

OVS Outreach

Winter 2020

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From the Director's Desk



In New York State, January is observed as Human Trafficking Awareness Month to raise awareness about this modern-day slavery, which can involve the use of force, fraud or coercion to obtain some type of labor or

commercial sex act. People of all ages, races, genders, and socioeconomic status can fall victim to this crime, which is estimated to be a \$150 billion industry worldwide.

New York is fortunate to have a strong network of victim service providers that assists these victims. OVS provides financial compensation to eligible individuals and funds programs, while two other state agencies provide critical services and support to victims and survivors: the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). The state Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) also trains law enforcement professionals how to identify, investigate and prosecute these crimes.

As victim assistance professionals, it's critical that we know the forms that human trafficking takes and how to help those who are trafficked. The [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) and the [Office for Victims of Crime](#) offer awareness materials and comprehensive information, including indicators of human trafficking, tips on how to respond to possible incidents, how to identify victims and safety planning.

During his tenure, Governor Cuomo has advanced and signed legislation eliminating the requirement that coercion be proven in a sex trafficking prosecution when the victims are minors; increasing penalties for traffickers and creating an affirmative defense

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OVS Speakers Bureau: Call for Presenters

OVS is currently seeking volunteers for its 2020 [Speakers Bureau!](#)

If you are interested in presenting, speaking or know others who would like to be considered for the seminar series, please email training@ovs.ny.gov.

The OVS Speakers Bureau is a bi-monthly information sharing seminar for OVS staff and allied professionals on a variety of topics, including:

- Victim assistance program overviews and provider testimonials;
- Innovation in victim services;
- Victim services best practices;
- Reaching underserved victims;
- Self-care;
- And more.

These seminars will seek to educate attendees on the tremendous impact victim services have on the lives of victims and survivors from across New York State.

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From the Director's Desk

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in prostitution prosecutions if the defendant was a trafficking victim.

The state's Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking also brings together the experience and expertise of 10 state agencies to combat trafficking, raise awareness and develop creative solutions to address and prevent it. The Task Force is partnering with the Students Stopping Trafficking and Exploitation of People at the University at Albany to host a forum on the topic on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2020, from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Campus Center on [UAlbany's main campus](#).

The free forum will focus on anti-trafficking efforts in the Capital Region and feature presentations by professionals from OTDA, DCJS, Unity House in Troy and The Legal Project in Albany. Mark your calendars if you're interested in attending.

On a different topic, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo

last week presented his 2020 State of the State Address, outlining his vision for this year's legislative session, including targeting financial exploitation of the elderly, enhancing protections for victims and survivors of domestic violence, prohibiting individuals convicted out-of-state of serious offenses from owning a firearm in New York, and closing the rape intoxication loophole, among others. Each of the proposals are outlined in [Making Progress Happen](#) and additional details will be forthcoming when Governor Cuomo presents his 2020-21 executive budget.

Thank you for your continued commitment, dedication and advocacy. I wish you all the best for a happy and safe 2020.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Cronin, Esq.

Victim Service Portal Updates

In an effort to make the Victim Service Portal (VSP) more user-friendly and efficient, OVS recently deployed two new enhancements to the system.

When searching for the status of an existing claim, users will now see the name of the OVS crime victim specialist handling the claim and their phone number if the claim is in "Investigating" status. Previously, the search result only showed Claim Status.

Search Results

Claim Number	Claimant Name	Victim Name	Victim SSN	Victim Date of Birth	Crime Date	Claim Status	Investigator Name	Investigator Phone #	
2790971	Smith, John	Smith, John		05/08/1995	11/30/2019	Investigating	Sarah Jones	518-222-5555	Upload

Users are now able to better track documents they have already uploaded to claims with the addition of a new field on the "Upload Document" screen. The "Document Explanation" field allows users to add description(s) of any document(s) after they select the file(s) for uploading.



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OVS 2019 Conference – Bringing Service Providers Together to Network and Learn

Nearly 450 victim service professionals from across the state attended the OVS 2019 Conference in November, the largest group of attendees ever! Funded by a training grant from the federal Office for Victims of Crime, the three-day event featured more than 30 workshops and plenary presentations centered around the theme of innovation in victim services. Highlights included presentations by:

- The Urban Resources Institute's [PALS \(People and Animals Living Safety\) program](#), the only domestic violence shelter in New York City that houses both victims and their pets;
- Heather Martin, who survived the Columbine High School shooting. She spoke about how that experience led her to co-found [The Rebels](#)

[Project](#), which specializes in filling the gaps in providing long-term support for survivors of mass trauma;

- Youngbee Dale shared her expertise in uncovering the Asian sex market in the United States, and
- Zeke Thomas shared his survivor story and facts and figures about instances of male sexual assault. The professional DJ then brought attendees to their feet for a night of music and dancing.

OVS is grateful to all the speakers, exhibitors and, most of all, attendees who made this year's event a rousing success. ■



Clockwise, from top left: OVS Director Elizabeth Cronin joins Zeke Thomas (third from left) in stuffing the 100,000th bag for SUNY's Got Your Back; a special screening and Q&A of Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope proctored by Director Cronin and Dr. Lucy Barbera; Conference attendees enjoy the photo booth at the Wednesday evening reception; Ghanaian dancer Zorkie Nelson and his team performing a traditional West African dance to open the Wednesday evening reception; Director Cronin presents a Lifetime Achievement Award to BethAnn Holzhay, the recently retired director of the Bronx DA's Crime Victims Assistant Unit; and Zeke Thomas shares his story of survival with conference attendees.

Find more photos from the OVS 2019 Conference Wednesday reception on [page 6!](#)

OVS 2019 Conference Spotlight: A Conversation with the OVS Grants Team

The Performance Measurement Tool (PMT) is a requirement for any program receiving OVS grant funds. Here's a recap of key points explored during the PMT workshop given by agency staff at the biennial training conference in November.

The completed PMT is due on the 20th of the month following the end of each quarter. For example, April 20 is the PMT due date for the second quarter (January through March) of the contract year. Programs will no longer enter their own quarterly data into the OVC PMT website as they previously were required to do. All programs should still continue to submit their OVS PMT Excel spreadsheet to ovsgrants@ovs.ny.gov and their contract manager. OVS will use the Excel spreadsheet information to enter the quarterly data to the OVC PMT website, therefore it is very important the Excel spreadsheets are received by the due date.

The number of individuals assisted with a compensation application (Direct Services #6) is only counted when assisting with an OVS claim application and can only be counted one time per client, per crime. Any additional assistance provided with the application is counted in Individual Advocacy, #8B4, which includes

assisting victims in securing remedies and services from other agencies (i.e., DSS, housing); locating emergency financial assistance on behalf of the victim; assisting in filing for losses covered by public and private insurer programs (Workers' Compensation, unemployment benefits and public assistance). Any information and explanation about OVS compensation is to be counted under #8A2.

Follow-ups and off-site visits are no longer counted as services themselves. Items provided during a follow-up contact or off-site visit, such as individual advocacy or counseling, are still counted as services. Telephone counseling, when not done over a hotline or crisis line, is now counted under individual counseling, and therapy has been expanded to include animal-assisted therapy.

Victim Assistance Programs (VAP) staff are encouraged to contact their assigned contract management specialist with any questions about the PMT. OVS has also distributed a PMT Excel worksheet which includes a "PMT Instructions and Tips" tab with an abundance of helpful information. ■

OVS Speakers Bureau: Call for Presenters

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We are excited to announce our schedule for the upcoming 2020 Speakers Bureau:

- January 28
- March 17
- May 19
- July 21
- September 15
- November 17

All sessions run from 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., inclusive of Q&A, at OVS offices in Albany. We look forward to receiving your proposals! ■



Victim Service Portal Updates

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When returning to the Upload Document screen for a claim, users will see a new “Review Uploads” button. Clicking this button displays a list of descriptions for the documents that have been uploaded to the claim.

The screenshot shows the 'Victim Services Portal' interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Apply For Compensation, Search For a Claim, VSP FAQ, and Logout. Below the navigation bar, the user's claim number (2790971) and a welcome message ('Welcome: VSPUserTwo') are displayed. A 'Review Uploads' button is highlighted with a red circle. Below this, there is a form for uploading documents, including a dropdown menu for document type, a text input field, and buttons for 'Browse', 'Upload', and 'Cancel'.

Please note: This list will only include descriptions of documents uploaded through the VSP, not hard copies received by OVS and scanned into the claim. In addition, the user will not receive the actual document, only the description that was entered for the document when it was uploaded. ■

The screenshot shows a 'Review Uploads' window. At the top, it displays 'Claim 2790971' and 'Claimant: John Smith'. Below this, there is a table listing six uploaded documents:

1	VSP PDF Copy of Filed Claim
2	Mr. Smith's Drivers Licence
3	Hospital discharge summary
4	New City Hospital Bill - \$475.00
5	Police Report
6	Insurance Explanation of Benefits

At the bottom of the window, there is a note: '* Contact NYS OVS for questions regarding files you have submitted but do not see descriptions of in this window.' and a 'Close' button.

Vehicular Crimes: OVS Can Help

Vehicle crashes can have devastating effects on their victims and leave them with lifelong injuries, both physical and emotional. If a crash has been determined to be a crime under New York State law, the victims of those incidents and/or their family members may be eligible for assistance and compensation from the Office of Victim Services.

Eligible crimes must be felonies or misdemeanors and include offenses such as driving while intoxicated, leaving the scene of an accident, and vehicular manslaughter, for example. OVS staff can assist victim advocates and service providers if they have questions about whether a victim and/or family member may be eligible for medical and counseling costs and other help from the agency.

Families for Safe Streets is an advocacy organization that aims to raise awareness of vehicle-related crimes and advocates for victims of traffic injuries and fatalities. Visit familiesforsafestreets.org for more information. ■



OVS 2019 Conference Photos

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Clockwise, from top left: OVS Director Elizabeth Cronin and Deputy Director Ginny Miller arrive at the Wednesday evening reception; Conference attendees arrive at the Wednesday evening reception; evening karaoke shows off the talented victim service providers of New York State; Director Cronin displays a lifetime achievement award for Anne FitzSimmons, former White Plains Police Chief; and more enjoyment of the Wednesday evening reception by Conference attendees.

Expanded Eligibility Coming Next Month

Governor Cuomo signed legislation in 2019 to clarify OVS' enacting statute and expand eligibility for crime victims' compensation. The following two changes will take effect on Feb. 17, 2020.

Chapter 178 of the Laws of 2019 expands the definition of "child victim" to include victims less than 18 years old, who suffer physical, mental or emotional injury, loss or damage as a result of any violation enumerated in Article 22 of the Executive Law – committed against, or witnessed by, such child. One violation is currently included in the law. A child victim who witnesses that violation – committed against a parent, for example – would be ineligible for assistance, while their parent would be eligible. The amendment removes that conflict and makes the child eligible.

Chapter 179 expands eligibility to crime victims who did not suffer a physical injury but were victims of the following crimes: unlawful dissemination or publication of an intimate image, first- and second-degree unlawful surveillance, and first- and second-degree dissemination of an unlawful surveillance image. Once this takes effect:

Individuals who are victims of unlawful surveillance will be eligible for loss of earnings, unreimbursed costs of mental health counseling and transportation expenses incurred for necessary court appearances in connection with the prosecution of such crime.

Individuals who are victims of unlawful dissemination or publication of an intimate image or the dissemination of an unlawful surveillance image will be eligible for loss of earnings, unreimbursed costs of repair or replacement of essential personal property, unreimbursed costs for security devices, costs of residing at or utilizing services provided by shelters for victims of domestic violence and/or their children, transportation expenses incurred for necessary court appearances in connection with the prosecution of such crime, unreimbursed costs of mental health counseling, costs of crime scene cleanup and securing a crime scene, reasonable relocation expenses and for occupational or job training. ■

Training & Technical Assistance Request Program is Live!



The OVS [Training and Technical Assistance Request](#) Program re-launched last fall. Since then, 38 victim assistance programs (VAPs) have taken advantage of this **free**, individualized training.

Eligible VAPs interested in receiving training can review the training [catalog](#) and submit a formal technical assistance request [online](#). Requests are considered on a first-come, first-served basis, with the selection process streamlined for swift review and response.

We encourage eligible VAPs to take advantage of this opportunity to enhance their ability to serve victims of crime across New York State. ■

Can't Get Enough of OVS 2019 Conference Photos?

Photos from the OVS 2019 Conference Wednesday evening reception can be found [here](#).



OVS 2019 Conference
Innovation in Victim Services:
Transforming the Field through Creative Solutions