

Frequently Asked Questions

Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund

What Is the VOCA Fund?

Congress created this Fund under the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) of 1984 to provide state assistance grants for compensation and free services to help victims and their families cope with the trauma and aftermath of crime.

Where Does the Money Come From?

Not one taxpayer dollar goes into the VOCA Fund – it is 100% sustained by fines and penalties imposed on offenders of federal crimes. Some recent substantial fines include:

- 2009: Sharp Corp., price-fixing, \$120 million
 LG Display, price-fixing, \$400 million
 Siemens AG, Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, \$448 million
- 2008: Air France, price-fixing, \$210 million, paying in installments
 KLM, price-fixing, \$140 million, paying in installments
 Japan Airlines International, price-fixing, \$110 million
- 2007: British Airways, price-fixing, \$300 million, fully paid
 Korean Air Lines, price-fixing, \$300 million, paying in installments
- 2006: Samsung Electronics, price-fixing, \$300 million, paying in installments
 Serono Laboratories, illegal marketing, \$132 million, paid
 Schering-Plough, illegal marketing, \$180 million, paid
- 2005: KPMG, tax shelter fraud case, \$128 million, paid
 Hynix Semiconductors, price-fixing, \$185 million, paying in installments
 Infineon Semiconductors, price-fixing, \$160 million, paying in installments

Does the Fund Help Victims of All Types of Crime?

The Fund pays for services to victims of every type of crime. Each year, 4,400 local service providers throughout the U.S. rely on the Fund to offer support and assistance to close to 4.1 million victims and their families. In Pennsylvania, 124 agencies provided services to 141,410 victims of crime. Providers include rape crisis centers, domestic violence programs and shelters, prosecutor- and law-enforcement-based programs, child advocacy centers, drunk driving victim and homicide survivor support groups, etc.

How Much Money Is in the Fund?

The current balance totals approximately \$1.9 billion dollars and the federal government expects to collect an additional \$710 million in 2009.

What Other Programs Does the Fund Support?

Throughout the years, Congress has tapped the Fund to also authorize annual allocations for the Children’s Justice Act, the U.S. Attorneys Victim Witness program, FBI Victim Specialists, the Victim Notification System, and training and technical assistance programs. The Fund also includes a \$50 million Antiterrorism Emergency Reserve.

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How Is the Fund Distributed?

Each year in the federal budget, Congress sets the amount to be released from the Fund. Monies then are distributed based on a formula that allocates funds to states for victim assistance **only after all the other programs noted on the previous page receive their funding**. "Leftovers" don't even begin to meet the needs of crime victims.

Why Has Funding Decreased for State Assistance Grants?

In 2000, Congress placed a cap (limit) on the amount released from the VOCA Fund in order to ensure that a stable level of funding remains available for use to fund crime victim programs in future years. However, since 2004, the cap on the amount released has been lower than the amount of deposits into the Fund, thereby holding back more than \$1.430 billion collected for the Fund.

Despite the substantial surpluses in the VOCA Fund, the amount released has dwindled, then been cut dramatically. In 2008 the cap on funds released was decreased by \$35 million – from \$625 million in 2007 to \$590 million in 2008 – while the amount of deposits into the fund was \$1.017 billion dollars just in 2008.

What Is the Impact of Cuts on Pennsylvania Victim Services?

Since 2006, the loss of \$6.723 million in grants from the Fund to Pennsylvania has put an enormous strain on providers, forcing 20% to implement waiting lists for services; 31% to eliminate staff; and 16.5% to discontinue programs altogether.

What Is the Impact of Cuts on Pennsylvania Crime Victims?

In responding to a recent statewide survey, Pennsylvania victim service providers say that the cuts are likely to:

- "force victims to pursue pro se representation on their own, which can be overwhelming when facing the legal and judicial systems without an advocate or representation"
- "jeopardize the client's safety and fair treatment in court"
- "impede on their ability to heal because their needs are not being met"
- "increase the potential for lethality with the likelihood of client returning to a dangerous situation"
- "increase likelihood of client and children ending up homeless"
- "reduce resiliency of crime victims"
- "result in one more person is left 'out in the cold' without help to navigate the difficult criminal justice system"