVC expected the FY 2024-2025 Fund balance to be \$1.3 billion.
 - OVC noted a potential 40% reduction in VOCA assistance grant funding.
 - Connecticut was able to maintain current funding levels at \$29.49 million for current contracts through the utilization of *American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)* funds, which expire on December 31, 2024. The 40% reduction in funding and the expiration of ARPA funds, could potentially result in a FY 2025-2026 Connecticut VOCA assistance grant of approximately \$8 million.

The Council discussed issues related to advocating for additional funding and the impact of reduced funding on victim services.

In November:

- OVS Program Manager James Morgan reported that the Fund balance as of October 1, 2023, was \$1.01 billion, which was the lowest fund balance since 2006. The President's FFY 2024 budget request included an appropriation of \$1.2 billion from the Fund for OVC programs. The Council discussed issues related to advocating for additional sources to fund victim services.

2. Community-based Victim Services Presentations and Discussions

In February:

- Council member Amy Lupoli, LMFT, Senior Director of Clinical Services, Klingberg Family Centers provided an overview of Klingberg Family Centers services available to victims of crime. The Council discussed the increase in crimes against children during the Covid-19 pandemic and suicide ideation among children following the pandemic.

In April:

- Krystal Rich, Executive Director, Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA) provided a presentation about the Regionalized Human Trafficking Recovery Task Force. The Council discussed issues related to the ratio of traffickers to victims, prevention, intervention, prior victimization, training provided to casino staff members to recognize behaviors, legal services partnerships, and specially trained law enforcement team members.
- Council member Andrew Woods, Executive Director, Hartford Communities That Care (HCTC) and Johanna Schubert, Director of HVIP Collaborative, and Chavon Campbell, Director of Compliance and Quality Assurance, provided a presentation on the HCTC Hospital Based Violence Intervention program and the New Visions Alternative School. Council members discussed the successful outcomes of the New Visions Alternative School.

In June:

- Council member Susan Omilian, Esquire, founder and facilitator of My Avenging Angel Workshop™ provided a presentation on how the workshops help victims break the cycle of violence. The Council discussed the workshop's motivational model.

In September:

- OVS trainer Court Planner Alexandra Gittines provided a presentation on OVS Programs and Services. Council members discussed issues related to the criminal court process for victims of crime.

In November:

- No presentations were presented.

3. Legislative Initiatives

In February:

- No updates or reports were provided.

In April:

- Council member Gerrie Wild reported that:
 - Senate Bill No. 5, *An Act Strengthening the Protections Against and Response to Domestic Violence* expands the electronic monitoring program for family violence offenders and prohibits the court from ordering an injured spouse to make temporary or permanent alimony payments to a spouse who is convicted of criminal attempt or conspiracy to commit murder or manslaughter.
 - Senate Bill No. 1118, *An Act Establishing the Domestic Violence Criminal Justice Response and Enhancement Advisory Council* establishes a new advisory council to assess and provide guidance regarding the state's criminal justice response to domestic violence by the expansion of Connecticut's Alert Notification/GPS Program for high risk domestic violence offenders, provides notification to victims, and implements a specialized domestic violence dockets focusing on victim safety, offender accountability, and services.
- Council member Andrew Woods, director of HCTC reported on a collaborative effort with Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Coalition to request lawmakers provide funding to support violence prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery programs specific to community violence across Connecticut.
- OVS Deputy Director Mary Kozicki reported that proposed House Bill No. 6874, *An Act Concerning Judicial Branch Operations, the Sharing of Judicial Branch Records, and the Award of Damages in Certain Civil Matters* expands access to juvenile and youthful offender proceedings to victims' next of kin.

In June:

- Council member Jessica Pizzano reported that proposed House Bill No. 6510, *An Act Designating Survivors of Homicide Victims Awareness Month* designated November 20 to December 20, 2023, as *Survivors of Homicide Victims Awareness Month*.
- Council members were provided with updates on:
 - House Bill No. 6874, *An Act Concerning Judicial Branch Operations, the Sharing of Judicial Branch Records, and the Award of Damages in Certain Civil Matters*.
 - Senate Bill No. 5, *An Act Strengthening the Protections Against and Response to Domestic Violence*.
 - Senate Bill No. 1118, *An Act Establishing the Domestic Violence Criminal Justice Response and Enhancement Advisory Council*.
 - HCTC collaborative effort with the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Coalition for legislative funding for statewide services to victims of community violence.

In September:

- Council member Gerrie Wild reported that Public Act No. 23-106, *An Act Strengthening the Protections Against and Response to Domestic Violence* identified Derby, New Haven, and Milford Superior courts to participate in the first phase of the GPS program.
- Council member Beth Hamilton reported that the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence as part of the Trafficking in Persons Council would re-introduce legislation that includes all victims of crime to the state's protected classes.

In November:

- The Council discussed various potential legislative proposals for the upcoming session.
- Council members were provided with updates on:
 - Public Act No. 23-106, *An Act Strengthening the Protections Against and Response to Domestic Violence*.
 - Public Act No. 23-136, *An Act Concerning the Establishment and Duties of the Domestic Violence Criminal Justice Response and Enhancement Advisory Council*.
 - An initiative to re-introduce legislation to add all victims of crime to the state's protected classes.

4. General Collaboration Discussion

In February:

- Council member Beth Hamilton reported that the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence, the Connecticut Coalition to End Domestic Violence, and the Connecticut Children's Alliance met with current VOCA grantees to engage in collective advocacy to support the Governor's inclusion of \$13.17 million in the state budget to keep VOCA level funding for FY 2024.
- OVS Director Linda Cimino summarized the key findings of the Victimization Study/Needs Assessment Phase 2: In-depth Interviews.
 - Director Cimino thanked Council member Marc Pelka for assigning Kevin Neary, Research Director, Office of Policy and Management as a staff resource to assist the OVS Strategic Planning Committee in further analyzing the victimization study's raw data and with the development of fact sheets on the most common victimizations identified in the study.
 - Director Cimino reported that the OVS Strategic Planning Committee surveyed the OVS VOCA funded contracted agencies for more refined information about collaboration within the victim service provider community, which was identified as a recurrent theme in the study data analysis.
- Council member Susan Omilian reported that because of a referral from the Klingberg Family Centers and a recording of an Advisory Council meeting on the Judicial Branch YouTube site two victims of domestic violence were made aware of the My Avenging Angel Workshop™.

In April:

- OVS Deputy Director Mary Kozicki reported that to commemorate National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), OVS coordinated educational and outreach opportunities including:
 - hosting a five-day Contractor Spotlight virtual training;
 - mailing information about OVS programs and services to the Human Services Departments in all of Connecticut's towns and municipalities; and

- posting promotional NCVRW information on the Judicial Branch Website and Twitter account.

In June:

- Council member Susan Omilian distributed information about My Avenging Angel Workshop™.

In September:

- Council member Andrew Woods reported that a *Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention* meeting would be held in September.

In November:

- OVS Director Mary Kozicki reported that
 - OVS collaborated with the OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center on a Vicarious Trauma and Building Resiliency training provided to OVS staff in October. Training follow-up will begin in the Spring of 2024.
 - OVS collaborated with the Psychiatric Security Review Board (PSRB) to provide OVS advocacy services to victims at PSRB hearings.
- Council member Jessica Pizzano reported about statewide fundraising events and initiatives to promote Homicide Awareness Month.
- Council members discussed victims of sexual assault being charged with false reporting and identifying opportunities to improve the criminal justice response and exploration of additional training opportunities.

APPENDIX A

Office of Victim Services
Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime
2023 Meeting Schedule

Date	Meeting Platform	Meeting Time
Tuesday, February 14, 2023	Microsoft Teams	3:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday, April 11, 2023	Microsoft Teams	3:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday, June 13, 2023	Microsoft Teams	3:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday, September 12, 2023	225 Spring Street, Wethersfield	3:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday, November 14, 2023	225 Spring Street, Wethersfield	3:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Reporter: Jean M. Weisbrod, Administrative Assistant, Office of Victim Services

APPENDIX B

Office of Victim Services
Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime
2023 Council Members

Member Name	Affiliation	State Agency or Population Represented
Judge Courtney M. Chaplin, Co-Chair	Superior Court Judge Hartford Superior Court	Judicial Branch
Yvette Young, Co-Chair	Associate Vice President of Programs and Advocacy The Village for Families and Children	Victims of Human Trafficking
Judge Laura F. Baldini, Co-Chair (Resigned 6/2023)	Superior Court Judge New Britain Judicial District	Judicial Branch
Lisa D'Angelo	Executive Assistant State's Attorney Division of Criminal Justice	Executive Branch
Bob Garguilo	Executive Director Mothers Against Drunk Driving	Victims of Impaired Drivers
Beth Hamilton	Executive Director CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence	Victims of Sexual Assault
Amy Lupoli	Senior Director of Clinical Services Klingberg Family Centers	Mental Health Services
Irene Mikol, Esquire	Chief Victim Compensation Commissioner	Judicial Branch
Susan M. Omilian, Esquire	Founder and Facilitator of My Avenging Angel Workshop™	Victim Service Community Provider
Geralyn O'Neil-Wild	Director of Legal Advocacy CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence	Victims of Domestic Violence
Marc Pelka	Undersecretary of Criminal Justice Policy and Planning	Office of Policy and Management
Jessica Pizzano	Director of Victim Services Survivors of Homicide	Survivors of Homicide Victims
Lee Ross	Deputy Director II External Affairs Division	Judicial Branch
Ebonie Suggs	Counselor Supervisor, Victim Services Unit Department of Correction Designee	Executive Branch
Deborah Witkin	Executive Director Connecticut Legal Services	Low Income Communities
Andrew Woods	Executive Director Hartford Communities That Care	Victim Service Community Provider