

## Abstract

Applicant: State of Connecticut, Judicial Branch

Project Title: Victim Services Advocate Program Enhancement

Amount Requested: \$3,242,640.00

Grant Category: VI: Improving Resources and Services for Victims of Crime

### Goal:

- To create jobs, promote economic recovery and stabilize the budget of the State of Connecticut, Judicial Branch, to help ensure that essential services are provided to victims of crime.

### Strategy:

- Increase the capacity of the Victim Services Advocate program to help reduce gaps in service.

### Deliverables:

1. Eighteen Victim Service Advocates
2. Amount of services delivered to victims as a result of creating eighteen new positions.

### Coordination Plans:

- Victim Service Advocates coordinate with non-profit service providers throughout the state (including domestic violence shelters, rape crisis agencies, child guidance clinics and therapy based organizations) advocacy and peer support groups to ensure that victims of crime are served to the fullest degree possible.

## Project Narrative: Grant Category: VI Improving Resources and Services for Victims of Crime

The Office of Victim Services (OVS) is Connecticut's lead agency dedicated to providing services to the victims of violent crime. By providing timely, accessible, high-quality, victim-centered services, the Office of Victim Services helps to empower victims and to ensure that the rights afforded victims of crime by the Connecticut State Constitution and General Statutes may be exercised to their fullest.

### Problem Statement

The Office of Victim Services enjoys a high level of support from Judicial Branch leadership and members of the criminal justice community, however its staffing and resource levels have fallen significantly short of the amounts necessary to manage the ever-increasing demands placed upon its Victim Services Advocate Program. At present, not every criminal court has a Victim Services Advocate, and in some courts where there is a Victim Services Advocate, the advocate's time must be shared with a second court. In most instances, the casework produced by a single court is far too much work for one Victim Services Advocate to handle effectively. On an average year, Victim Services Advocates open approximately 13,000 new cases, assist with approximately 14,000 victim impact statements and accompany over 15,000 people to court, with these numbers growing steadily as each year passes.

Consequently, assignment of Victim Services Advocates to new cases is becoming increasingly delayed, the backlog of work required for ongoing cases continues to mount, and the frustration level among unserved victims is on the rise. The State of Connecticut currently faces a budget deficit of unprecedented proportions and may no longer be able to provide the resources

necessary to meet the current demand for many of its services. Expansion of any existing programs beyond their current staffing and funding levels is unlikely, no matter how great the need.

This project seeks to create jobs and ensure the provision of essential services to victims of crime by providing the Office of Victim Services with the staffing necessary to expand the operation of its Victim Services Advocate Program, specifically by providing the resources needed to hire eighteen additional Victim Services Advocates.

### Design and Implementation

The initial focus of this project will be to advertise, interview, hire, train and deploy eighteen new Victim Services Advocates to the courts. The Office of Victim Services will follow standard Judicial Branch hiring policies and procedures in regard to these positions until they are filled successfully.

The courts that have been selected to receive new staff have been identified by the Office of Victim Services as areas having demonstrated the greatest level of need. These include the criminal court in Hartford, where a second, full-time Victim Services Advocate is needed due to the high volume of serious assault, sexual assault, and homicide cases; criminal courts in Meriden, Norwalk, Stamford, Danbury, Middlesex, Danielson, Bantam, Rockville, and Milford, which at present are minimally covered by Victim Services Advocates who are shared with other courts; and, to Juvenile Matters courts that presently have no Victim Service Advocates or victim services available including courts in Bridgeport, New Britain, Waterford, Middletown, Rockville, Willimantic, Danbury, and Torrington. There are also plans in this project to

eventually identify a Victim Services Advocate Supervisor from the new hires to manage the Juvenile Matters program.

Victims Services Advocates from this project will also be placed in non-courthouse settings, including a Victim Services Advocate housed at the central office for coverage of the Helpline and Victim Notification Units, and a Victim Services Advocate who will work with the Board of Pardons and Paroles, to keep pace with the backlog of cases in which an inmate has made an application for release and victim contact is needed.

Once in place, the eighteen new Victim Services Advocates will support the Victim Services Advocate Program, one of the five major programs administered by the Office of Victim Services. (Others include the Advisory Council for Victims of Crime, Victim Compensation Program, Education and Planning, and Grants and Contracts.)

The Victim Services Advocate Program provides direct services to victims of crime that include court-based victim advocacy, Helpline, post-conviction notification, protection order registry notification, and outreach services to family members of homicide victims. These programs and services help to support crime victims in many ways throughout their contact with the criminal justice process. Victim Services Advocates also assist crime victims beyond these major programs and services by notifying crime victims of their rights, referring crime victims to community services, and by providing crime victims with much needed support and information.

#### Court-based Victim Advocacy

Victim Services Advocates ensure that crime victims understand their rights at each proceeding and accompany victims to court to support them as they present impact statements. Victim Services Advocates provide initial screening of each case; assist victims in the preparation of victim impact statements to be placed in court files; notify victims of their rights;

provide information and advice to victims in order to assist victims in exercising their rights throughout the criminal justice process; direct victims to public and private agencies for service; coordinate victim applications for compensation to the Office of Victim Services Victim Compensation Program; and, assist victims in the processing of claims for restitution.

### Helpline Service

The Office of Victim Services operates a statewide, toll-free Helpline (800-822-8428) to assist callers in obtaining information regarding OVS and community-based services. The Victim Services Advocate assigned to the Helpline may also help provide assistance to victims whose offender's cases are held in court locations where no Victim Services Advocate is available. This assistance may include informing victims of their rights, helping crime victims understand the criminal justice system, and referring victims to the appropriate State's Attorney. (A State's Attorney represents the State as a prosecutor and works for the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice.)

### Post Conviction Notification

The goal of the Post Conviction Notification Program is to provide eligible individuals with information regarding the status of an inmate. To receive notification, individuals must submit a confidential "Request for Notification" form to the Office of Victim Services or the Department of Correction Victim Services Unit. Persons who may request notification regarding an inmate's change of status include crime victims, parents or guardians of crime victims, relatives of crime victims, inmate family members, and State's Attorneys. The Office of Victim Services notifies registrants when an inmate has made an application to the Board of Pardons and Paroles for a release other than furlough; to the sentencing court or judge for a reduction in sentence; to the Sentence Review Division for a review of sentence; to the sentencing court for

exemption from sex offender requirements; and, to the sentencing court for an order restricting dissemination of sex offender registration.

The Victim Services Advocate provides information to victims of crime concerning any changes in the status of convicted inmates and provides referrals to registrants.

#### Protection Order Registry Notification

The Protection Order Registry Program features automated notification to protected parties when a criminal order of protection terminates, or five weeks prior to the expiration of a civil restraining order. The Victim Services Advocate answers questions, provides referrals, and informs protected parties in regard to extending a restraining order, if necessary.

#### Outreach to Family Members of Homicide Victims

The Office of Victim Services developed the Homicide Outreach Program in 1988 in an effort to enhance services to family members whose lives had been affected by the murder of a loved one. A Victim Services Advocate Supervisor assists family members with information regarding the compensation process, makes referrals to grief counselors and community based organizations, and makes a referral to the appropriate court-based Victim Services Advocate, who will also assist the family during the criminal proceedings.

#### Capabilities/Capacity

The Office of Victim Services has continually demonstrated its capacity to provide high-quality, victim-centered services to crime victims in the state of Connecticut and has met or exceeded audit standards established by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime. The activities included in this project, from the hiring of personnel to the provision of direct services to victims of crime, represent an expansion of core organizational functions already provided with expertise by the Office of Victim Services. Therefore, it is expected that

the Office of Victim Services has the capability to succeed in meeting any program related performance measures for Byrne Recovery Act Funds as established by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

The Office of Victim Services collects large amounts of data in order to continually assess and improve its operations, identify possible trends, and plan for the future. The data includes, but is not limited to, information regarding the type of victimization that has occurred, the number of victims served, and the number of specific services that have been provided. This will aid in reporting and help the Office of Victim Services to participate in any independent evaluation of this program that is required by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

The Judicial Branch and its Office of Victim Services will cooperate with the independent evaluator selected by the Bureau of Justice Assistance in any evaluation of this program.

The Judicial Branch and its Office of Victim Services have a history of successfully performing under numerous Federal grant programs, including VOCA formula grants for victim services and compensation, as well as numerous additional project grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime and Office on Violence Against Women, among others. These grants have required the Branch and the Office of Victim Services to meet numerous and varied objectives, performance measures, and reporting requirements. Based upon this experience, the Branch has demonstrated its capability to meet any reporting requirements established for this project by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. Further, the goals, objectives and activities of this project have been designed such that this project is anticipated to successfully achieve both the employment and criminal justice aspects of the performance measures for Byrne Recovery Funds as defined by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

An accounting of grant funds for this project, separate from other Judicial Branch funds, will be performed by the Branch's Grants Management Unit. A unique account identifier (SID number) will be assigned to funds received as a part of this project so that they may be independently managed, tracked and reported to the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Personnel assigned to the Grants Management Unit, as well as other grant administrators have had extensive experience with Department of Justice programmatic and financial standards, rules, and reporting, and will attend the financial management seminar that is required as a part of this project to ensure that funds are properly utilized and that results are reported in an accurate and timely manner.

### Impact

This program is expected to have the following impacts:

- Stimulate the economy through the creation of eighteen new jobs in the State of Connecticut;
- Assist victims of crime by increasing the capacity of the Victim Services Advocate Program;
- Assist victims of crime by increasing the number of victims served by the Victim Services Advocate Program;
- Assist victims of crime by increasing the number of services provided to victims by the Victim Services Advocate Program.



Budget Summary

<b>Victim Service Advocate Program Enhancement</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Personnel	\$1,646,966.00
Fringe	\$934,488.00
Travel	\$8,000.00
Equipment	\$0.00
Supplies	\$0.00
Construction	\$0.00
Consultants/Contracts	\$0.00
Other Costs	\$0.00
Indirect	\$653,186.00
Total State Matching Funds	\$0.00
Total Federal Funds Requested	\$3,242,640.00

Budget Narrative

Please note: Calculations supplied in this narrative are accurate to the nearest cent. These amounts have been rounded for budgeting purposes to the nearest whole dollar amount. Therefore, the budget amount will differ slightly from the actual calculation and the amounts identified in the Budget Summary.

Personnel

Eighteen Victim Services Advocates will be hired as a part of this project. An allowance has been made for the promotion of one Victim Service Advocate to Victim Service Advocate Supervisor if it is found to be necessary. All salaries are calculated for 18 months, allowing six months to complete the hiring process.

Salaries for 1 Victim Advocate Supervisor and 17 Victim Services Advocates:

Position	# FTEs	Annual Salary *	Salary ** (18 months)
Victim Services Advocate	18	60,849	1,642,923.00
Victim Services Advocate Supervisor - Salary Differential ***	1	2,695	4,042.00
Total Salary Expenses			1,646,965.50

\* Starting salary based on current AFT contract

\*\* Salary is for 18 months allowing 6 months for hiring

\*\*\* Amount is difference between pay grades if an existing advocate becomes a supervisor.

The total amount budgeted for the “Salary” category is \$1,646,966.00

Fringe

Fringe benefits are provided for State of Connecticut Judicial Branch employees in accordance with established agreements. These are calculated as a percentage of employee salary as calculated in the previous category.

Fringe Benefits	Percent %	Salary	Benefits
Medical (average rate)	15.00%	\$1,646,965.50	\$247,044.83
Unemployment	0.09%	\$1,646,965.50	\$1,482.27
FICA	6.20%	\$1,646,965.50	\$102,111.86
Medicare	1.45%	\$1,646,965.50	\$23,881.00
State Employee Retirement	34.00%	\$1,646,965.50	\$559,968.27
Total Fringe Benefit Expenses			\$934,488.24

The total amount budgeted for the “Fringe” category is \$934,488.00.

Travel

Funds have been budgeted to comply with the Bureau of Justice Assistance’s requirement to allow two staff to attend two meetings, including the financial management training seminar presented by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (DOJ, OJP, OCFO) as identified in the program instructions. All travel expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with State of Connecticut, Judicial Branch reimbursement policies. Amounts are estimated based upon prior experience.

- Financial Management Seminar, 2 days, Washington, D.C.

Travel:	\$400.00	
Lodging:	\$750.00	\$250/night x 3 nights
Per Diem:	\$200.00	\$50/day x 4 days
Other Expenses:	\$150.00	Allowable expenses such as parking, etc.
Total:	\$1,500.00	

$$2 \text{ staff} \times \$1,500.00/\text{trip} = \$3,000.00$$

- Additional Meeting, unknown duration, expected in Washington, D.C.

Estimates for expenses are similar to those listed in the seminar above, however additional funds have been budgeted in the case of a seminar of longer duration, or a location other than Washington, D.C.

$$2 \text{ staff} \times \$2,500.00/\text{trip} = \$5,000.00$$

The total amount budgeted for the “Travel” category is \$8,000.00.

## Equipment

There are no items budgeted for this project in the "Equipment" category.

## Supplies

There are no items budgeted for this project in the "Supplies" category.

## Construction

There are no items budgeted for this project in the "Construction" category.

## Consultants/Contracts

There are no items budgeted for this project in the "Consultants/Contracts" category.

## Other Costs

There are no items budgeted for this project in the "Other Costs" category.

## Indirect

The cognizant agency which establishes the indirect rate for the State of Connecticut, Judicial Branch is the U.S. Department of Justice. The indirect cost rate established for the period of July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009 is 39.66%. This amount is applied against total salaries included in the project. This rate will be adjusted during the project period as new rates are approved by U.S. DOJ.

$$.3966 \text{ (rate)} \times \$1,646,965.50/\text{salaries} = \$653,186.52$$

The total amount budgeted for the "Indirect" category is \$653,186.00.

## State Matching Funds

There are no state matching funds for this project.

## Total Federal Request

The total request for Federal funds for this project is \$3,242,640.00.