

# Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance Formula Grants

CFDA: 16.575

**Administering Federal Agency:** U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Justice Programs (OJP), Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)

**Description:** The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) of 1984 established the Crime Victims Fund (CVF), the nation's primary funding source to help victims of all types of crimes. CVF is a repository of federal criminal fines, forfeitures, and special assessments. It does not include tax dollars. Among the VOCA-authorized CVF grant programs is the state administered victim assistance formula grants program. It provides funding to groups and direct services for victims, such as domestic violence shelters, legal support, faith-based organizations, and child abuse organizations. OVC – the federal CVF administrator – awards the VOCA Victim Assistance Formula Grant Program in accordance with VOCA and the [Victim Assistance Rule](#) and related guidance. The states, in turn, provide subgrants to local public agencies and community service providers (referred to as “subgrantee” or “subrecipient”) that help individuals, families and communities recover from both the initial trauma and the long-term effects of victimization. Courts and legal aid organizations are eligible subgrantees.

**Find your state/local administrator:** Go to the OVC [US Resource Map of Crime Victim Services & Information](#) webpage and click on your state to find your state/local administrator.

**Amount of Available Funding:** Find OVC formula grant allocations by year [here](#) (look for “assistance” allocations).

**Match requirements:** State VOCA subgrantees must contribute 20 percent of the total project cost of each VOCA-funded project, with some exceptions, e.g., federally recognized American Indian or Alaska Native

tribes and projects on tribal lands. Match may be cash and/or in-kind. In a [March 2020 update to the OVC Match Waiver Approval Process](#), states now have the discretion to waive or partially waive the match requirement on behalf of subrecipients provided that the state has adopted an OVC-approved waiver policy.

**Potential uses:** The OVC [VOCA Assistance Rule](#), effective August 8, 2016, included clarification that state VOCA administrators have the freedom and flexibility to use their funds for a broad array of civil legal needs beyond the immediate aftermath of the crime. It expressly authorizes funds for “Accompanying a victim to offices and court”.

OVC has identified a non-exhaustive list of legal services state VOCA victim assistance administrators could fund:

- Proceedings for protective/restraining orders or campus administrative protection/stay-away orders
- Family, custody, housing, and dependency matters, particularly for victims of intimate partner violence, child abuse, sexual assault, elder abuse, and human trafficking
- Divorce
- Immigration assistance for victims of human trafficking, sexual assault, and domestic violence
- Intervention with creditors, law enforcement (e.g., to obtain police reports), and other entities on behalf of victims of identity theft and financial fraud
- Intervention with administrative agencies, schools/colleges, tribal entities, and other circumstances where legal advice or intervention would assist in addressing the consequences of a person's victimization
- VOCA funds may also be used to allow victims

to file a motion to vacate and/or expunge certain convictions based on their status of being a victim.

The rule also makes clear that states may fund direct services regardless of a victim's participation in the criminal justice process and that victim eligibility under this program for direct services is not dependent on the victim's immigration status.

Court navigators and technology relevant to crime victims' services are allowable uses of these funds. Use of the [comparison chart](#) is encouraged to explore other key services or aspects of collaboration that may be relevant and allowable under the Rule, e.g., multi-disciplinary partnerships and coordination activities. DOJ OVC prepared [VOCApedia](#) as a resource to address allowability questions related to the VOCA Formula Victim Assistance Grant Program Final Rule.

#### Other Helpful Information:

- The Department of Justice, [Office for Victims of Crime Resource Map](#) enables you to click on your state to find the administering agency, latest available statistics, compensation and assistance funds information, and VOCA performance reports. **Your state's performance report contains valuable information** about how your state spent its formula funds and shows data by year of the federal awards amount, the number of sub awards, and the balance remaining over the last few years.
- OVC's [VOCApedia](#) is a frequently updated VOCA Victim Assistance allowability resource tool for VOCA Victims Assistance state administrators. It is the best source for questions about what VOCA and its corresponding rule allows subgrantees (e.g., legal aid programs and courts) to do.
- Many states have had their VOCA programs audited by the DOJ Office of Inspector General. To see if your state has been audited, [go to this link](#), select your state in the location filter, and see if there's a "Victim Assistance Formula Grants" audit report.

- In some states, like California, the VOCA administrator submits reports to the state legislature. If your state prepares this kind of report, you may find additional information about how VOCA victim assistance grants work in your state.
- The American University Justice in Government Project (JGP) prepared FAQs about Legal Aid & VOCA. Much of the information is relevant to courts.
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