

**MINUTES**  
**Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime**  
**November 20, 2007**

The Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime met at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, in the fourth floor conference room on Tuesday, November 20, 2007, from 2:05 p.m. to 3:41 p.m.

**Members in Attendance:**

Co-chair Steve Eppler-Epstein, Cheryl Burack, Joseph Bibisi, Larry Bostrom, Chester Brodnicki, John Duffey, Janice Heggie Margolis, Tonya Johnson for Lisa Holden, Nancy Kushins, Kevin Lawlor, Neil O'Leary, and Jan VanTassel

**Members Excused or Absent:**

Judge Patrick L. Carroll, Fernando Betancourt, and Larry D'Orsi

**OVS Staff Present:**

Linda J. Cimino, David Burr, James Morgan, and Brenda Jordan

**Agenda:**

1. Welcome and Introductions  
Steve Eppler-Epstein welcomed members and called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. Members introduced themselves to recently appointed State Victim Advocate Michelle Cruz, who attended the meeting as a member of the public.
2. Review and Approval of the July 17 and September 18, 2007 Meeting Minutes  
Steve asked for a motion to accept the minutes of July 17 and September 18, 2007. The motion was moved and seconded, and the minutes were accepted as presented.
3. Establish Meeting Dates for 2008  
Linda J. Cimino remarked that historically Council meetings have been held on the third Tuesday of the odd month. Steve asked for a motion to continue this meeting schedule. The motion was moved and seconded. The 2008 Council schedule meeting is attached to the minutes.
4. Update – OVS Compensation Program Issues  
Linda distributed a double-sided sheet that contain the *Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund Statement of Financial Position and Budget Statement for Month Ending 10/31/07 for FY 07/01/07 – 06/30/08*.

Linda thanked Jim Morgan for preparing the statements and reported on the section of the report entitled *Obligations of the fund*. Linda noted the following highlights:

1. For FY 2006-2007 \$165,985.16 remains to be paid
2. For FY 2007-2008, OVS has not begun to pay on obligations. Obligations for July-October 2007 total \$939,022.17
3. OVS is holding \$72,824.04 in reserve for direct payments to minors nearing their eighteenth birthday. These monies are not invested because of the minimal amount of time to invest and therefore do not earn interest.

Linda stated that the Compensation Program may face the same financial position [total obligations exceeding budget] by April or May 2008. She added that the next VOCA grant OVS receives and the infusion of funds from the General Assembly may correct the negative balance.

Steve inquired if the *Value of claims to be determined* total (\$869,631.41) on the report represents claims submitted but not adjudicated and whether this amount fluctuates. Linda responded that this number reflects the amount determined by the claims examiners and would fluctuate.

Steve requested an assessment of the combined funding to determine if the current funding flow is adequate or if another push is needed at the legislature. Linda responded that OVS would require an additional month to provide an assessment and would forward the findings to Council members by mid-December.

Steve recommended that the Council's January agenda should include a discussion on whether the funds are sufficient for the obligations, considering February is a short legislative session.

Kevin Lawlor inquired if the Judicial Branch had addressed this matter with the Appropriation Committee. Linda stated that she will follow-up with External Affairs and report at the January Council meeting.

Jim Morgan reported that the *CICF Statement of Financial Position* reflects zero dollar amounts for court fees because the court collections postings are two months behind.

Nancy Kushins inquired if the Fund earns interest. Jim responded that the Fund does earn interest that is allocated by the Treasurer's Office.

#### 5. OVS Survey Discussion

Jim distributed a draft survey and explained that one of the components of the OVS Strategic Plan is to conduct research on the needs of victims and OVS contractors. OVS would provide ten to fifteen surveys to each contractor to distribute to clients to assess if victims are benefiting from VOCA funding programs. The survey consists of seven general questions that were developed after reviewing a host of surveys from the State of Tennessee. A second survey on the services OVS provides to contractors will be conducted in the spring.

Members discussed the pitfalls of the survey and provided the following suggestions:

#### Pitfalls:

- the usefulness of the information, considering persons who are likely to respond would be extremely satisfied or dissatisfied with service, more educated, and less in crisis
- the survey is too vague and victims would not understand questions
- contractors have a difficult time getting surveys returned
- the survey does not identify the contractor distributing the survey, which would skew the data

### Suggestions:

- provide the draft survey to contractors for feedback
- develop a more uniformed set of questions from each contractor
- include OVS questions on surveys currently used by contractors for VOCA reporting
- develop questions that are geared to what OVS anticipates to learn
- seek suggestions from contractors on key important questions
- simplify the grammar
- use questions asking for the responders view, such as if there is one thing that he or she would change ...
- seek assistance/advice from the University of Connecticut Center for Survey and Research Analysis or Quinnipiac University Polling Institute

### 6. OVS Update

Linda reported that there are currently four vacant positions within the ranks of the victim services advocates (VSA). At this time, OVS may only post these positions internally and have mined all qualified individuals in previous internal postings. Those individuals found qualified by the Judicial Branch Human Resources Unit do not meet OVS qualification standards. OVS is awaiting approval to post these positions externally.

Linda reported on the following staffing changes:

- VSA Carmen Garcia resigned her position at the Manchester GA to accept a position as a compliance specialist at CSSD. Her position was posted internally with one qualified candidate identified.
- VSA Mike Dankulich retired from OVS in June, creating a vacancy in the Middlesex JD. This position was posted internally.
- VSA Jeanne Holm-Barth transferred from the Ansonia-Milford JD to the Middlesex JD. This position was posted internally.
- VSA Kathleen Surette-Gutierrez transferred from the Stamford JD to the Ansonia JD. This position was posted internally twice with one qualified candidate identified.
- Joel Hall was offered the position of grants and contracts specialist, which he began in late September. The central office VSA position has been posted twice, with three qualified candidates identified.
- Jamey Harris transferred in early October. Her new position is to oversee the accreditation process of the Judicial Marshal Academy.
- Rachel McKnight has accepted the position of claims supervisor, effective November 23, 2007. Her primary responsibility will be to complete the determination process and coordinate the review process. The position posting for the claims examiner vacancy closed November 19, 2007.
- Valina Carpenter has accepted the position of victim services supervisor. Her start date is December 7, 2007. The vacancy created by her transfer in the New Britain GA was posted on November 23, 2007 and closes on December 3, 2007.

Linda reported that the 2005-2007 biennial report that is due to the Judiciary Committee on January 15, 2008, was delivered to the graphic designer on November 15, 2007.

Linda informed Council members that she was named as a member of the Governor's Sentencing and Parole Review Task Force, of which Lisa Holden serves as co-chair.

The Task Force has met four times and will meet four more times between now and December 19, 2007. Linda stated that the meetings have been very instructive with presentations by many of the agencies around the table. Linda will be presenting on victim notification on December 10, 2007. The Task Force will hold a public hearing at the Legislative Building on November 26, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. to allow the community to raise issues or concerns.

Linda reported that on Tuesday, November 27, 2007, the Judiciary Committee will hold a public hearing for comment on fourteen proposals dealing with various criminal justice issues. Section 22 of Raised Bill 4, sponsored by Representative Lawlor and Senator McDonald, states *"The Office of Victim Services shall assign two victim advocates to provide full-time assistance to victims who appear before a panel of the Board of Pardons and Paroles or submit a written statement to such panel, as authorized by section 54-126a of the general statutes."*

Linda remarked that the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission (CJPAC) Victims Sub-committee, of which she is a member, addressed this issue at a meeting held on November 19, 2007. Linda added that OVS, and it appears, the Boards of Pardons and Paroles are not in favor of this bill.

Nancy Kushins inquired if a SHIELD Notification System referred to in Section 12 of Raised Bill 4 is duplicative or complimentary to SAVIN [Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification System]. Linda responded that this is a separate system to enhance communication among the public safety departments. Linda stated that eighty-one Connecticut towns are state police jurisdiction; twenty-six of the police departments use the same software vendor, but not the same system.

Kevin Lawlor added that the Shield system would allow more investigative and court room information sharing and would be available to various state agencies.

Jim Morgan reported that the Request For Proposals (RFP) for Victims of Crime Act Victim Assistance Grant Program funded contracts was posted on the Judicial Branch website. Proposals are due December 14, 2007. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for counseling programs for family members of homicide victims will be posted within one month and a Train the Trainer RFQ to solicit professionals to become certified trainers on human trafficking is in Judicial Branch Purchasing for review.

Nancy Kushins thanked OVS on behalf of her staff for improvements to the RFP process that included making the process simpler.

Jim reported that OVS has not received the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) appropriation, but for the first time revenue collections into the Fund has exceeded one billion. OVS expects the new VOCA allotment will be the same or lower as previous allocations, resulting in a slight decrease for the next two years.

Jim reported that Joel Hall is conducting informal site visits with contracted agencies and next year the formal monitoring process will resume.

Jim informed Council members that a state auditor has been auditing the Compensation Program since August with an expected completion date of December. Linda added that the auditor has raised several questions during the audit, including how OVS calculates lost wages and the manner of acceptable notarization.

Jim distributed a summary of the court collections for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund and stated that OVS now has a second full year of data for comparison to determine if outreach is needed to the courts.

Dave Burr reported that another bottleneck issue, besides funding, that the Program faced was the length of process during the determination phase. Dave stated the issue was resolved with the promotion of claims examiner Rachel McKnight to claims supervisor.

Dave requested feedback from Council members on the difficulty OVS is experiencing in obtaining reports from the Department of Public Safety (DPS), which are necessary for OVS to process compensation claims. Dave stated he had available to members that were interested copies of the letter and attachments forwarded to Lt. Colonel Cheryl Malloy of DPS outlining the issue.

Kevin remarked that if the court case is dismissed the State Police Bureau of Investigation cannot release the records. Kevin suggested that OVS contact the prosecutor on the case prior to pre-disposition for information.

Linda stated that by statute any information received by OVS that is confidential remains confidential and not subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Kevin stated that technically the information does not exist.

Kevin suggested that OVS have access to the proposed SHIELD system that would include the information sought, alleviating the issue.

Nancy stated that Section 12 of Raised Bill 4 directs the creation of a task force for SHIELD development and does not include victim representation. Nancy suggested that Linda should serve as a representative on that task force.

7. New Business

No new business was introduced.

8. Adjournment

Steve called for a motion to adjourn the meeting; the meeting was adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

Brenda Jordan, Recorder



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## Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime

### 2008 Meeting Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Time</b>
January 15, 2008	OVS – Wethersfield	2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
March 18, 2008	OVS – Wethersfield	2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
May 20, 2008	OVS – Wethersfield	2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
July 15, 2008	OVS – Wethersfield	2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
September 16, 2008	OVS – Wethersfield	2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
November 18, 2008	OVS – Wethersfield	2:00 – 4:00 p.m.