



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, AUGUST 8, 2016
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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE EXPANDS SERVICES FOR CRIME VICTIMS

New Federal Rule Helps States Plan for Historic Funding Increases

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice today published a final rule expanding the ability of victim serving agencies and organizations across the nation to reach and serve more crime victims at a time of substantial increases in victim assistance funding. Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding directed to the states for victim assistance has more than quadrupled in the last two fiscal years.

“Supporting the victims of crime is as essential to the pursuit of justice as making arrests and prosecuting cases,” said Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch. “This new rule significantly expands state and local agencies’ ability to reach survivors of a wide range of crimes, to help them recover from their ordeals, and to empower them to secure a brighter future for themselves and their loved ones. I want to thank Congress for their outstanding commitment to the rights and well-being of victims, and I pledge that the Department of Justice will continue to do everything in our power to promote healing, restore lives, and secure meaningful justice for every American affected by crime.”

Federal funding for state victim assistance programs comes from the Crime Victims Fund, a repository of federal criminal fines, forfeitures and special assessments. This fund does not include tax dollars. The states, in turn, provide sub-grants to local public agencies and community service providers that help individuals, families and communities recover from both the initial trauma and the long-term effects of victimization.

Congress raised the appropriations level of the Crime Victims Fund from \$745 million in fiscal year 2014 to more than \$2.3 billion in fiscal year 2015, effectively quadrupling the amount available for crime victim assistance programs. Congress raised the cap again to more than \$3 billion in fiscal year 2016.

The Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) Formula Victim Assistance Grant Program rule—clarifies and expands support for a continuum of services to crime victims, including:

- comprehensive legal assistance, including victims' rights enforcement and civil legal assistance related to the victimization;
- transitional housing for victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and other crimes and expanded coverage of relocation expenses;
- forensic interviewing and some medical expenses;
- volunteer trainings, including support for Court Appointed Special Advocates; and
- victim-centered restorative justice.

The rule also emphasizes that programs that serve victims of elder abuse, human trafficking, financial fraud and other crimes are eligible for VOCA funding, and removes language that prevented VOCA funding from supporting services to victims in detention and correctional facilities. The rule defines the statutory term *victim of child abuse*, to make clear that the term covers a broad array of harm inflicted on children and includes children who witness violence or who are victims of pornography.

The rule, which replaces the VOCA Victim Assistance Final Program Guidelines, is effective today following a 30 day period for public notice and comment after publication in the Federal Register. Recipients of VOCA Assistance grant funds from the [Office for Victims of Crime](#) must comply with the rule after the effective date. For more information, click [here](#).

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