

OVS Outreach

Winter 2024

IN THIS ISSUE: [Transition from Grants Gateway](#) • [Compensation Program Updates](#) • [Legal Updates](#)

From the Director's Desk



“How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”

– Winnie the Pooh

When we begin an adventure, we often don't think about the time at the other end – when we move on and need to say goodbye. My time at OVS has been the best kind of adventure, as I've had the privilege of working with like-minded people with the goal of making New York State a better place for victims and survivors of crime.

As I reflect on my 10-year tenure, I see everything that this “little agency that could” has accomplished, all of which will have a lasting impact beyond anyone's time at OVS or in the victim services field. We have worked side by side with our victim assistance programs, state agency and federal partners, and the Executive and the Legislature to develop stronger responses and resources for victims, survivors and families, and expand access to financial assistance.

We have responded to mass violence events, developed and established the state's Sexual Offence Evidence Collection Kit Storage Facility, expanded the training, technical assistance and support we provide, and strengthened our Advisory Council. We hosted deep dive summits on male survivors of abuse, restorative justice, elder abuse and human trafficking. We successfully applied for a federal grant to create the [Crime Victims Legal Network](#) to assist individuals with civil legal matters they face because of a crime. We weathered a pandemic without curtailing services and provided victim assistance programs with additional funding so they could do the same. We have proposed a variety of legislation to expand eligibility for compensation that has been enacted. We issued the largest RFP in agency history and created [OVS Resource Connect](#) to make it easier to find services and support in the community. We created the social worker/case manager model for the state's SNUG Street Outreach programs in partnership with the state Division of Criminal Justice Services, greatly expanded the Enhanced Multidisciplinary Team model for elder abuse and funded the PREA project expansion to ensure access to services and support for victims and survivors who have been abused or assaulted while incarcerated. This is but a snapshot of the work we have collectively done to strengthen and improve services for victims, survivors and families.

We cannot do this work alone. I am thankful for Governor Hochul's leadership and steadfast support for victims and survivors, and I am grateful to have had such dedicated partners in this difficult – yet most rewarding – work. Thank you for making this journey with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth Cronin".

Elizabeth Cronin, Esq.

Transition from Grants Gateway to SFS

New York State will transition all grant-related activities from the Grants Gateway to the Statewide Financial System (SFS) on Jan. 16, 2024, to further streamline the grant process. Following the transition, OVS grant functions, such as fiscal cost reports, contracts, budget amendments, and pre-qualifications, will no longer take place in Grants Gateway and instead be shifted to SFS.



The OVS Grants Unit will work with its funded programs to make this transition as seamless as possible. OVS will ensure you receive the SFS vendor handbook that will be your guide to the system. Your agencies also must take steps to update information and establish user roles once the system is live. We will work with programs to help facilitate the submission of documents in the new system and prevent any delays on payments or contracts. Any in-process payments at the time of the transition will need to be re-submitted in the SFS system after the transition. Contracts that are not executed will transition over, but programs may need to re-enter some data. Your contract manager will closely monitor what has converted to SFS and what will need to be updated.

Please review these [training materials and related information](#) to help prepare for this transition. Any questions should be directed to the SFS Help Desk at Helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov or **855-233-8363**. ■

Reminder: TTARP Ends September 2024

OVS' Training and Technical Assistance Request Program (TTARP) is scheduled to end in September 2024.

Could your program benefit from free and confidential customized trainings aimed at building more resilient organizations?

Are your staff overwhelmed, burned out, and looking for solutions?

TTARP connects your staff with local and national experts who craft customized trainings, coaching and workshops targeted to your specific needs.

The application only takes a few minutes, and approved submissions are offered at no cost to your organization.

Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity to build your program's resilience and organizational capacity. Visit ovs.ny.gov/ttarp to learn more or click the button below to submit your request today! ■

[Click here to submit a free training request!](#)



Office of
Victim Services

in partnership with



CUNY INSTITUTE
FOR STATE & LOCAL
GOVERNANCE

Training and Technical Assistance Request Program (TTARP)

Compensation Program Updates

OVS has released a new, streamlined application for compensation in response to feedback from victims of crime, other individuals filing claims, and stakeholders who said the application was too long: four pages of information was too much to ask of individuals who have experienced a traumatic event.

The redesigned application now has five pages instead of nine, and the number of questions has been cut in half to seven from 14. OVS is taking a more mindful approach to its data collection: The application provides the information necessary for OVS to assign claims to staff members, who then obtain any additional documents to make decisions as needed, depending on the type of help sought. It should now take individuals and advocates fewer than 15 minutes to complete an application online.

To access the application through the Victim Service Portal or to download and print it, visit the [Victim Compensation page of the OVS website](#).

Governor Kathy Hochul also signed legislation that removes the mandatory law enforcement reporting requirement and allows victims of crime to provide alternative forms of evidence to show a qualifying crime was committed. The law will take effect on Dec. 31, 2025, and apply to crimes occurring on or after that date. OVS will work over the next two years to ensure its compensation program workflows, correspondence and core claims processing system are equipped to effectively and efficiently implement these operational changes and expanded eligibility. ■

Save the Date: 2024 OVS Seeking Solutions Summit

A friendly reminder to save the date for the 2024 OVS Seeking Solutions Summit: Tuesday, June 25 and Wednesday, June 26, in Skaneateles, Onondaga County.

The summit – ***Challenges for Providing Victim Services in Rural Communities: Ensuring Sustainable and Effective Services*** – will convene victim assistance professionals, services providers and others who work with rural communities to learn from one another, and brainstorm solutions to common challenges these communities face.

Stay tuned for more information in the coming months. We hope to see you there! ■



FAQ: OVS Payments to Individuals with Awarded Claims

The OVS Administrative Services Unit frequently receives questions from individuals who have been awarded claims about their payments and other financial information. To help programs assisting these individuals during the payment process, we have compiled this list of the most common questions we receive.

Future issues of OVS Outreach will include FAQs for payments made to service providers such as funeral homes, home care providers, relocation services, or medical care providers.

Can I receive my payment via direct deposit or wire transfer?

- No, payment can only be sent via a physical check in the mail. The check will be issued to the address you have on file with OVS. If you have moved, please notify OVS of your new address as soon as possible by calling **518-457-8727**.

How soon should I expect to receive my check in the mail?

- Checks are processed and issued by the Office of the State Comptroller after a payment has been approved by OVS. You will receive a letter from OVS informing you of an approved payment before receiving the check in the mail. It may take up to six (6) weeks for a check to be received in the mail.

What do I do if I moved, and I did not receive an expected check in the mail?

- Please notify OVS of your new address as soon as possible. Payments awarded to claimants will always be mailed to the current address on file with OVS. To change your address, you must complete and submit the signed Change of Address form, which is available on the OVS website under the “Forms” section or by contacting OVS at **518-457-8727**. A check can be reissued to a new address, but this process may take several weeks.

What do I do if I have not moved recently, and it has been over six weeks since I received a letter saying my payment was approved but I never received my check?

- Contact the OVS Finance Unit at ovsasutasks@ovs.ny.gov or **518-473-0456** from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. If someone is not available to take your call, please leave a voicemail with your contact information. Your call will be returned within 2 to 3 business days.

What do I do if I received my check, but it is now lost or damaged?

- Contact the OVS Finance Unit at ovsasutasks@ovs.ny.gov or **518-473-0456** from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. If someone is not available to take your call, please leave a voicemail with your contact information. Your call will be returned within 2 to 3 business days.

(Continued on [page 5](#))

FAQ: OVS Payments *(continued)*

(Continued from [page 4](#))

Is there a way to track a check in the mail?

- No, tracking the status of a check is not available.

Who should I contact if I believe the amount of the check is incorrect or if I submitted documentation but have not received a check yet?

- Contact OVS at **518-457-8727** and request to speak to the Compensation Unit.

How long do I have to cash my check before it expires? What if I don't have a bank account, how can I cash my check?

- You must cash your check within one year of the issue date. A bank account is not required to cash a check. You may cash the check with either a bank or any other check cashing facility.

What if I received my check over a year ago but never cashed it?

- If it has been more than 1½ years since the issue date on the check, you must contact the New York State Office of Unclaimed Funds to obtain any monies owed to you.

Who can I contact to know if my check has already been cashed? What if someone else cashed my check, what do I do then?

- Contact the OVS Finance Unit at ovsasutasks@ovs.ny.gov or **518-473-0456**, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except legal holidays. If someone is not available to take your call, please leave a voicemail with your contact information. Your call will be returned within 2 to 3 business days.
- If a third party fraudulently cashed your check, the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance may conduct a forgery investigation, which could take approximately six months.

What do I do if my name was spelled incorrectly on my check, or my name has changed?

- Contact the OVS Finance Unit at ovsasutasks@ovs.ny.gov or **518-473-0456**, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except legal holidays. If someone is not available to take your call, please leave a voicemail with your contact information. Your call will be returned within 2 to 3 business days.

If you have questions about payments made directly to OVS claimants that are not on this list, please send them to ovsasutasks@ovs.ny.gov or call us at **518-473-0456**. ■

Victims of “Deepfake” Technology Now Eligible for Financial Assistance

Today’s technology easily allows anybody to produce obscene, embarrassing, or unflattering images or videos of people acting in ways that they never have. A malevolent actor can create these images for the sole purpose of causing severe emotional harm to a specific person the subject when disseminated or published.

In plain English, this practice is commonly known as “deepfake” and a new law effective in November 2023 amended Penal Law 245.15 to criminalize dissemination or publication of intimate images created by digital manipulation. Prior to this change, Penal Law 245.15 only included unlawful dissemination or publication of an intimate image.

OVS can assist individuals who have been victimized by this new technology because it championed a law that took effect last year that expanded eligibility to individuals who were victims of PL 245.15 but did not suffer physical injury.

Assistance available to individuals who have been harmed by “deepfake” technology include, but are not limited to: loss of earnings, the unreimbursed cost for security devices to enhance the personal protection of such victim, transportation expenses incurred for necessary court appearances in connection with the prosecution of such crime, the unreimbursed costs of counseling provided to such victim on account of mental or emotional stress resulting from the incident in which the crime occurred, reasonable relocation expenses, and for occupational or job training.

Each claim’s unique circumstances are examined to determine the eligibility of (1) the person and (2) the expenses sought. While filing a claim does not guarantee an award, OVS does its best to make its determinations in favor of the claimant and encourages applications be made, so we can help as many individuals as we can. ■

OVS Outreach

e-newsletter



Office of
Victim Services

OVS.NY.GOV / 1-800-247-8035

facebook

twitter

YouTube