



Office of Victim Services

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ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES

PREAMBLE

Article 22, § 623(14) provides the Office of Victim Services (OVS) with the statutory authority to establish an Advisory Council "...to assist in formulation of policies on the problems of crime victims and to provide recommendations to the director to improve the delivery of services to victims by the office." OVS elects to establish such Advisory Council in the following manner:

ADVISORY COUNCIL GUIDELINES

MEMBERSHIP

The Office of Victim Services has established an Advisory Council to provide information, support, and guidance on issues regarding victims ¹ and victim assistance programs. The goal shall be to maintain an Advisory Council of at least 16 members appointed by the Director of OVS who have demonstrated an active interest in or obtained professional knowledge of the problems, needs, and treatment of victims. In addition, membership(s) may also include individuals who have lived experience as victims of crime, including victims of gun violence. Advisory Council members shall be representative of: the victim advocacy community (including victims' assistance programs); the diversity of New York State across the State's regional victim service providers' coalitions; and, the diversity of types of victimization. OVS shall endeavor to maintain a significant level of representation of un- and underserved populations. OVS shall solicit nominations from the Advisory Council, coalitions, and other interested parties on a regular basis for new members or to fill vacancies.

OVS designates standing membership on the Advisory Council for the following:

- the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence;
- the New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault; and
- the New York State Children's Alliance.

Additionally, other individuals having a special interest in serving victims of crime may be invited by OVS to participate on the Advisory Council as non-voting, ex-officio members. Designated ex-officio members include those representing the:

- New York State Office of Children and Family Services;
- New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services;
- New York State Department of Health;
- New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision;
- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance; and,
- New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

¹ INDIVIDUAL SELF DETERMINATION: Individuals who experience victimization may identify themselves in many ways such as victims, survivors, "survivors", or other terms that may resonate. OVS and the Advisory Council recognizes that these self-identifications are up to the individual. For the purposes of this document, OVS and the Advisory Council will use the term "victim(s) of crime."

The Advisory Council shall elect two co-Presidents at the first meeting of each Advisory Council year. Co-Presidents will serve as the primary contacts for OVS and will coordinate the monthly meetings of the Advisory Council and, with OVS, the quarterly full OVS Advisory Council Meetings. One or both co-Presidents will represent the Advisory Council at the quarterly meetings. The Advisory Council will rotate position of secretary among members to create meeting agendas and provide minutes to the membership.

The Advisory Council will maintain regular contact with the Community Engagement Liaison who will support and assist with communication between the Advisory Council and OVS. The Advisory Council may reach out to OVS at any time to address specific concerns.

TERM OF OFFICE

All members of the Advisory Council shall be appointed by the Director of OVS, for an initial term of three-years, beginning on January 1. At the conclusion of an initial term, an Advisory Council member has the option of a second, three-year term. If an Advisory Council member is not interested in a second, three-year term, or leaves the Advisory Council at any time during any term, such vacancy may be filled no sooner than the following January 1. OVS, in consultation with Advisory Council members, reserves the right to grant term extensions to allow for continuity of operations in the event of a Statewide emergency, mass-casualty event, or other scenarios. OVS will make these determinations on an ad-hoc basis. At the discretion of the Director of OVS, member terms may be extended for a one-year period.

STRUCTURE

The Advisory Council shall have two co-Presidents and utilize a shared leadership model. Using this shared leadership model, all Advisory Council members will commit to leading one of the monthly Advisory Council meetings, taking notes, and communicating issues and concerns with the co-Presidents. Assignments for these roles should be made at the beginning of each calendar year. Monthly meetings will take place remotely and invitations will be issued in a timely manner. Additional contact may be necessary and will include any interested Advisory Council members.

Members will focus on three primary areas: Membership, Strategic Planning/Implementation, and Policy/Procedure.

The **Membership Committee** is responsible for: reviewing upcoming vacancies, carrying out the nominations process in partnership with OVS, on-boarding new Advisory Council members, and mentorship of new members. The committee will share updates and partner with OVS as necessary.

The **Strategic Planning and Implementation Committee** is responsible for facilitating strategic planning meetings as needed, providing structural support to the Council, and other support for planning and implementation efforts as needed.

The **Policy and Procedure Committee** is responsible for identifying policy and procedural issues between victim assistance programs, the Advisory Council, and OVS. Members will identify current gaps in services and/or barriers to services and will develop potential solutions to address such gaps and/or barriers. Potential solutions may include policy changes and/or legislative proposals.

The Advisory Council members working in each committee shall be the conduit between the Advisory Council and the victim assistance Programs in the regional coalitions.

Additional efforts by the Advisory Council may include but not be limited to:

1. Assist OVS in the formulation of regulatory and legislative policies. The Advisory Council will monitor legislative efforts related to victims of crime and provide OVS recommendations on any relevant proposals or changes.



2. Review, analyze, and report on victims' issues, and fiscal and administrative concerns, which are common among victim assistance programs. These issues may focus on concerns that directly impact program administration including budgeting, staffing, the grant process, statistical and narrative report forms, monitoring and evaluation and development.
3. Advise OVS on victims' unmet needs and provide recommendations to OVS on ways to better serve victims of crime in the State of New York. The Advisory Council shall review and discuss any victim compensation issues, including information from other sources and states and may make recommendations in regard to compensation applications, benefits, and services.
4. Study the effects of social and economic oppression on marginalized populations of victims of crime and report findings and provide recommendations to OVS.
5. Notify OVS of developments in the field related serving victims of crime including but not limited to, general awareness, needs of victims, and barriers to service.

OVS and the Advisory Council may choose to establish ad-hoc groupings or task forces to pursue specific issues as needed. These groups shall report to the Advisory Council and OVS.

DUTIES

The Advisory Council shall have the duty to encourage public understanding of the needs of victims and the status of victims' rights. The Advisory Council shall assist OVS in the formulation of regulatory and legislative policies in establishing statewide goals and objectives for advancing services to victims and implementing victims' rights. The Advisory Council shall have the power to consider any matter relating to the improvement of victim assistance programs and to advise OVS. OVS shall assist the Advisory Council by disseminating information to Advisory Council members relative to reports and follow-up.

Advisory Council members are required be active participants in each of the five regional victim service provider coalitions. Advisory Council members are responsible for bringing committee work forward at each coalition meeting and are responsible for gathering information from the region and transmitting information back to the Advisory Council and OVS. OVS shall invite representatives from the Advisory Council to report to OVS during one quarterly meeting. At the beginning of each calendar year, the Council should ensure there is a plan in place to be present at and participate in Advisory Council and coalition meetings.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Participation on the Advisory Council by members representing agencies or organizations that may be funded by OVS shall not alone constitute a conflict of interest. No member of the Advisory Council may use their Advisory Council membership (or title) to advance personal causes or to promote positions not endorsed by the Advisory Council and OVS. The prohibition shall not be construed to prevent a member from freely speaking as an individual. Employees of OVS shall not serve as a member of the Advisory Council. Council members will sign a conflict-of-interest form which will be kept at OVS.

AMENDMENTS TO THESE GUIDELINES

OVS and the Advisory Council shall regularly review and amend this document as appropriate. Suggested amendments to this document may be made by the Advisory Council and submitted in writing to OVS for consideration. The final determination for amendments to the protocol shall rest with OVS.

MEMBER REVIEW AND ATTESTATION

All new members are required to review this document and attest to their willingness to participate in both Advisory Council meetings and Regional Victim Service Providers' Coalition meetings at the start of their term. Upon any changes made to this document, all existing members shall complete an additional review and attestation.