

# ***ADVISORY BULLETIN***

**TRANSMITTAL NO. 2020-02**

**TO: ALL FUNDED PROGRAMS  
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS**

**FROM: ELIZABETH CRONIN, ESQ.  
DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: VOCA Funding Update**

**DATE: April 22, 2020**

Dear Colleague:

As you know, OVS has been concerned about a reduction in deposits to the Crime Victims Fund and therefore a reduction in VOCA victim assistance funding to the states. In the award letters sent in June, we made sure that our funded programs were aware of this situation and could begin thinking about, and planning for, how to manage under these circumstances. We want to assure you that OVS has the funding to meet the three-year commitments outlined in the award letters that all successful applicants received in 2019 and for all of OVS' current commitments. However, we think it prudent to stress that the level of VOCA funds going forward remains unclear and worrisome.

Funding for 2019 was 28% less than our 2018 award and we just received our 2020 award which is approximately 26% less than 2019. The extraordinarily high levels of funding that OVS and the other states have received since 2015 are not sustainable with the current deposits in the Crime Victims Fund. We will, of course, continue to keep programs informed about the funding issues but you must be mindful that should federal funding levels continue to be reduced, OVS may have to opt not to extend the current three-year contracts for the two-year renewal option. It looks increasingly likely, that without Congressional intervention or a significant infusion of fees into the Fund, at the end of the current contract period (9/30/22), OVS would not be able to sustain funding at current levels. If our federal award in the future is significantly lower, or if it continues at the 2020 level, OVS would have to issue a new RFA for a reduced amount compared to what was awarded in 2019.

Currently, the Fund is only comprised of criminal fines, fees and penalties from federal prosecutions. Many national organizations, including the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators, are working on legislation and advocating for ways to increase the types of deposits into the Fund such as those from civil settlements or deferred prosecutions. If successful, there could be light at the end of tunnel but of course, there are no guarantees.

All of our grant recipients will be given ample warning about what we are hearing but we want you to be aware that this is a possibility. OVS is committed to providing our grantees with the support you will need to plan for the continued and future success of your programs. To that end, one of the resources we are offering is a series of webinars in the coming months focusing on sustainability.

The first webinar in this series, [Financial Sustainability for Victim Assistance Programs](#), will be held on **Tuesday, April 28 at 10:00 a.m.** In this webinar, we will review the current financial landscape, as well as possible changes in the coming years. The webinar will help participants:

- Understand the components of financial sustainability
- Assess their program's risk based on current funding and staffing models
- Begin to explore the development of a long-term sustainability plan, including:
  - Learning about options for saving costs
  - Understanding the importance of evaluating board and staff readiness for resource development

We understand that your programs are under unique forms of stress during this time, and OVS is here to help you weather the storm. In a changing landscape, readiness is critical, and this webinar series aims to provide the tools you need for long-term success.

On behalf of the New York State Office of Victim Services, thank you for your commitment to providing the highest quality services to innocent victims of crime in New York State.



Elizabeth Cronin, Esq.  
Director