

# OVS Outreach

## Summer 2022

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### From the Director's Desk



The New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS) has planned and planned to ensure it is prepared to mobilize and respond quickly to mass casualty events. When we do, we always learn that no two events are ever the same, which

requires us to be nimble and flexible in identifying a community's specific needs. We experienced this yet again in May, when we responded to the racially motivated mass shooting at the Tops supermarket in Buffalo. We had staff on the ground for more than a month and continue to work with stakeholders in the city to help ensure that every victim receives the help and support they need.

As many of you know, this work is demanding and draining but we all do our best to keep emotions in check and just forge ahead. There are moments, however, when that becomes impossible. For me, that occurred when I learned of the horrific murders at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas. I thought it was important to communicate with my staff, so they knew they weren't alone if they were feeling the same way:

*This morning I noticed that I was feeling weepy, and it took me a few minutes to identify what was happening – it was a delayed reaction to my time in Buffalo. It has been non-stop since the hour we learned about that horrific hate crime. The time in Buffalo was difficult but gratifying that we could be there to help, and our help was needed. But it takes its toll. Our staff who responded did incredible work and sometimes ended up having to talk to people who were there when it happened and were just disclosing then. It was incredibly*

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### Save the Date!



**Seeking Solutions:**  
*Restorative Justice:*  
*A Survivor-Centric Approach*

**September 19 – 20 • Albany, NY**

OVS will host its next Seeking Solutions Summit, *Restorative Justice: A Survivor-Centric Approach*, on Monday, Sept. 19 and Tuesday, Sept. 20, in Albany.

Mark your calendars and visit [ovs.ny.gov/summit](https://ovs.ny.gov/summit), which will be updated in the coming weeks with the agenda, location, registration information and more. ■



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Victim Services**

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## From the Director's Desk

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*emotional. When you are very busy and moving, it can be easy to compartmentalize your feelings so you can get the job done. But those feelings don't go away – we just hide them for a while. And that's what I felt this morning – the grief for a community that was devastated by this level of violence. Because even the helpers we worked alongside are from that community, so they were trying to provide support and assistance while also being victims. And that was heartbreaking to see.*

*Then I learned this afternoon about the unspeakably horrifying shooting at a Texas elementary school and to be honest, I am just gutted. All those feelings I thought I dealt with this morning flooded back and I thought of all of you. We deal with some truly terrible stuff – and to be effective in our jobs, we must sometimes put aside our emotions. Even for those of you who did not physically respond to Buffalo, many of you have been working with us from Albany. Or just handling other difficult cases.*

*What I know from my time in the DA's Office handling homicides and many children abuse cases, is that it's ok to feel bad. It's ok to just not feel ok. It's ok to ask for help. Reach out to EAP or call the [Project Hope](#) hotline if you feel you need some extra support.*

I wanted to share this with you to remind you that you are not alone as you do this work. There are resources, support and training available to help you and your staff process the emotions and vicarious trauma that you may be experiencing.

In closing, I want to thank all the Victim Assistance Programs (VAPs) that stepped up and offered their help to Buffalo in the aftermath of this devastating incident. Your willingness to devote your time and experience were critical and allowed us to respond to the needs of the victims and their families when they needed it the most.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Cronin, Esq.

## OVS Welcomes a New Grants Unit Chief



Kathy Joslin

OVS is pleased to announce that **Kathy Joslin** has been appointed as the new Grants Unit Chief, bringing with her to this new role her many years of experience with the agency. Kathy joined OVS in 2012 as the phone representative and then as agency program aide in the Compensation Unit. In these roles, she worked with both victim assistance programs and claimants to compensate individuals for medical and mental health expenses. In 2015, she moved to the Grants Units and began working with VAPs on their OVS contracts. These different positions throughout the agency provided her with a great understanding of the work of the agency and its funded programs.

Kathy has a master's degree in forensic mental health from The Sage Colleges. She lives in Latham, with her 6-year-old baseball-obsessed son.

When she is not at work, she spends a lot of time with her son doing all the activities he loves, including traveling and going on mini adventures together. One of their favorite places to visit is Cooperstown, home to the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Please join us in congratulating Kathy on her new role! ■

## 2022 Legislative Session Update

During the 2022 legislative session, OVS was once again successful in advocating for several changes to state law that will improve benefits for victims of crime and their families. The state Legislature approved – and Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law – three bills submitted by the Governor at the agency’s request. These amendments to state law expand those eligible for certain reimbursement to include victims of “revenge porn;” those eligible for certain reimbursement to include victims of reckless endangerment charges; and added documents and information that can be used to show identity theft in certain circumstances before debt collection can be pursued.

Under state law, certain non-injured victims of crimes that are most often associated with domestic violence, and non-injured victims of hate and other crimes, can seek compensation for a variety of crime-related expenses: bills related to counseling, loss of earnings, the repair or replacement of essential personal property, and moving expenses, for example. This eligibility will be expanded to victims of Penal Law Section 245.15, unlawful dissemination, or publication of an intimate image, which is commonly referred to as revenge porn.

Victims of first- and second-degree reckless endangerment, as defined in Penal Law Sections 120.20 and 120.25, will be eligible for reimbursement of expenses related to loss of earnings, counseling, securing a crime scene and the unreimbursed cost of crime scene cleanup.

Finally, the state’s General Business Law will be amended to afford victims of identity theft alternate ways to report the victimization and allow them to provide additional documentation that must be considered by creditors, which must cease collection activities until they have completed a review of the information. Victims will have the option of reporting the identity theft to law enforcement or through a filing to the Federal Trade Commission ID Theft Victim’s reporting process. Creditors will be required to consider statements by the victim of coercion, and/or criminal or family court documents before pursuing collection.

All changes take effect Dec. 27, 2022, and the two related to victim eligibility will only apply to crimes occurring on or after that date. OVS will distribute additional guidance about these changes as the effective date draws near. ■

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## OVS Staff Participate in the 2022 CDPHP Workforce Team Challenge

Nine OVS employees participated in the [2022 Capital District Physician’s Health Plan \(CDPHP\) Workforce Team Challenge](#) on Thursday, May 19, in Albany. With thousands of runners and walkers from hundreds of organizations participating, the 3½-mile race is the largest annual road race in the Capital Region. Each year’s race benefits a charity and this year, [Oakwood Community Center](#) received the donation from CDPHP. Congratulations to the OVS staff members who participated this year! ■



*OVS Staff members pose for a photo before the race.*

## New York State's Federal VOCA Award Allocations

OVS recently received notice of the state's 2022 federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding from the Office for Victims of Crime.

- Victim Compensation Award: \$9.6 million to provide victims of crime and families with direct compensation and reimbursement for crime-related expenses. The award is 75 percent of what New York State provided in compensation in the two years prior to the award year. It is a 19 percent decrease from the 2021 award and attributable to fluctuations in compensation spending, which is dependent upon claim submissions, approvals and when claims are paid.
- Victim Assistance Allocation: \$83.7 million to support community organizations and criminal justice agencies that serve victims of crime and their families. After several consecutive years of decreased funding, this allocation is 41 percent higher than our 2021 allocation. While this is good news, the agency continues to closely monitor the status of the federal Crime Victims Fund as there is concern that the award levels may not be sustainable in the future.

Agency staff are committed to working with funded programs and federal partners to maximize all available resources that support victim services across New York State. ■

## OVS Spring/Summer Trainings with IDMH

Last month, OVS, in partnership with the Institute of Disaster Mental Health at SUNY New Paltz (IDMH), hosted three trainings as part of the Victim Service Academy and Disaster Mental Health Fundamental Training Series.

Two Victim Service Academy sessions and one Disaster Mental Health Fundamentals training welcomed more than 70 victim service professionals to the SUNY New Paltz campus for one to three days of collaboration, networking, and self-care. Visit [ovs.ny.gov/academy](https://ovs.ny.gov/academy) where information on our next Victim Service Academy Training will be updated in the coming weeks. ■



*The Spring Cohort of the Victim Service Academy Training get in touch with nature at the Mohonk Preserve.*



*Participants in Disaster Mental Health Fundamentals pose for a photo.*



*OVS Training and Outreach Unit's Blake Kush and Rachel Gentile enjoy the great outdoors.*

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e-newsletter