



# Department of Justice



## Office of Justice Programs

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### **OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS OFFERS GRANTS TO HIRE LAW ENFORCEMENT VICTIM SPECIALISTS**

WASHINGTON — The Office of Justice Program’s Office for Victims of Crime has released a grant solicitation designed to help law enforcement agencies hire new staff, train existing staff and create three-year programs that can more effectively support victims of crime. The initiative is intended to build the capacity of law enforcement agencies to better identify and respond to victims by informing them of their rights and referring them as early as possible to much-needed services like counseling, emergency shelter, safety planning or assistance with crime victim compensation.

“Law enforcement is the first, and often the only, contact victims have with the criminal justice system, so an officer’s ability to provide effective guidance and support is critical,” said OJP Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Matt M. Dummermuth. “We believe that if local law enforcement agencies have trained victim specialists available, more victims will report their crimes and get the help they need, more quickly. And by generating good will with citizens and equipping victims to support investigations and prosecutions, the agencies themselves will benefit.”

Under the [FY 2019 Law Enforcement–Based Victim Specialist Program](#), OVC expects to make 80 awards to state, tribal and local law enforcement agencies to hire staff or develop programs that have a strong focus on improving care and services to victims, especially in high-crime areas and communities particularly affected by violence. The program also contains funding to enable law enforcement to establish partnerships with community-based victim service programs.

Dummermuth highlighted the program today during a training event for Department of Justice-funded human trafficking task forces composed of law enforcement officers and victim service providers. Due to the hidden nature of human trafficking crimes, these survivors are among the most underserved of all crime victims. Today’s training emphasized the vital role that law enforcement officers play in identifying trafficking victims, many of whom are afraid to come forward because they have been threatened and intimidated into silence. Programs supported by OJP have expanded access to services and are now reaching thousands of human trafficking victims each year.

“Only a fraction of victims of serious violent crime actually get the services they need, but we are working to make assistance more readily available,” said OVC Director Darlene Hutchinson. “In those early hours and initial days following crime, victims are often bewildered and overwhelmed and may need assistance and a link to vital services. But unfortunately, less than 25 percent of local police departments have staff designated to assist victims of crime. We hope that law enforcement agencies of all sizes—and tribes in

particular—will explore this opportunity to connect victims to trained, compassionate providers who can help put them on a path to recovery.”

Eligible applicants for this opportunity are limited to public law enforcement agencies. Applications are due by July 25, 2019. To learn more and apply, click [here](#). On June 6, OVC will hold a pre-application [webinar](#) to provide interested applicants information about program objectives and submission requirements.

The Office of Justice Programs, directed by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Matt M. Dummermuth, provides federal leadership, grants and resources to improve the nation’s capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal justice system. More information about OJP and its components can be found at [www.ojp.gov](http://www.ojp.gov).

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