



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Criminal Justice Services

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October 29, 2026

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas
Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee
General Assembly Building
201 North 9th Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Mr. Michael Maul
Director
Virginia Department of Planning and Budget
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Luke E. Torian
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
General Assembly Building
201 North 9th Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

***Re: Annual Report on Current and Projected Status of Federal, State, and
Local Funding for Victim/Witness Programs***

The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) provides funding support to Victim Witness Assistance Programs through the Victim Witness Grant Program (VWGP), using federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant funds, state general funds, and state special funds accrued from court fees. Local Victim Witness Assistance Programs are housed in government agencies, primarily in the offices of Commonwealth's Attorneys and local law enforcement.

Item 394 B.2 of the 2025–2026 Appropriations Act directs that the Department of Criminal Justice Services shall provide a report on the current and projected status of federal, state, and local funding for victim-witness programs supported by the Fund [Virginia Crime Victim-Witness Fund]. Attached please find the report for this year.

Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ashaki McNeil".

Ashaki McNeil, Director

Report on Current and Projected Status of Federal, State, and Local Funding for the Victim Witness Grant Program

2026



Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services
1100 Bank Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219
www.dcjs.virginia.gov
October 16, 2026

Preface

Item 394 B.2 of the 2026–2028 Appropriation Act directs that the *Department of Criminal Justice Services shall provide a report on the current and projected status of federal, state, and local funding for victim-witness programs supported by the Fund [Virginia Crime Victim-Witness Fund]. Copies of the report shall be provided annually to the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, the Department of Planning and Budget, and the Chairs of the Senate Finance and Appropriations and House Appropriations Committees by October 16 of each year.*

This report reflects the status of funding for state fiscal year 2026.

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Executive Summary

The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) provides funding support to Victim Witness Assistance Programs through the Victim Witness Grant Program (VWGP), using federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant funds, state general funds, and state special funds accrued from court fees. Local Victim Witness Assistance Programs are housed in government agencies, primarily in the offices of Commonwealth's Attorneys and local law enforcement.

In state fiscal year 2026 (SFY 2026), there were 115 total projects (112 local and 3 statewide) funded through the VWGP. Projects focused on the delivery of services required under Virginia's Crime Victim and Witness Rights Act (Title 19.2, Chapter 1.1 of the *Code of Virginia*). Services provided by these programs include explaining to crime victims their rights; assisting victims in obtaining protective orders; helping victims apply for compensation; explaining the criminal justice process; accompanying victims to court; assisting victims in preparing victim impact statements; and providing crisis intervention and other services.

Between federal fiscal years (FFY) 2015 and 2019, each state's federal VOCA victim assistance funding allocation significantly increased, with Virginia's allocation increasing to a high of over \$85 million in 2018. The availability of increased VOCA funding allowed DCJS to address long-unmet needs within local programs, especially the need to increase staffing levels and to initiate programs in unserved areas. Federal VOCA funding dropped significantly after the highest award in 2018, and has fluctuated widely in recent years.

Regarding state sources of funding, in SFY 2026, deposits into the Virginia Crime Victim-Witness Fund (state special fund) continued to rebound, resulting in a year-end cash balance of \$2,495,554 as of June 30, 2026. In state general funds, budget appropriations to support the VWGP have increased significantly, from \$943,700 in SFY 2023 to \$9,888,807 in SFY 2026. These additional funds are intended to mitigate the impact of the significant VOCA reductions and fluctuations.

Victim Witness Grant Program Overview

The Criminal Justice Services Board (CJSB) approves all DCJS grant awards made through the Victim Witness Grant Program (VWGP). Grants are awarded directly to administrators in localities or state agencies, who have the responsibility for fiscal management and compliance with all grant terms and conditions. Within the programs, local project directors have the day-to-day responsibility for managing the projects to ensure that the Virginia Crime Victim and Witness Rights Act (“Rights Act”) is upheld.

Victim Witness Assistance Programs in Virginia have the mandate, expertise, and position to make the criminal justice system more responsive to victims’ interests at critical stages of the criminal justice process. The Rights Act focuses on the provision of information and assistance to victims as their cases proceed through the criminal justice process, but programs can also provide information, support, and assistance to victims outside of the formal criminal justice process. Programs serve all types of crime victims and ensure that they:

- Have opportunities to make the courts aware of the full impact of crime;
- Are treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity and in a way that protects their privacy;
- Are informed of their rights;
- Receive authorized services; and
- Are heard at all critical stages of the criminal justice process.

Services provided include, but are not limited to:

- Explaining victims’ rights;
- Explaining and helping victims apply for compensation through the Virginia Victims Fund (VVF);¹
- Explaining the criminal justice process;
- Assisting victims in preparing victim impact statements;
- Assisting victims in obtaining protective orders;
- Notifying victims of case status, court dates, and inmate status;
- Accompanying victims to court and criminal justice-related meetings;
- Providing crisis intervention; and
- Providing case disposition information (i.e., final status or outcome of an arrest or prosecution).

¹ The Virginia Victims Fund (VVF) is administered by the Virginia Workers’ Compensation Commission. VVF provides assistance to individual victims of crime for out-of-pocket expenses, such as medical bills and funeral expenses. Information about VVF can be found at <https://virginiavictimsfund.org>.

For SFY 2026, the CJSB approved funding to 115² VWGP-funded programs for a total award of \$20,778,719. In June 2026, the CJSB approved funding to 116³ VWGP-funded programs for SFY 2027 with a total award of \$20,776,190. This represents essentially level funding to the SFY 2026 award amounts. Table 1 provides information about annual awards through the VWGP.

**TABLE 1: Virginia's Victim Witness Grant Program (VWGP) Awards
SFY 2018–SFY 2027**

State Fiscal Year	State General Funds	State Special Funds	Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funds⁴	TOTAL
SFY 2018	\$943,700	\$3,510,775	\$13,363,450	\$17,817,925
SFY 2019	\$943,700	\$3,738,129	\$14,045,487	\$18,727,316
SFY 2020	\$943,700	\$3,738,129	\$14,045,487	\$18,727,316
SFY 2021	\$943,700	\$3,738,129	\$14,045,487	\$18,727,316
SFY 2022	\$943,700	\$4,833,471	\$13,480,065	\$19,257,236
SFY 2023	\$943,700	\$5,187,598	\$13,242,295	\$19,373,593
SFY 2024	\$2,264,578	\$3,866,720	\$11,918,066	\$18,049,364
SFY 2025	\$5,996,036	\$1,482,922	\$11,884,791	\$19,363,749
SFY 2026	\$9,836,872	\$1,482,827	\$9,459,020	\$20,778,719
SFY 2027	\$9,726,973	\$2,003,075	\$9,046,142	\$20,776,190

² Total includes funding for one additional local program in SFY 2026. The new program is a result of an existing multi-jurisdictional program split to better serve both participating localities.

³ Total includes funding for one additional local program in SFY 2027. The new program is a result of an existing multi-jurisdictional program split to better serve both participating localities.

⁴ The VWGP is one of several grant programs that uses VOCA funds. The total VOCA award received by Virginia is divided among several different grant programs. The year of the federal award to Virginia will not be the same as the year of the awards made to sub-recipients, as awards to sub-recipients are generally made after the federal awards are received. The amount shown in Table 1 represents the amount of the VOCA award utilized for Victim Witness Grant Program awards during the state fiscal year indicated.

Current and Projected Status of Federal, State, and Local Funding

Federal Funding – Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

The federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) has been a key funding component for victim-serving organizations in Virginia and nationwide since 1984. In addition to the Victim Witness Grant Program (VWGP), VOCA funding supports sexual and domestic violence programs, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs, and other services for victims of crime throughout Virginia. VOCA is funded by criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties, and other non-tax revenues collected by the federal government into the Crime Victims Fund (CVF). The amount of VOCA funds allocated from the CVF is determined by Congress in the federal Appropriations Act and is referred to as the “VOCA Cap.” All VOCA funds awarded to sub-recipients by DCJS must be matched at an amount of not less than 20%.

Since 2015, there have been significant fluctuations in the VOCA Cap and thus in the amount of VOCA dollars allocated to states. Virginia’s federal fiscal year (FFY) 2015 VOCA allocation totaled \$50.3 million. This was more than four times as much as Virginia received in 2014, when the award totaled \$11.5 million. The increase in awards peaked in FFY 2018 with an award totaling over \$85 million. Since FFY 2018, awards have declined, with Virginia’s FFY 2024 award totaling a recent low of \$19.87 million. Table 2 shows Virginia’s VOCA awards each year with the percentage change from year to year.

**TABLE 2: Virginia’s VOCA Awards Annual Percentage Change
FFY 2014–FFY 2026**

Federal Fiscal Year	Virginia’s VOCA Allocation	Percent Change
FFY 2014	\$11,561,072	+7.6%
FFY 2015	\$50,330,687	+335.3%
FFY 2016	\$56,993,066	+13.2%
FFY 2017	\$47,315,341	-17.0%
FFY 2018	\$85,366,389	+80.4%
FFY 2019	\$57,815,818	-32.3%
FFY 2020	\$42,711,960	-26.1%
FFY 2021	\$26,655,243	-37.6%
FFY 2022	\$36,757,166	+37.9%
FFY 2023	\$34,605,387	-5.9%
FFY 2024	\$19,866,137	-42.6%
FFY 2025	\$32,320,048	+62.7%
FFY 2026	\$33,033,668	+2.2%

Source: DCJS Grant Awards from the Office for Victims of Crime

In 2021, the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 (“VOCA Fix Act”) was passed to address the long-term sustainability of the CVF.⁵ Among other actions, the VOCA Fix Act directs monies from federal criminal settlements from non-prosecution and deferred prosecution agreements to be deposited into the CVF. Previously, these funds were deposited into the United States General Fund. It remains to be seen how much money will be deposited into the CVF from the non-prosecution and deferred prosecution agreements. In the near future, the CVF will not be able to sustain increased VOCA Cap levels like those from FFY 2015–FFY 2019. As of May 2026, the balance of the CVF was over \$3.6 billion. Current information about the status of the CVF and the federal allocation process is available at <https://ovc.ojp.gov/about/crime-victims-fund>.

DCJS continuously monitors VOCA appropriations for funding volatility and to better plan for future potential decreases. Additionally, it is standard practice for DCJS to seek feedback and survey key stakeholders, such as victim advocates and allied professionals, to gather additional input about funding needs, service delivery gaps, and organizational capacity.

In SFY 2026, \$9,459,020 of the VOCA funds obligated in Virginia supported the VWGP.⁶

⁵ Full VOCA Fix Act text available at: www.congress.gov/bills/117/congress/house/bills/1652/text

⁶ As previously noted, the total VOCA award received by Virginia is divided among several different grant programs.

State Funding – Virginia Crime Victim-Witness Fund (VCVWF)

In 1995, the General Assembly established the Virginia Crime Victim-Witness Fund (*Code of Virginia* § 19.2-11.3) “as a special nonreverting fund to be administered by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services to support victim and witness services that meet the minimum standards prescribed for such programs” through the Victim Witness Grant Program (VWGP). A portion of the sum collected for fixed court fees is deposited into the state treasury and credited to the VCVWF. The VCVWF is distributed according to grant guidelines developed by DCJS in accordance with *Code of Virginia* § 9.1-104.

In the 2026–2028 biennium budget, a total of \$5,692,738 is appropriated each year from the VCVWF, assuming the fund has this amount of money available. As with the federal Crime Victims Fund, annual deposits into the VCVWF had been declining since SFY 2019; however, since SFY 2023, deposit amounts have incrementally increased (see Table 3). Despite these increases, annual deposits remain far below the state’s appropriated budget amounts, and the annual balance is much lower than in past years.

**TABLE 3: Virginia Crime Victim-Witness Fund Annual Deposits, Balances, and Obligations
SFY 2018–SFY 2026**

State Fiscal Year	VCVWF Annual Deposits	Percent Change	Annual VCVWF Balance	Annual Grant Award Obligations
SFY 2018	\$3,927,686	-----	\$9,169,550	\$3,510,775
SFY 2019	\$3,941,660	+0.4%	\$9,319,855	\$3,738,129
SFY 2020	\$2,983,021	-24.3%	\$8,958,482	\$3,738,129
SFY 2021	\$2,262,504	-24.2%	\$7,278,770	\$3,738,129
SFY 2022	\$2,078,584	-8.1%	\$4,869,156	\$4,833,471
SFY 2023	\$2,435,035	+17.1%	\$1,769,649	\$5,187,598
SFY 2024	\$2,592,785	+6.5%	\$1,457,355	\$3,866,720
SFY 2025	\$2,644,529	+2.0%	\$2,495,554	\$1,482,922
SFY 2026	\$2,684,230	+1.5%	\$3,607,764	\$1,482,827

In SFY 2025, due to the low balance in the VCVWF, DCJS significantly reduced the amount of these funds obligated for the VWGP from \$3,866,720 in SFY 2024 to \$1,482,922 in SFY 2025 (a decrease of 62%). For SFY 2026, DCJS obligated a similar amount of \$1,482,827, in order to continue allowing the VCVWF’s balance to rebuild. Now that some improvement in the balance has occurred, DCJS has allocated a higher, though still conservative, amount of \$2,003,075 for SFY 2027 grant awards.

State Funding – General Funds

In SFY 2011, the general fund appropriation supporting Victim Witness Assistance Programs was reduced by 15% to \$2,635,000 and remained at that level until SFY 2018, when it was further reduced to \$943,700 (a reduction of 64%). The annual general fund appropriation remained at that same level until SFY 2024 (see Table 4).

Since SFY 2023, state general fund support for Victim Witness Assistance Programs has increased significantly in order to offset losses in VOCA funding and low balances in the VCVWF. These additional funds allowed DCJS to increase VWGP awards in SFY 2025, increase them again in SFY 2026, and maintain level funding amounts in SFY 2027.

**TABLE 4: State General Fund Appropriations
SFY 2010–SFY 2027**

State Fiscal Year	State General Fund Annual Appropriation	Percent Change
SFY 2010	\$3,100,000	
SFY 2011–SFY 2017	\$2,635,000	-15%
SFY 2018–SFY 2023	\$943,700	-64%
SFY 2024	\$2,264,578	+140%
SFY 2025	\$5,988,807	+164%
SFY 2026	\$9,888,807	+65%
SFY 2027	\$9,888,807	0%

Without the additional influx of state general funds, VWGP awards would have been reduced by an estimated 7%-12% over the past several years. With reductions in VOCA funding and lower VCVWF balances, it is critical that state general fund support continue for Victim Witness Assistance Programs to ensure the *Code of Virginia*-required services for victims can remain at current levels. Increased funding would enable programs to better serve communities through additional victim assistance, higher staffing levels, and increased services.

Local Funding

DCJS continues to encourage programs to secure local funds to supplement VWGP grant awards they receive from DCJS. When awards were reduced in SFY 2024, several VWGP recipients reported that their localities offered some financial assistance to support programming. With uncertainty about future funding levels, Victim Witness Assistance Programs may need to diversify their sources of financial support to continue operating effectively and serving crime victims in Virginia while also addressing changing demographics and population growth. Programs should not rely solely on VWGP funds to cover the full cost of operations. To ensure continuity of services for crime victims across the Commonwealth, DCJS may need to require localities to provide a match to federal funds when permissible, and to increase local investment where population growth has outpaced historic funding plans. This approach will help stabilize program capacity, align funding with current community needs, and maintain the effectiveness of Virginia's victim services infrastructure.

DCJS staff have had multiple conversations over the years, with internal and external stakeholders, about requiring local match contributions from Victim Witness Assistance Programs. DCJS has identified both benefits and challenges to this approach. Benefits to requiring local match include instituting local financial support for services vital to that community, as well as encouraging buy-in from local leaders. The primary challenge is that many people strongly believe that state funding should fully support the costs of Victim Witness Assistance Programs, since these programs are doing work directed by *Code of Virginia* § 19.2-11.01.

Conclusion

Historically, the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) has endeavored to provide stable and consistent levels of funding for Victim Witness Assistance Programs to ensure the continued provision of services codified under the Virginia Crime Victim and Witness Rights Act. DCJS was able to maintain and/or increase VWGP award amounts from SFY 2016 through SFY 2023; however, in SFY 2024, reductions were necessary. Although DCJS was able to increase funding in SFY 2025 and SFY 2026, future reductions to VWGP award amounts may occur due to continued fluctuations and instability with VOCA funding.

Federal VOCA funds and state VCVWF resources will no longer be able to sustain the VWGP at previous levels or meet current demands within the evolving environments where victim advocates serve crime victims and witnesses. Looking ahead, key priorities include identifying alternative funding streams, strengthening program sustainability, and enhancing collaboration across stakeholder agencies.

Beyond SFY 2029, considerable ambiguity remains regarding the future of VWGP funding; anticipated challenges include possible reduced financial support from VOCA, increased service demands in communities, and potential gaps in continuity as related to population increases. To help stakeholders navigate these issues, the recommended actions for consideration listed below include exploring diversified funding structures (#1), advocating for additional funding support (#2), and developing contingency plans (#3 and #4) to ensure essential services remain available (#5).

Actions for consideration include:

- 1. Consider changing the funding structure for the three statewide projects by directly appropriating state general funds to the respective state agencies to reduce their reliance on grant funding used to meet their individual codified responsibilities for victim services.**

VWGP funds currently support three statewide projects providing codified victim services through state agencies: the Office of the Attorney General, the Virginia Department of Corrections, and the Virginia Parole Board. Each of these agencies has specific and distinct responsibilities to serve victims in the *Code of Virginia*. It is recommended that state funding be directly allocated through the state appropriation process to these state agencies, within their agency budgets, in order for them to meet their required responsibilities. This would end their reliance on grant funding and ensure that the state meets its codified responsibilities within its agencies. If this were to occur, grant funds that are currently obligated to these three state agencies could be reallocated to the (now) 113 local Victim Witness Assistance Programs beyond SFY 2027, which would help to stabilize funding for these programs.

- 2. Consider increasing the state general fund appropriation for Victim Witness Assistance Programs.**

It is possible that the VWGP will experience a reduction of up to \$2,000,000 (10%) in federal VOCA funds, beyond SFY 2029, if Virginia's VOCA awards continue to remain at lower levels. DCJS

anticipates awarding level funding to Victim Witness Assistance Programs through SFY 2029; however, reductions may be necessary beyond that without additional state general funds.

- 3. Consider increasing the revenues into the Virginia Crime Victim-Witness Fund (state special fund) to offset reductions in federal funding.**
- 4. Consider requiring localities to provide a match to federal funding as may be allowed.**
- 5. Consider adding local Victim Witness Assistance Program staff to those considered “state supported local employees” for the purposes of compensation raises included in Central Appropriations.**