
Victims of Crime Act Funding for CASA/GAL Organizations



The Crime Victims Fund (the Fund) was established by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) of 1984 and is administered by the Office for Victims of Crime. VOCA state victim assistance grants are an important source of funding for the CASA/GAL network. The use of direct service funds to support the recruitment, screening, training and supervision of CASA/GAL volunteers enables CASA/GAL programs to provide more direct services for victims of child abuse. In some states, the state CASA/GAL organization also receives funding to support state-level services such as training, program development, data collection and administration. Currently, state organizations or local programs in 38 states receive VOCA funding, including 10 states in which CASA/GAL recipients receive more than \$1 million in funding. In total, the CASA/GAL network received more than \$56 million in VOCA funding last year.

BACKGROUND ON FUNDING

The Fund is financed by the collection of federal crime fines, forfeitures and special assessments rather than taxpayer dollars. The Fund is used to fund crime victim assistance grants in every state, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories. States, in turn, provide sub-grants to community-based organizations and public agencies that provide services directly to victims. While states have wide discretion and make their own determinations on how and to whom they supply VOCA funding, the Department of Justice (DOJ) developed federal guidelines on the parameters for spending VOCA dollars. This includes *“the use of direct service funds to support training and coordination of volunteer services in such circumstances is appropriate, as it typically allows funded organizations to cost-effectively leverage the available funds and volunteer efforts to provide more direct services for victims.”*

DOJ determines the amount of funds available to each state. The 50 states and DC receive a base amount of \$500K each year for Victim Assistance Grants and any additional funds are distributed based on a formula determined by U.S. Census population data.

Starting in 2000, in response to large fluctuations in these sources of funding, Congress placed an annual cap on funds available for distribution, with the intent to maintain the Crime Victims Fund as a stable source of support for future services for victims. In Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, funding for state victim assistance grants totaled \$3.353 billion in distribution from the Crime Victims Fund (including a 5 percent set-aside for tribes).

Although details have not yet been released, the Administration's FY 2020 budget request seeks a reform of the Fund by replacing the annual "cap" on Fund obligations with a mandatory, annual \$2.3 billion appropriation, which would include full funding for the Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA). The President's budget is the first step

in the appropriations cycle and typically changes by the time the funding package is passed. The Fund helps an average of 3.7 million victims of all types of crime every year.

HOW CASA/GAL PROGRAMS MEET VOCA ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

CASA/GAL advocacy is an eligible VOCA purpose because CASA/GAL programs and volunteers provide direct services to crime victims by helping child victims of abuse navigate the court system. In addition they meet the following criteria: public or non-profit organization, record of effective services, provide substantial financial support, use volunteers, promote community efforts to aid crime victims and help victims apply for compensation benefits.

SECURING VOCA FUNDING

If you are a local CASA/GAL program director, please seek input from your state CASA/GAL director before contacting the VOCA administrator so that you are knowledgeable as to how the CASA/GAL network is working with VOCA in your state. State organizations and local programs must coordinate on these efforts.

For state CASA/GAL organizations, engaging your VOCA administrator is a crucial first step in order to increase awareness and secure VOCA funding for the powerful advocacy of CASA/GAL volunteers. You can find the contact information for your state VOCA administrator [here](#). Reviewing the [VOCA Program Guidelines](#) will assist you in preparation for your engaging your VOCA administrator.

A meeting with your VOCA administrator is an effective way to connect VOCA funding to the state/local services your state organization and affiliated programs provide. This meeting will give your organization the opportunity to illustrate to the administrator ways that VOCA funding has/could advance the CASA/GAL mission in your state. The meeting also can position you as a reliable expert on child welfare issues in your community. Here are four actions that state directors can take to help secure funding:

- Schedule a meeting with the VOCA administrator and find ways to positively highlight strong outcomes that could be produced by CASA/GAL programs with VOCA funds from the state. For first-time applicants, be prepared with fact-based materials that highlight your current efforts and outcomes and what outcomes you might be able to estimate with a VOCA grant.
- Consider opportunities to serve as a resource to the state administrator.
- Highlight your program's ability to collect and demonstrate data-driven outcomes.
- Create a one-pager about the CASA/GAL network in your state. For state offices, fill out this [template](#) on the member portal and National CASA/GAL's government relations team will create a one-pager to help increase knowledge and awareness of your network.

You should limit the attendees for a meeting with your VOCA administrator to the most effective and knowledgeable people in your organization:

- You as the state director
- Possibly:
 - A local program director who can talk about the work of volunteer advocates in local communities and the importance of local programs
 - A volunteer who can share a good example of an impact on a child
 - A judge or former judge who has relied on CASA/GAL volunteers
- A champion who supports your mission and has a relationship with or influence with the VOCA administrator

You should be prepared to share information with the VOCA administrator and leave behind key program information so they may review it more closely after your meeting. In addition to creating the one-pager on your state CASA/GAL network, here are items you should also consider bringing to the meeting:

- State-specific materials
- Your state organization's annual report
- News stories that highlight the benefits of your state organization and local programs
- Recent op-ed articles
- Information about the eligibility of the CASA/GAL program as a VOCA expense as well as data around the number of CASA/GAL organizations nationwide that receive VOCA funding

While engaging your VOCA administrator involves time and effort, the rewards of getting acquainted or furthering your relationship are well worth it. The National CASA/GAL government relations team is here to assist you at every step in the process. Please contact advocacy@casaforchildren.org with questions.