

EXCERPTS FROM:

FINAL PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance Grant Program

Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime, Department of Justice

ALLOWABLE Costs

E. Services, Activities, and Costs at the Subrecipient Level

1. Allowable Costs for Direct Services. The following is a listing of services, activities, and costs that are eligible for support with VOCA victim assistance grant funds within a subrecipient's organization:

a. Immediate Health and Safety. Those services which respond to the immediate emotional and physical needs (excluding medical care) of crime victims such as crisis intervention; accompaniment to hospitals for medical examinations; hotline counseling; emergency food, clothing, transportation, and shelter (including emergency, short-term nursing home shelter for elder abuse victims for whom no other safe, short-term residence is available); and other emergency services that are intended to restore the victim's sense of security. This includes services which offer an immediate measure of safety to crime victims such as boarding-up broken windows and replacing or repairing locks. Also allowable is emergency legal assistance such as filing restraining orders and obtaining emergency custody/visitation rights when such actions are directly connected to family violence cases and are taken to ensure the health and safety of the victim.

b. Mental Health Assistance. Those services and activities that assist the primary and secondary victims of crime in understanding the dynamics of victimization and in stabilizing their lives after a victimization such as counseling, group treatment, and therapy. "Therapy" refers to intensive professional psychological/psychiatric treatment for individuals, couples, and family members related to counseling to provide emotional support in crises arising from the occurrence of crime. This includes the evaluation of mental health needs, as well as the actual delivery of psychotherapy.

c. Assistance with Participation in Criminal Justice Proceedings. In addition to the cost of emergency legal services noted above in section a. "Immediate Health and Safety", there are other costs associated with helping victims participate in the criminal justice system that also are allowable. These services may include advocacy on behalf of crime victims; accompaniment to

criminal justice offices and court; transportation to court; child care or respite care to enable a victim to attend court; notification of victims regarding trial dates, case disposition information, and parole consideration procedures; and assistance with victim impact statements. State grantees may also fund projects devoted to restitution advocacy on behalf of specific crime victims. VOCA funds cannot be used to pay for non-emergency legal representation such as for divorces, or civil restitution recovery efforts.

d. Forensic Examinations. For sexual assault victims, forensic exams are allowable costs only to the extent that other funding sources (such as state compensation or private insurance or public benefits) are unavailable or insufficient and, such exams conform with state evidentiary collection requirements. State grantees should establish procedures to monitor the use of VOCA victim assistance funds to pay for forensic examinations in sexual assault cases.

e. Costs Necessary and Essential to Providing Direct Services. This includes pro-rated costs of rent, telephone service, transportation costs for victims to receive services, emergency transportation costs that enable a victim to participate in the criminal justice system, and local travel expenses for service providers.

f. Special Services. Services to assist crime victims with managing practical problems created by the victimization such as acting on behalf of the victim with other service providers, creditors, or employers; assisting the victim to recover property that is retained as evidence; assisting in filing for compensation benefits; and helping to apply for public assistance.

g. Personnel Costs. Costs that are directly related to providing direct services, such as staff salaries and fringe benefits, including malpractice insurance; the cost of advertising to recruit VOCA-funded personnel; and the cost of training paid and volunteer staff.

h. Restorative Justice. Opportunities for crime victims to meet with perpetrators, if such meetings are requested or voluntarily agreed to by the victim and have possible beneficial or therapeutic value to crime victims.

State grantees that plan to fund this type of service should closely review the criteria for conducting these meetings. At a minimum, the following should be considered: (1) the safety and security of the victim; (2) the benefit or therapeutic value to the victim; (3) the procedures for ensuring that participation of the victim and offender are voluntary and that everyone understands the nature of the meeting, (4) the provision of appropriate support and accompaniment for the victim, (5) appropriate "debriefing" opportunities for the victim after the meeting or panel, (6) the credentials of the facilitators, and (7) the opportunity for a crime victim to withdraw from the process at any time. State grantees are encouraged to discuss proposals with OVC prior to awarding VOCA funds for this type of activity. VOCA assistance funds

cannot be used for victim-offender meetings which serve to replace criminal justice proceedings.

2. Other Allowable Costs and Services. The services, activities, and costs listed below are not generally considered direct crime victim services, but are often a necessary and essential activity to ensure that quality direct services are provided. Before these costs can be supported with VOCA funds, the state grantee and subrecipient must agree that direct services to crime victims cannot be offered without support for these expenses; that the subrecipient has no other source of support for them; and that only limited amounts of VOCA funds will be used for these purposes. The following list provides examples of such items:

a. Skills Training for Staff. VOCA funds designated for training are to be used exclusively for developing the skills of direct service providers including paid staff and volunteers, so that they are better able to offer quality services to crime victims. An example of skills development is training focused on how to respond to a victim in crisis.

VOCA funds can be used for training both VOCA-funded and non-VOCA-funded service providers who work within a VOCA recipient organization, but VOCA funds cannot be used for management and administrative training for executive directors, board members, and other individuals that do not provide direct services.

b. Training Materials. VOCA funds can be used to purchase materials such as books, training manuals, and videos for direct service providers, within the VOCA-funded organization, and can support the costs of a trainer for in-service staff development. Staff from other organizations can attend in-service training activities that are held for the subrecipient's staff.

c. Training Related Travel. VOCA funds can support costs such as travel, meals, lodging, and registration fees to attend training within the state or a similar geographic area. This limitation encourages state grantees and subrecipients to first look for available training within their immediate geographical area, as travel costs will be minimal. However, when needed training is unavailable within the immediate geographical area, state grantees may authorize using VOCA funds to support training outside of the geographical area. For example, VOCA grantees may benefit by attending national conferences that offer skills building training workshops for victim assistance providers.

d. Equipment and Furniture. VOCA funds may be used to purchase furniture and equipment that provides or enhances direct services to crime victims, as demonstrated by the VOCA subrecipient.

VOCA funds cannot support the entire cost of an item that is not used exclusively for victim-related activities. However, VOCA funds can support a prorated share of such an item. In addition, subrecipients cannot use VOCA funds to purchase equipment for another organization or individual to perform a victim-related service. Examples of allowable costs may include

beepers; typewriters and word processors; video-tape cameras and players for interviewing children; two-way mirrors; and equipment and furniture for shelters, work spaces, victim waiting rooms, and children's play areas.

The costs of furniture, equipment such as Braille equipment or TTY/TTD machines for the deaf, or minor building alterations/improvements that make victims services more accessible to persons with disabilities are allowable. Refer to the OJP Financial Guide, effective edition, before these types of decisions are made.

e. **Purchasing or Leasing Vehicles.** Subrecipients may use VOCA funds to purchase or lease vehicles if they can demonstrate to the state VOCA administrator that such an expenditure is essential to delivering services to crime victims. The VOCA administrator must give prior approval for all such purchases.

f. **Advanced Technologies.** At times, computers may increase a subrecipient's ability to reach and serve crime victims. For example, automated victim notification systems have dramatically improved the efficiency of victim notification and enhanced victim security.

In order to receive a grant for advanced technologies, each subrecipient must meet the program eligibility requirements set forth in section IV.B. Of the Guidelines, Subrecipient Organization Eligibility Requirements. In making such expenditures, VOCA subrecipients must describe to the state how the computer equipment will enhance services to crime victims; how it will be integrated into and/or enhance the subrecipient's current system; the cost of installation; the cost of training staff to use the computer equipment; the ongoing operational costs, such as maintenance agreements, supplies; and how these additional costs will be supported. Property insurance is an allowable expense as long as VOCA funds support a prorated share of the cost of the insurance payments.

State grantees that authorize equipment to be purchased with VOCA funds must establish policies and procedures on the acquisition and disbursement of the equipment, in the event the subrecipient no longer receives a VOCA grant. At a minimum, property records must be maintained with the following: a description of the property and a serial number or other identifying number; identification of title holder; the acquisition date; the cost and the percentage of VOCA funds supporting the purchase; the location, use, and condition of the property; and any disposition data, including the date of disposal and sale price. (See OJP Financial Guide, effective edition.)

g. **Contracts for Professional Services.** VOCA funds generally should not be used to support contract services. At times, however, it may be necessary for VOCA subrecipients to use a portion of the VOCA grant to contract for specialized services. Examples of these services include assistance in filing restraining orders or establishing emergency custody/visitation rights

(the provider must have a demonstrated history of advocacy on behalf of domestic violence victims); forensic examinations on a sexual assault victim to the extent that other funding sources are unavailable or insufficient; emergency psychological or psychiatric services; or sign and/or interpretation for the deaf or for crime victims whose primary language is not English.

Subrecipients are prohibited from using a majority of VOCA funds for contracted services, which contain administrative, overhead, and other indirect costs included in the hourly or daily rate.

h. Operating Costs. Examples of allowable operating costs include supplies; equipment use fees, when supported by usage logs; printing, photocopying, and postage; brochures which describe available services; and books and other victim-related materials. VOCA funds may support administrative time to complete VOCA-required time and attendance sheets and programmatic documentation, reports, and statistics; administrative time to maintain crime victims' records; and the prorated share of audit costs.

i. Supervision of Direct Service Providers. State grantees may provide VOCA funds for supervision of direct service providers when they determine that such supervision is necessary and essential to providing direct services to crime victims. For example, a state grantee may determine that using VOCA funds to support a coordinator of volunteers or interns is a cost-effective way of serving more crime victims.

j. Repair and/or Replacement of Essential Items. VOCA funds may be used for repair or replacement of items that contribute to maintaining a healthy and/or safe environment for crime victims, such as a furnace in a shelter. In the event that a vehicle is purchased with VOCA funds, related items, such as routine maintenance and repair costs, and automobile insurance are allowable. State grantees are cautioned to scrutinize each request for expending VOCA funds for such purposes to ensure the following: (1) that the building or vehicle is owned by the subrecipient organization and not rented or leased, (2) all other sources of funding have been exhausted, (3) there is no available option for providing the service in another location, (4) that the cost of the repair or replacement is reasonable considering the value of the building or vehicle, and (5) the cost of the repair or replacement is prorated among all sources of income.

k. Public Presentations. VOCA funds may be used to support presentations that are made in schools, community centers, or other public forums, and that are designed to identify crime victims and provide or refer them to needed services. Specifically, activities and costs related to such programs including presentation materials, brochures, and newspaper notices can be supported by VOCA funds.

UNALLOWABLE Costs

3. Non-Allowable Costs and Activities. The following services, activities, and costs, although not exhaustive, cannot be supported with VOCA victim assistance grant funds at the subgrantee level:

a. Lobbying and Administrative Advocacy. VOCA funds cannot support victim legislation or administrative reform, whether conducted directly or indirectly.

b. Perpetrator Rehabilitation and Counseling. Subrecipients cannot knowingly use VOCA funds to offer rehabilitative services to offenders. Likewise, VOCA funds cannot support services to incarcerated individuals, even when the service pertains to the victimization of that individual.

c. Needs Assessments, Surveys, Evaluations, Studies. VOCA program funds may not be used to pay for efforts conducted by individuals, organizations, task forces, or special commissions to study and/or research particular crime victim issues.

d. Prosecution Activities. VOCA funds cannot be used to pay for activities that are directed at prosecuting an offender and/or improving the criminal justice system's effectiveness and efficiency, such as witness notification and management activities and expert testimony at a trial. In addition, victim witness protection costs and subsequent lodging and meal expenses are considered part of the criminal justice agency's responsibility and cannot be supported with VOCA funds.

e. Fundraising activities.

f. Indirect Organizational Costs. The costs of liability insurance on buildings; capital improvements; security guards and body guards; property losses and expenses; real estate purchases; mortgage payments; and construction may not be supported with VOCA funds.

g. Property Loss. Reimbursing crime victims for expenses incurred as a result of a crime such as insurance deductibles, replacement of stolen property, funeral expenses, lost wages, and medical bills is not allowed.

h. Most Medical Costs. VOCA funds cannot pay for nursing home care (emergency short-term nursing home shelter as described in section IV.E.1.a. is allowable), home health-care costs, in-patient treatment costs, hospital care, and other types of emergency and non-emergency medical and/or dental treatment. VOCA victim assistance grant funds cannot support medical costs resulting from a victimization, except for forensic medical examinations for sexual assault

victims.

i. Relocation Expenses. VOCA funds cannot support relocation expenses for crime victims such as moving expenses, security deposits on housing, ongoing rent, and mortgage payments. However, VOCA funds may be used to support staff time in locating resources to assist victims with these expenses.

j. Administrative Staff Expenses. Salaries, fees, and reimbursable expenses associated with administrators, board members, executive directors, consultants, coordinators, and other individuals unless these expenses are incurred while providing direct services to crime victims.

k. Development of Protocols, Interagency Agreements, and Other Working Agreements. These activities benefit crime victims, but they are considered examples of the types of activities that subrecipients undertake as part of their role as a victim services organization, which in turn qualifies them as an eligible VOCA subrecipient.

l. Costs of Sending Individual Crime Victims to Conferences.

m. Activities Exclusively Related to Crime Prevention.