

## THE ASK

CCADV and our 18 member organizations are requesting **\$3,283,000** in state funding **through the Department of Social Services** to support **Adult Advocate services** and **Safe Connect, Connecticut's statewide domestic violence hotline**.

Reduced federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding has left several core domestic violence services in an unstable position. All states have been facing this problem, which for the past three years in Connecticut has been addressed with one-time ARPA funding generously allocated by the Governor and General Assembly.

CCADV and our 18 member organizations have worked diligently in recent months to examine both the needs of survivors and our services, determining where resources can be shifted to meet growing needs within the confines of shrinking funding while minimizing the elimination of services. Together, our coalition has come up with a plan and we are requesting **\$3,283,000** in state funding to help stabilize domestic violence services in Connecticut.

## HOW WE GOT HERE - BACKGROUND ON VOCA FUNDING

For years Connecticut, like many other states, has relied heavily on federal funding available through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) to support a variety of victim services. Critical domestic violence services in both court-based and community-based settings have been funded by VOCA grants, including all domestic violence court-based advocates, as well as the entire statewide domestic violence hotline, Safe Connect, since its inception in 2019.

VOCA is funded through the federal Crime Victims Fund (CVF), which is solely financed through fines and fees paid by those corporations or individuals involved in federal criminal cases, largely white-collar crime. This contrasts with many other federal formula grants that receive appropriations funded by taxpayer dollars, resulting in volatility to the CVF and amount of monies available for grant allocations.

In federal fiscal year 2018, there was a substantial increase in funds released from VOCA, in part due to a large settlement in a federal court case that generated a large deposit into the CVF. In the years that have followed, this large deposit and release of funds has proven to be an anomaly. Available VOCA funds have steadily declined since FFY18, impacting all states, not just Connecticut.

|   | FFY15   | FFY16    | FFY17   | FFY18    | FFY19    | FFY20    | FFY21    | FFY22    | FFY23    | FFY24   | FFY25<br>President<br>Proposed |
|---|---------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|--------------------------------|
| Federal Cap                             | \$2.36b | \$3.042b | \$2.50b | \$4.40b  | \$3.50b  | \$2.64b  | \$2.015b | \$2.60b  | \$1.90b  | \$1.35b | \$1.5b                         |
| State<br>Victim<br>Assistance<br>Grants | \$1.96b | \$2.2b   | \$1.8b  | \$3.3b   | \$2.25b  | \$1.67b  | \$1.04b  | \$1.43b  | \$1.34b  | \$779m  | \$1.03b                        |
| CT Allocation                           | \$22m   | \$24.7m  | \$20.4m | \$36.45m | \$24.54m | \$18.13m | \$11.79m | \$15.63m | \$14.74m | \$8.54m | \$9.1m                         |

\*Please note that CT's VOCA-administrator, Judicial Branch Office of Victim Services (OVS), issues VOCA grants for the state fiscal year that follows the release of federal funds (e.g., VOCA funds released for federal fiscal year 2025 – 10.1.24 through 9.30.25 – would be available for CT's state fiscal 2026 – 7.1.25 through 6.30.26).

In 2021, Congress passed the "VOCA Fix Act" which was intended to address dwindling deposits to the CVF. While the reform in deposit procedures has worked, it has not resulted in a restoration of funds as quickly as supporters had hoped due in large part to the fact that the decision to require a fine or fee as part of prosecution is at the sole discretion of the appointed federal prosecutor.

Following significant advocacy by several VOCA-funded providers, the CT General Assembly allocated \$48 million in one-time ARPA/Covid relief funds to fill the federal VOCA funding gap during state fiscal years 2023 (\$14,865,300), 2024 (\$13,175,000) and 2025 (\$20,000,000). This one-time state funding, coupled with the practice of Judicial Branch OVS

to spread its VOCA Assistance allocations over multiple years to help buffer against CVF volatility, has allowed OVS to maintain mostly level funding to all current VOCA-funded providers at a total funding amount of approximately \$29 million through state fiscal year 2025.

As ARPA funds will no longer be available after state fiscal year 2025, Connecticut VOCA-funded providers are bracing for a significant funding reduction. Judicial Branch OVS has warned all existing VOCA-funded contractors to anticipate an approximate 70% funding cut beginning in state fiscal year 2026 (7.1.25 through 6.30.26) given that the state will likely go from approximately \$29 million in available funding for FY25 (\$8.5 million in VOCA Assistance grants + \$20 million in ARPA funding) to just \$9.1 million in VOCA Assistance grants based on initial federal budget proposals.

## HOW STATE FUNDING IS NEEDED TO STABILIZE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

CCADV and our 18 member organizations currently receive approximately \$8.5 million in funding from Judicial Branch OVS:

- \$6.2 million that funds member services, including \$5.2 million in VOCA Assistance grants and \$1 million in match dollars from the Judicial Branch (approx. \$900,000 from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund from fines & fees paid by defendants and \$100,000 in state general funds).
- \$2.3 million in VOCA Assistance grants that funds the statewide domestic violence hotline, Safe Connect, operated at CCADV.

A 70% funding reduction would result in total available funding for domestic violence services of approximately \$2.5 million. As such, CCADV has been working closely with our member organizations to assess current VOCA-funded services and determine potential options moving forward.

In FY24, **CCADV's 18 member organizations provided VOCA-funded services to 37,621 victims, while Safe Connect handled approximately 31,000 contacts to the statewide hotline.** VOCA currently funds **127 FTEs** across both CCADV and our 18 member organizations, including:

- Criminal and Civil Court Advocates: These advocates, also known as Family Violence Victim Advocates, work for CCADV's 18 member organizations and provide court-based advocacy designed to increase victim safety during both criminal cases, as well as civil issues such as restraining orders, divorce, custody, housing, immigration, and others.
- Adult Advocates: These advocates work for CCADV's 18 member organizations and provide assistance with obtaining basic needs (e.g., housing, medical, food, social services, transportation, etc.), as well as lead one-on-one counseling and support groups.
- Law Enforcement Advocates: These advocates work for CCADV's 18 member organizations and serve as a liaison between the domestic violence organization and the local police department, assisting with the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP).
- Safe Connect Advocates: These advocates work for CCADV and staff Connecticut's 24/7 domestic violence hotline. All advocates are bilingual and provide crisis response, triaging immediate safety needs and making a warm transfer to the victim's local CCADV member organization for services.

Following the large influx in funds available after the federal fiscal year 2018 distribution of VOCA Assistance Grants, CCADV applied for and received an increase in VOCA funding to support an expansion of court-based advocacy services to include civil/family court advocacy across the membership, as well as the creation of Safe Connect.

Establishing Safe Connect was intended to achieve two main goals – 1) create a single, coordinated, statewide entry point for domestic violence services, and 2) alleviate some of the burden from members having to answer hotline calls and not receiving any funding to do so.

Total VOCA funding for CCADV and our membership went from approximately \$5 million (\$4.1 million in VOCA Assistance grants + \$750,000 in match dollars from the Judicial Branch) to \$8.5 million (\$7.5 million in VOCA Assistance grants + \$1 million in match dollars), but now will be reduced to approximately \$2.5 million.

### HOW VOCA FUNDING SUPPORTS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES



VOCA-funded services to  
**37,621 VICTIMS**



Safe Connect handled  
**31,000 HOTLINE CONTACTS**



Across CT, VOCA funds  
**127 FTEs**

Given the reduction in available VOCA funding, CCADV's member organizations prioritized three services based on utilization:

- Criminal court advocacy - Involvement with the Family Violence Victim Advocate following an arrest remains one of the highest "referral" sources for other domestic violence services. If Family Violence Victim Advocates were not available in court during or following arraignment, victims may be less likely to engage in domestic violence services.
- Adult advocacy – The majority of victims entering services are experiencing economic insecurity and have limited access to financial resources, which are often controlled by their abusers. The assistance Adult Advocates provide in getting basic needs met is invaluable.
- Safe Connect/statewide hotline – The statewide, coordinated entry point available through Safe Connect simplifies access to services and relieves a significant workload from the member organizations by triaging initial safety needs.

**CCADV and our member organizations will seek a combination of the reduced VOCA Assistance grants, state funding, and private fundraising to support these priority services.**

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## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES FY26-27 STATE FUNDING REQUEST**

CCADV and our 18 member organizations are requesting **\$3,283,000** in state funding **through the Department of Social Services** to support **Adult Advocate services** and **Safe Connect, Connecticut's statewide domestic violence hotline**.

### **Adult Advocates:**

We are requesting **\$2,283,000** to support the following positions:

1.5 FTE per site x 18 sites = 27 FTEs x \$80,000 per FTE (salary, fringe, supervision) = \$2,160,000  
+ 1.45 FTE CCADV staff (.45 Program Director at \$92,000 + 1 Program Manager at \$80,000) = \$123,000  
Total = \$2,283,000

Adult Advocates will provide the following core services:

- Ongoing risk assessment & safety planning
- Identification of basic needs and advocacy to obtain related services (e.g., housing, medical, food, social services, transportation, etc.)
- One-on-one counseling and support groups
- Assistance applying for family violence restraining orders

### **Safe Connect/statewide domestic violence hotline:**

We are requesting **\$1,000,000** to support the statewide domestic violence hotline.

In anticipation of cuts to VOCA funding and in consideration that Safe Connect was a service added when Connecticut received the large influx of funding following federal fiscal year 2018, CCADV has worked closely with our membership and a consultant with expertise in call center operations to identify ways that the operation of Safe Connect could be streamlined while meeting the needs of both victims and CCADV's 18 member organizations.

Policies and protocols are currently being finalized that will **reduce the overall operational cost of Safe Connect from approximately \$2.5 million annually to \$1.6 million annually**. This includes a reduction in the number of FTEs from 27 to 16. The same volume of contacts (approx. 30,000 annually) is anticipated to be handled by implementing use of a Universal Intake across Safe Connect and the member organizations. While Safe Connect will offer fewer initial services, thereby reducing per-call time, they will initiate a warm transfer to an advocate at the local CCADV member organization for continued assistance and service provision.

Also in anticipation of cuts to VOCA, CCADV recently sought and obtained approximately \$460,000 from other government funding sources to support Safe Connect Advocacy Coordinators as follows:

- State funding through the Judicial Branch to support 4 coordinators who facilitate calls related to the statewide Domestic Violence Offender GPS Monitoring Program; and,
- Federal U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development funding that passes through the CT Department of Housing to support 3 coordinators who specialize in housing coordinated entry procedures.

## PLEASE SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Please support our request for **\$3,283,000** in state funding **through the Department of Social Services** to support **Adult Advocate services** and **Safe Connect, Connecticut's statewide domestic violence hotline**.

CCADV and our 18 member organizations have thoroughly and thoughtfully examined our service system in consideration of ongoing funding challenges. We want to be clear that the needs among survivors and their children have not reduced. Service numbers across the state remain steady and survivor needs have only grown more complex, especially during a prolonged period of economic uncertainty felt across the country.

That does not mean that our system is not able to consistently examine itself and seek efficiencies, which we have done. As we mentioned above, CCADV and our member organizations will seek a combination of the reduced VOCA Assistance grants, state funding, and private fundraising to support those services that we have collectively identified as priorities. By shifting some responsibilities across staff, creating more efficient procedures, and eliminating some less impactful services, CCADV and our 18 members organizations believe that we can meet the core needs of survivors despite what will amount to a 13% reduction in member advocates for the specific services referenced above and a 41% reduction in Safe Connect hotline advocates.

We are not blind to the needs of so many across our state and the difficult decisions that face our state leaders. We also know that, when not addressed, the long-term issues that domestic violence survivors face can have a greater economic burden on the state. CCADV and our 18 members believe we have done our due diligence to operate efficiently and effectively and hope that you will support these services by providing **\$3,283,000** in state funding **through the Department of Social Services** to support **Adult Advocate services** and **Safe Connect, Connecticut's statewide domestic violence hotline**.

## OUR MEMBERS



BRIDGEPORT



DANBURY



DAYVILLE/WILLIMANTIC



ENFIELD



GREENWICH



HARTFORD



Empowering Healing & Hope since 1973

NEW BRITAIN



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MERIDEN



MIDDLETOWN



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