

OVS to Survey Opinions on Collaboration and Information Sharing

By **Brenda Keane**, Court Planner II, Education Unit

After a nearly two-year statewide comprehensive victimization study, the Office of Victim Services (OVS) established an internal Victim Needs Assessment Workgroup to review the study's findings for opportunities to better meet the needs of Connecticut's crime victims.

The OVS Workgroup announced that it will survey various Connecticut providers in February to obtain additional insight on their opinions related to the importance of information sharing and collaboration, which was a theme identified in the third and final phase of the victimization study. The survey responses will also inform how OVS might help support information sharing and collaboration amongst service providers.

The statewide victimization study was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of

Crime and awarded to Market Decisions Research (MDR) of Maine through a request for proposal process.

MDR divided the study into three phases. The first phase focused on surveying Connecticut residents to obtain benchmark data on the proportion of residents who reported being a victim of crime, the types of and impact of victimizations they experienced, the use of victim services, and relevant demographics.

"The Victims Needs Assessment results have provided OVS with a unique vantage point to understand the victimizations experienced by the 1,233 individuals who completed the survey," OVS Director Linda J. Cimino said.

"The data reveals the crimes most frequently committed against this group of crime victims and the second and third crimes they reported as experiencing."

Poly-victimizations, Cimino said, were identified frequently.

The second phase of the study, focused on collecting additional data and information, including gaps and barriers to services received and opportunities to improve victim services in Connecticut through in-depth interviews with survey respondents.

"Crime victims who chose to participate in an interview provided viewpoints that reflect the lack of knowledge of the criminal justice system and the availability of community based services, and their thoughts about the support and information they received from law enforcement, Cimino said.

"An underlying theme is that these crime victims reported the need for more access to services and more follow-up after the criminal incident."

The survey results, Cimino said, "provide a road map of crime victims needs and how we can all provide better more trauma informed services.

The OVS Workgroup anticipates releasing its findings on the information and sharing collaboration survey in the next edition of this newsletter.

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Human Trafficking Taskforce Pilot Project Launches in Hartford Area

Submitted by Yvette Young, Associate Vice President of Programs and Advocacy, The Village for Families and Children

In December 2021, the Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA) was awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) to implement a three-year pilot project to provide a comprehensive, multidisciplinary response to victims of trafficking.

The project titled Regionalized Human Trafficking Recovery Taskforce (RHTRT) will use a multidisciplinary response to both child and adult victims of both sex and labor trafficking cases. The response will include the investigation and prosecution of traffickers and the provision of comprehensive, trauma-informed services to all victims of trafficking in the Greater Hartford area.

The CCA is collaborating with the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice on this project.

For more information, contact the RHTRT Coordinator Jennifer Suroviak by email at jennifer.j.suroviak@ct.gov or by telephone at 860-951-9407.

SAFE Program Hiring Web Page Available

By Denise Covington, Program Manager, SAFE Program

Thanks to the efforts of OVS Director Linda J. Cimino, the Judicial Branch now has a Web page dedicated to the Gail Burns-Smith Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) Program for healthcare providers. Working diligently with the Web Board, Linda Cimino combined multiple sources of information and created a resource that is both informative and concise.

This Web page is a long-awaited and will provide a single reliable source of information for all healthcare providers who have an interest in being a part of the SAFE Program.

To view the SAFE Program career opportunities available for health care providers, please go to <https://www.jud.ct.gov/> and on the left side of the page click on "Careers, Jobs, and Opportunities."

The site includes information about the role of the SAFE, the medical-forensic exam, qualifications to become a SAFE, scope of practice, training, time commitment and other relevant information.

Also included are the class dates, and in the future, the Web Board has indicated that a direct link to the current Request for Interest (RFI) application will be embedded. This would allow interested healthcare providers to apply directly through the Web page to become a part of the SAFE Program.

Judicial Marshal Services Help OVS Locate Annuitants

By Rachel McKnight, Program Manager, Victim Compensation Program

The OVS Victim Compensation Program staff have attempted to reach 10 claimants whose victim compensation awards were invested on their behalf by OVS in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Generally, victim compensation awards are made directly to eligible claimants; however, OVS policy requires the establishment of an annuity for claimants under the age of majority with funds being disbursed to claimants when they reach the age of 18.

Since investing the victim compensation funds on behalf of these 10 claimants, the claimants had either changed their legal names, relocated, or both, which complicated OVS's location efforts.

In November 2022, OVS Director Linda J. Cimino provided an update of OVS' efforts to locate these claimants at a meeting that was attended by Director O'Donovan Murphy of Judicial Marshal Services.

Director Murphy offered his department's services as it has access to more comprehensive software used in the delivery of orders of protection. Director Cimino and Director Murphy's collaborative efforts are invaluable as it allowed the Victim Compensation Program to successfully locate and verify the identity of seven claimants.

The Victim Compensation Program staff worked closely with the investment firm to issue payment to four of those claimants and are actively working with three claimants on completing the necessary paperwork to release the funds.

Advisory Council for Victims of Crime Begins New Term

By **Jean Weisbrod**, Administrative Assistant, Education Unit

The Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime has new co-chairs.

The Honorable Laura F. Baldini, New Britain Superior Court judge, and Yvette Young, Associate Vice President of Programs and Advocacy at the Village for Families and Children, were appointed by the Honorable Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson to serve as co-chairs for the 2022-2026 term.

Judge Baldini was first appointed as co-chair in September 2021, replacing the Honorable John A. Danaher, who retired from the Judicial Branch in 2020.

Ms. Young, who has been a Council member since 2018 was appointed to replace long-standing co-chair Attorney Susan Omilian, who resigned in August 2022 after more than a decade of service. Attorney Omilian elected to continue to serve as a Council member representing the nonprofit sector and family members of homicide victims.

During the October 4, 2022, Council meeting, co-chairs recognized and thanked Attorney Omilian for her dedicated service.

The Council is charged under Section 54-203 (b) (9) of the Connecticut General Statutes to “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 Council meets via Microsoft Teams, and its meetings are live streamed and

available for viewing on the Judicial Branch YouTube channel.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 11, 2023, at 3:00 p.m. The Council membership, meeting schedule, agendas, and minutes are available at <https://jud.ct.gov/committees/OVS/default.htm>.

Rapid Response Program Reduces Trauma Impact

Submitted by **Maryellen Sciallo**, LCSW, Senior Director, Early Childhood, The Village for Families and Children

In 2016, the Village for Families and Children received federal Victims of Crime Act funding from the Office of Victim Services to minimize the impact of trauma on children experiencing or witnessing crime.

The Program services include crisis intervention and stabilization, assistance completing a victim compensation application, and referrals to other clinical and nonclinical services.

In the last fiscal year, 417 children and family members accessed the Rapid Response Program. The majority of children were referred as a result of witnessing intimate partner violence, and/or being a victim of child abuse and/or neglect.

Program eligibility includes residing in Hartford or the surrounding communities, being age 0-17, and the exposure taking place in the past 90 days. Appointments may be made on the Rapid Response Helpline at 860-297-0576 or at <https://thevillage.org/programs/rapid-response/>.

Restraining Order Project Implemented in Several Courts

By **Attorney Deborah Witkin**, Executive Director, Connecticut Legal Services

Connecticut Legal Services is pleased to note that we have a Restraining Order Project in the Stamford, Bridgeport, and Waterbury courts.

We have attorneys onsite and remotely to help applicants with their restraining order applications.

Attorneys generally are available from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., but hours might vary.

Applicants may call 203-388-1717 any time to speak to or schedule an appointment with a CLS attorney.

Our sister agencies, Greater Hartford Legal Services and New Haven Legal Assistance, have similar projects in the Hartford and New Haven courts, respectively.

February is
Teen Dating
Violence
Awareness Month.

#tdvam23
#beaboutit



love is
respect

2023 OVS Trainings

Audience: victim service providers and criminal justice professionals

Title: Victim Compensation Program

Overview of the Victim Compensation Program benefits, process, and how to submit an application.

Dates	Times
3/29/23	9:00-11:30 a.m.
5/2/23	9:00-11:30 a.m.
6/7/23	9:00-11:30 a.m.

Title: CT Criminal Court

Information on the Connecticut criminal court and how a case moves through the process.

Dates	Times
6/8/23	2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Title: CT Orders of Protection

Information on criminal and civil orders of protection and when and how to obtain these orders.

Dates	Times
3/2/23	2:00-3:30 p.m.

Title: CT SAVIN

An overview of the Connecticut Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (CT SAVIN) system, including notifications and how to register.

Dates	Times
3/21/23	9:30-11:00 a.m.
5/10/23	2:00-4:00 p.m.

Education Unit to Improve OVS Training Registration Process

By Tina Bouchard, Court Planner II, Education Unit

The OVS Education Unit will be launching a new registration process to create a more efficient approach that utilizes modernized engagement tools to enhance the experience for both the user registering for trainings and the Education Unit staff maintaining registration.

The 2023 OVS training calendar and registration form are available on the OVS Education page at <https://www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim/training.htm>. To register for an OVS training, email the completed training form to OVStraining@jud.ct.gov.

Victim Notification Web-based Application to Launch this Spring

By Brenda Keane, Court Planner II, Education Unit

This spring the Connecticut Judicial Branch Information Technology Division plans to launch the OVS Post-conviction Victim Notification (VN) Program Web-based application to replace the desktop application that was created in 1997.

Besides providing a more user-friendly environment, Web applications allow real-time updates ensuring all users have the same version of the software regardless of where they are and standardizes security, said IT Analyst IV Adam Tommasi, who is the lead developer on the application.

The Web application has several new features including the ability for users to add and update notification letters, automated email notifications to registrants, and an opt-out feature to identify victims who have elected not to receive notifications.

Federal Crime Victim Fund Update

By James Morgan, Program Manager, Fiscal Unit

The Federal Crime Victims Fund (Fund) is the source of funding for the Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime victim services programs including the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Assistance and VOCA Compensation Grant programs.

The federal fiscal year (FFY) ended September 30, 2022. Deposits into the Fund for the year totaled \$822 million. This is a 6% increase compared to the previous fiscal year. The balance in the Fund as of September 30, 2022, is \$1.499 billion dollars. This is a 25% decrease compared to the previous federal fiscal year. The President's requested allocation for FFY 2023 was \$1.75 billion, and the amount that was included in the approved Congressional Spending Plan for FFY 2023 was \$1.9 billion.