

# OVS Outreach

## Winter 2023

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### From the Director's Desk



Somehow, December and the end of the year always seem to sneak up on us, yet both provide an opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments and challenges of the past year and look forward to a fresh start for the new year. I am

incredibly proud of all the work we accomplished at OVS in 2022, and the resources and support we have provided to our partners.

We hosted more than 140 advocates from across the state at our biennial [Seeking Solutions Summit](#), which focused on restorative justice; the Compensation Unit relaunched its monthly compensation training for advocates, service providers and victim assistance professionals; and we began planning for our 2023 biennial conference. The OVS Training and Outreach Unit organized more than 30 trainings and webinars for victim assistance programs (VAPs) and allied professionals. Through these opportunities, upward of 1,500 advocates and direct service providers from organizations across the state registered and attended online and in person. We also relaunched our [Training & Technical Assistance Request Program \(TTARP\)](#), which provides free, customized training and technical assistance to our funded VAPs. I encourage all programs to take advantage of this tremendous resource.

While we celebrate these successes, we also pause to remember and reflect on our work responding to the horrific, racially motivated shooting at the Tops Friendly Market in Buffalo on May 14. We had the ability and resources to respond quickly and provided support for a devastated community.

*(Continued on [page 2](#))*

### Free Training, Technical Assistance, and Coaching



Office of  
Victim Services

in partnership with



CUNY INSTITUTE  
FOR STATE & LOCAL  
GOVERNANCE

**Training and Technical Assistance Request Program (TTARP)**

Is your program looking for ways to run more efficiently and effectively?

Could your team benefit from a customized training session to increase their capacity to serve victims and survivors of crime?

TTARP provides **free, confidential, and on-demand** training and technical assistance to OVS-funded VAPs through the CUNY Institute for State & Local Governance (ISLG).

Services are provided across five key, customizable Purpose Areas:

- Trauma-Informed Organizations
- Organizational Sustainability
- Leadership and Supervision
- Engagement and Outreach
- Program Development

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## From the Director's Desk

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With the assistance of [federal Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center](#), OVS worked with the community to identify an organization to establish and operate a resiliency center with federal funding through the [Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program](#) (AEAP). The Resource Council of Western New York has been selected and, working with a Steering Committee, established the Buffalo United



Resiliency Center to serve victims, survivors, families, and others who were traumatized by the shooting, by providing counseling, healing circles and other services and events. In addition, so many professionals from outside Buffalo stepped right up when we identified a need for additional victim service providers in the aftermath of the incident. All told, 54 staff members from 16 victim assistance programs have

volunteered at the Resiliency Center to provide support to the community. I also want to especially thank OVS Excelsior Fellow Jacklynn Blanchard for organizing this critical effort. As I mentioned to my colleagues in Buffalo, they are now members of a club no one ever wants to join, but at some time in the future, they may have the ability to help another community through a mass violence event.

We also recognize that many communities struggle with mass violence events that may not meet federal qualifications for assistance or get widespread attention, but they are equally as devastating. OVS has responded to these events and will continue to do so, as communities experiencing significant levels of violence unquestionably suffer from the same trauma and need support and resources as well.

All the best for a happy, healthy, and safe new year. Thank you for your continued commitment to providing the highest quality services to victims of crime across New York State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Elizabeth Cronin".

Elizabeth Cronin, Esq.

## 2022 Victim Assistance Program Data Highlights

At the start of a contract term, staff from OVS-funded victim assistance programs work with their OVS contract management specialists to develop a plan for services they will provide, including counseling, transportation, court advocacy, civil legal assistance, and referrals to other programs, among others. VAPs must submit quarterly reports to the agency that detail their activities through the Performance Measurement Tool (PMT) report.

OVS currently funds 219 nonprofit organizations and coalitions, hospitals and government agencies, supporting 239 victim assistance programs. Nearly half of the \$373.2 million in state and federal funding administered by the agency for the three-year period from Oct. 1, 2022, through Sept. 30, 2025, supports programs serving victims and survivors of domestic violence and their families; 23 percent, underserved communities; 17 percent, victims of child abuse; and 13 percent, victims and survivors of sexual assault.

The graphic on page 3 illustrates PMT data collected by programs about new individuals they served during the federal fiscal year that ended on Sept. 30, 2022. These data allow the agency to analyze who is currently accessing services, gaps that may exist and will help inform the comprehensive Victims of Crime Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis that OVS is conducting with the [Council of State Governments Justice Center](#). Victim assistance programs will provide critical information and insight to this analysis, which will allow OVS to identify and address inequities and better serve marginalized communities.

# Annual State Performance Report Highlights: New Individuals Served

October 1, 2021-September 30, 2022



1

## Victimization Type

On average, of new individuals served this fiscal year, the largest proportion of the 598,603 individuals who received services were victims of domestic/family violence [over 9%].

2

## Special Classifications of Individuals

On average, of new individuals served, the largest proportion of victims with special classifications had a limited English proficiency [29%].



3

## Race/Ethnicity

On average, of new individuals served, the largest race/ethnicity groups served identified as White/non-Latino or Caucasian [nearly 25%], followed by Black/African American [over 15%], and then Latino/Hispanic [over 12%].



4

## Gender Identity

On average, of new individuals served, the largest gender identity group was female [51%].



5

## Age

On average, of new individuals served, the majority of victims were between the ages of 25 and 59 [nearly 38%].

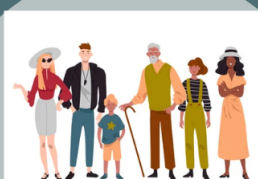


Image courtesy of Jacklynn Blanchard ■



## 2022 Training and Outreach Highlights

The OVS Training and Outreach Unit regularly offers training and technical assistance to the network of victim assistance programs funded by OVS across New York State. Through research, professional development, trainings and conferences, OVS builds the capacity of victim assistance programs to better serve victims and survivors of crime and their families. During 2022, the unit offered more than 30 trainings and webinars for VAPs. More than 1,500 advocates and direct service professionals from organizations across the state registered and attended online and in-person trainings. Highlights include:

- Return of in-person [OVS Victim Service Academy Trainings](#)
- Hosting of the [OVS 2022 Seeking Solutions Summit – Restorative Justice: A Survivor Centric Approach](#)
- Launch of the [OVS Grants Training Video Series](#)
- Re-launch of the [OVS Training & Technical Assistance Request Program \(TTARP\)](#)



This year, unit staff also began working with the [Council of State Governments Justice Center](#) to conduct a multi-year, comprehensive statewide victim of crime needs assessment.

Visit [ovs.ny.gov/training](https://ovs.ny.gov/training) for more information to access many no-cost tools, resources and specialized training opportunities. ■

## Save the Date!

The 2023 OVS Conference will occur Tuesday, Aug. 22 through Thursday, Aug. 24, in Albany. Stay up to date on news, including calls for presenters, event agenda, ticket prices, and more, at [ovs.ny.gov/conference](https://ovs.ny.gov/conference). ■



## Resilience:

*Redefining Victim Services in an Age of Uncertainty*

**2023 Conference • August 22 – 24 • Albany, NY**

## FOIL vs. File Copy – OVS' Strict Confidentiality Rules

New York State's [Freedom of Information Law](#) (FOIL), which has been in effect since 1978, provides the public with the right to access records reflective of governmental decisions and policies that affect the lives of New Yorkers.

Under FOIL, agencies must make all records available to the public, except those records, or portions thereof, that may be withheld pursuant to the exceptions detailed in Public Officers Law, Article 6. One of the exceptions allows an agency to deny access to records when they are specifically exempted from disclosure by state or federal statute.

Given the sensitive nature of OVS' work, the law under which the agency operates requires the strictest confidentiality when it comes to claimant records:

*§ 633. Confidentiality of records. 1. Records maintained by the office and proceedings by the office based thereon regarding a claim submitted by a victim or a claimant shall be deemed confidential with the following exceptions:*

- (a) requests for information based upon legitimate criminal justice purposes.*
- (b) judicial subpoenas.*
- (c) requests for information by the victim or claimant or his or her authorized representative.*
- (d) for purposes necessary and proper for the administration of this article.*

This section of law means claimant records are not subject to FOIL – even if the FOIL is filed by a victim, claimant, or authorized representative. The FOIL will be denied and instead, they will be advised to submit a request for a copy of some or all of their file to the OVS Legal Unit with an original signature. The Legal Unit also can assist with the forms necessary to authorize a representative if the victim or claimant wishes to allow the release of their records to a third party.

If a record is provided under FOIL to one person, it is provided under FOIL to all. The Legal Unit is available to victims, claimants, and programs to clear any confusion about this process at 518-457-8066. ■





## Storage and Transfer of Unreported SOECK

As you may know, OVS is responsible for storing sexual offense evidence collection kits (SOECKs) that have not been released to law enforcement (unreported kits). Public Health Law requires the state to store kits for 20 years and during this timeframe, a victim of crime may request certain information about their kit or personal items in storage. These requests may include:

- releasing the kit to law enforcement,
- returning personal items, or
- disposing the kit or non-kit item prior to the end of the 20-year storage period.

As OVS continues its work to open the storage facility so it can accept kits, the agency wants to make stakeholders – victim assistance programs, hospitals and medical providers, and law enforcement – aware of the important role they have related to confirming the identity of victims whose kits are in storage.

Protecting the rights and privacy of the victim is paramount to OVS, so the agency will not accept requests for information made by anyone other than the victim of crime. Individuals identified as a healthcare proxy or those with power of attorney cannot submit this request on behalf of a victim of crime.

To make a request, the victim of crime must complete an OVS SOECK Consent Form and provide a photo ID or alternative form of identification. VAP staff must attest that the victim of crime's identity has been confirmed and submit the form to OVS via email at [soeck@ovs.ny.gov](mailto:soeck@ovs.ny.gov). Alternatively, a victim may complete and submit a notarized copy of the OVS SOECK Consent Form directly to the agency [via email](#) or surface mail: 80 S. Swan Street, Room 238, Albany, NY 12210.

The consent form is currently in development. Once finalized, it will be available on [the agency's website](#). OVS will keep all stakeholders apprised about the availability of the form, the status of the facility and its opening date as soon as those details are available.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and partnership, which will help ensure the state complies with its statutory obligation and gives victims and survivors of sexual assault the additional time they may need to decide whether to report the crime and release their kit to law enforcement for testing. ■

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# OVS Outreach

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