



CAP TIPS is a series of periodic messages to assist in the planning and implementation of NCVRW Community Awareness Projects. Please feel free to send your individual questions or requests for assistance to Anne Seymour at annesey@atlantech.net

CAP TIP #3

To Improve Public Awareness

Commemorating VOCA

Introduction

The goal of the 2014 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) theme – “30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice – is to highlight the importance of the Crime Victims Fund (Fund) that was created in 1984 by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). Over the past 30 years, the VOCA Fund has had a profound and positive impact on crime victim services, and has resulted in the significant expansion and improvement of victim service delivery in America.

Our field remains indebted to U.S. Attorneys and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for their ongoing efforts that continually fill the coffers of the VOCA Fund, and provide greatly needed funding for victim assistance services. This CAP TIP describes these efforts, and provides creative suggestions on how to “honor those who bring honor to crime victims” through their diligent collection of VOCA funds.

How Are VOCA Funds Collected?

Annually, millions, sometimes billions, of dollars are deposited into the Fund from criminal fines, forfeited appearance bonds and special assessments in Federal criminal cases investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and prosecuted by U.S. Attorneys' Offices nationwide. The money in the Fund comes from criminal offenders – **not taxpayers' dollars**. In accordance with Federal law, monies in the Fund are to be used *exclusively* to support crime victim services.

Federal cases resulting in convictions may require defendants to pay criminal fines and other monetary penalties that go into the Fund, as well as restitution to crime victims. Each U.S. Attorneys' Office has a Financial Litigation Unit that collects all civil and criminal financial obligations owed to the United States, including VOCA, as well as restitution owed to crime victims.

Quick VOCA Facts and Resources

- From 1985 to 2013, a total of \$20.4 billion in non-taxpayer money has been deposited into the Fund.

- Programs and costs currently supported by the Fund include:
 - Children's Justice Act grants to improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases;
 - U.S. Attorney's victim/witness coordinators to assist victims exercise their rights to information and participation in Federal criminal cases;
 - FBI victim assistance specialists to provide assistance to victims during the investigation of Federal criminal cases;
 - Federal victim notification system (VNS) to provide victims in Federal criminal cases with notification about their case and offender status in the Federal corrections system;
 - Office for Victims of Crime discretionary grants to provide training and technical assistance to crime victim programs and services to victims of Federal crimes;
 - State compensation formula grants to supplement state funds used to reimburse crime victims for certain out-of-pocket costs;
 - State victim assistance formula grants to provide direct assistance to victims of all types of crime;
 - Antiterrorism Emergency Reserve to provide financial support to crime victim assistance and compensation programs in response to incidents of mass violence or terrorism and to reimburse some expenses of American victims of international terrorism.

- VOCA-funded state victim assistance grants support direct services, such as emergency shelter, crisis intervention, counseling and assistance in participating in the criminal justice system, through some 4,000 agencies to **an average of 3.7 million victims of all types of crimes every year**.

- An October 25, 1993 memorandum from then-Attorney General (and long-time victim advocate) Janet Reno to *all* U.S. Attorneys highlighted the critical role that U.S. Attorneys have in securing legal/financial obligations that support the VOCA Fund:

I want to highlight an important, positive impact of your prosecution efforts and to urge you aggressively to collect fines from defendants convicted of Federal crimes.....The Fund consists of fines, bail bond forfeitures and special assessments paid by the defendants that you convict of Federal crimes. Just as significant, and perhaps more consequential for crime victims, are the dedicated, persistent efforts of your financial litigation staff. Successful fine recoveries make greater Federal resources available to assist our Nation's crime victims with their physical, emotional and financial recoveries. Your fine collection efforts result in our being able to provide battered women with safe shelter, sexually abused children with counseling, and survivors of homicide victims with funds to pay for funeral services....I urge you to support the efforts of these colleagues and join with them to increase Fund deposit levels and enhance the provision of victim services throughout the country.

Additional VOCA Resources

- NAVAA - VOCA Funding - www.navaa.org/budget
- OVC Fact Sheet, "Crime Victims Fund" - www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/pubs/crimevictimsfundfs/intro.html#PrimarySources
- OVC 2013 Report to the Nation - www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/pubs/reporttonation2013/index.html
- OVC - U.S. Resource Map of Crime Victim Services & Information - <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/map.html> (click on your state on the map and then the second tab, "VOCA Reports")

How to Identify Your U.S. Attorney and

Federal Bureau of Investigation Field Office

This CAP TIP focuses on strategies to recognize Federal offices and employees that are so instrumental in supporting the Crime Victims Fund. As such, here are quick and easy ways to identify them:

- The U.S. Department of Justice “Find Your U.S. Attorney Office” website provides a searchable U.S. map where you can find your U.S. Attorney (among 93 U.S. Attorneys nationwide) by state/territory/district, and individual websites that identify leadership, other contact information, and news for your U.S. Attorney office. You can access this website at <http://www.justice.gov/usao/districts/>.
- The 56 FBI field offices can be identified by state, city and/or zip code, with individual websites that identify leadership (special agent in charge, among others), information, news and outreach in multiple languages. You can access this website at <http://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field/field-offices>.

The VOCA Story video

Since its inception in 1984, the Crime Victims Fund has been described as both a foundation for and driving force behind the success of our Nation’s victim assistance field. *The VOCA Story* video brings the history of the Fund to life, and provides insights into its impact on America’s victim assistance field. The video is available on YouTube at: <http://youtu.be/OiujDynVip4>.

The speakers featured on this 16-minute video are pioneers in the field of victim assistance. All videotape footage is derived from the “Oral History of the Crime Victim Assistance Field Archive,” funded by the Office for Victims of Crime (the entire online Archives can be accessed at <http://vroh.uakron.edu/>). *The VOCA Story* is divided into four sections, with the first two sections most applicable to this CAP TIP:

1. *The Origins of the Crime Victims Fund* features pioneers of our field, including 1982 Victims President’s Task Force on Victims of Crime Chair Lois Haight, talking about how the concept of VOCA first emerged; efforts to obtain support for the Crime Fund from the Administration of President Ronald Reagan; and the successful strategies to secure its passage in Congress.
2. *The Impact of VOCA* highlights the impressive effects of the Crime Victims Fund on our field, including victim assistance and victim compensation. These effects include political recognition of crime victim services; helping to institutionalize the field; providing a stable funding base; and perhaps most important, providing support for victim compensation and improved direct services for victims and survivors of crime.
3. *Sustaining the Crime Victims Fund* describes ongoing efforts to ensure the integrity and solvency of the Crime Victims Fund.
4. *Looking Back, Moving Forward* offers insights and guidance from Task Force Chair Lois Haight and the four past and current Directors of the Office for Victims of Crime, relevant to the challenges that our field faces today and in the future.

Tips for Recognizing the Contributions of U.S. Attorneys, FBI Leaders and Their Staff

Public Recognition

- Review the websites of your U.S. Attorney and FBI Field Office to familiarize your NCVRW Planning Committee with their work, current cases on which they are working, and any additional news that highlights their efforts to promote public safety, crime prevention and victim assistance (in addition to

their efforts that support the Crime Victims Fund). This information is essential to be able to publicly describe and acknowledge the scope and importance of their work.

- Learn about the types of programs and services they provide to victims of Federal crimes. Summaries of their respective victim services (all of which are paid for through the Crime Victims Fund) can be found at:
 - US Attorneys: http://www.justice.gov/usao/briefing_room/vw/
 - FBI: http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/victim_assistance/resources
- Familiarize yourself with the impact of VOCA on *your* state or jurisdiction.
 - You can contact your state VOCA Assistance Administrator for information about the types of programs and services supported by VOCA in your region; this may also be posted on the state agency's website. Contact information for state VOCA Administrators are available at www.navaa.org/statedirectory.html.
 - Check with the crime victim compensation program in your state about its efforts (funded in part with VOCA funds) to provide financial reimbursement to crime victims. Go to <http://nacvcb.org/index.asp?sid=5> for a directory of state crime victim compensation programs.
- Use the resources in this CAP TIP to also provide a *national perspective* of the impact of VOCA since its inception in 1984. When combined with your "local impact" identified above, you'll have an excellent summary of the scope of VOCA's positive effect on our field.
- Invite your U.S. Attorney, FBI Field Office Special Agent in Charge and/or their designees to a special ceremony to recognize their stellar efforts, or combine a ceremony honoring them with your planned events for 2014 NCVRW:
 - Develop and deliver a brief speech that highlights the national/state/ local impact of VOCA.
 - Use the information in this CAP TIP to describe the critical role of U.S. Attorneys and the FBI in investigating and prosecuting cases that result in legal/financial obligations from convicted offenders that go into the Crime Victims Fund.
 - Show "*The VOCA Story*" video (see above), or at least the first two sections that describe the origins and impact of VOCA, at your event to educate your audience about how VOCA has and continues to help "restore the balance of justice" to victims and survivors.
 - Use the sample "certificate of appreciation" at the end of this CAP TIP to publicly honor your U.S. Attorney's and FBI's offices for their contributions to the Crime Victims Fund and to victim/survivor services (it is suitable for framing!).
 - Ask your U.S. Attorney and/or FBI Special Agent in Charge, or their designees, to plan and deliver brief remarks accepting their certificate of appreciation.
 - Invite the media! (see below).
 - Also ask your U.S. Attorney and/or FBI Special Agent in Charge for a one-to-two sentence statement that describes their appreciation for public recognition of their efforts that contribute to the Fund (these statements can be used in your media outreach – see below).
- Ask to attend a staff meeting of your U.S. Attorney or FBI Field Office prior to or during NCVRW to explain how what they do helps victims and survivors of crime. You can show the first two sections of "*The VOCA Story*" video that provides a nice overview of the origins and impact of VOCA.

- Host a “brown bag lunch” and invite the leadership and victim assistance staff of your U.S. Attorneys and FBI Field Office. Provide cross-education about your respective efforts to assist victims, including their collection of legal/financial obligations that support the Crime Victims Fund and how the Fund supports local victim services.

Traditional Media Relations

You can offer public recognition of your U.S. Attorney’s and FBI Field Offices through media outreach during 2014 NCVRW.

Letter to the Editor

The editorial page of newspapers is one of the “most read” pages; a brief letter of thanks will go far to educate your community about the Crime Victims Fund and Federal efforts that support it. You can visit your newspaper’s website for guidelines on how to submit a letter to the editor, recommended format, and timelines for submission.

Here is a sample letter to the editor that can be adapted to your community or state:

Dear Editor:

This is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, when our (*community/state*) and Nation join together and commit to “restoring the balance of justice” within America’s public safety, victim assistance and crime prevention efforts. (*We/I*) salute our U.S. Attorney (*name*), our FBI Field Office Agent in Charge (*name*), and their respective staff whose daily efforts help fund crime victim services in our (*community/state*) and across our nation.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and the creation of the Crime Victims Fund. The money in the Fund comes from the FBI’s investigation of and U.S. Attorney’s successful prosecution of Federal cases that result in the collection of criminal fines and other penalties available exclusively to help crime victims. Since 1985, a total of \$20.4 billion of *non-taxpayer money* has been deposited into the Crime Victims Fund to provide emergency shelter, crisis intervention, counseling and assistance in participating in the criminal justice system nationwide to *an average of 3.7 million victims of all types of crimes every year*.

Here in (*community/state*), the Crime Victim Fund supports vital victim services through programs including (*list programs*).

We salute their diligent efforts that bring criminals to justice and assistance to countless victims of crime that are paid for by convicted offenders and *not* taxpayers’ dollars. For victims and survivors of crime and those who serve them, our U.S. Attorney and FBI are unsung heroes who deserve our appreciation and gratitude.

Sincerely,

(*Name/title/agency*)

Press Release

A press release can be developed and disseminated that recognizes the contributions of your U.S. Attorney and FBI Field Office to the Crime Victims Fund, and/or describes any event or ceremony at which they will be honored in conjunction with 2014 NCVRW.

You can coordinate the dissemination of your press release with the media or public information staff of your U.S. Attorney and FBI Field Offices, and provide them with a copy that they can include on their website.

Be sure to type your press release double-spaced, and include contact information (name/email address/telephone number) at the top of the release.

Here is a sample press release that can be adapted to your jurisdiction and any special events you are sponsoring:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
(Date)

CONTACT: (Name/Title)
(Email address)
(A/C and telephone number)

**Crime Victim Advocates Laud U.S. Attorney and FBI during
National Crime Victims' Rights Week**

(City/State) – Crime victim assistance organizations have joined together during National Crime Victims' Rights Week – April 6 to 12 – to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the U.S. Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and to honor U.S. Attorney (name), FBI Field Office Special Agent in Charge (name), and their staff for their efforts that funds victim services in (city/jurisdiction/state) and nationwide.

The FBI's investigation of and U.S. Attorney's successful prosecution of Federal cases result in the imposition of criminal fines, forfeitures and special assessments paid by convicted offenders into the federal Crime Victims Fund. From 1985 to 2013, a total of \$20.4 billion of *non-taxpayer dollars* has been deposited into the Fund, which provides emergency shelter, crisis intervention, counseling and assistance in participating in the criminal justice system nationwide to *an average of 3.7 million victims of all types of crimes every year*. The Fund also contributes to the state crime victim compensation program that reimburses crime victims for some of their out-of-pocket expenses.

According to (spokesperson), the Fund is a critical source of support for local victim assistance services. "Here in (community/state), the Crime Victims Fund supports a diverse array of services for crime victims and survivors, including (describe programs and/or services here), (spokesperson) said. "Without the Crime Victims Fund, countless victims would have nowhere to turn for assistance in the aftermath of crime, and to help them cope with the physical, financial, emotional and social impact of crime."

U.S. Attorney (name) and FBI Field Office Special Agent in Charge (name) will be honored at a National Crime Victims' Rights Week (ceremony/event) on (day/date) at (time) at (location).

We can't understate the important impact of the Crime Victims Fund on supporting vital victim services in our (community/state)," (spokesperson) said, "and we are grateful for the opportunity to publicly recognize the important role of U.S. Attorney (name), FBI Field Office Special Agent in Charge (name), and

their staff in making Federal criminals pay for their crimes in a manner that supports services for victims and survivors of crime.”

(You can seek brief quotations from your U.S. Attorney and FBI Special Agent in Charge for your press release and insert them here)

For additional information about the Crime Victims Fund or 2014 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, please contact (*name/title*) at (*area code/telephone number*) or by email at (*email address*).

END

New/Social Media Relations

- Use your organization’s website, Facebook and other social media to publicly acknowledge the role of U.S. Attorneys and the FBI in supporting the Crime Victims Fund:
 - Express public thanks, either from your organization or from victims and survivors who benefit from VOCA-funded services.
 - Include links to their District/Field offices to educate your audience about their many contributions to public safety and victim assistance.
 - Post photos and brief descriptions from any award or recognition ceremony you sponsor in conjunction with NCVRW.

- Using the Twitter hashtag **#VOCA4Victims**, acknowledge their roles and recognize their contributions to victim assistance services (remember to limit your “tweets” to 140 characters!); for example:
 - US Attorney/FBI Federal convictions help victims thru Crime Victims Fund;
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/pubs/crimevictimsfundfs/> **#VOCA4Victims**
 - Crime victims/survivors salute US Attorney and FBI for funding imp victim services;
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/pubs/crimevictimsfundfs/> **#VOCA4Victims**
 - US Attorneys and FBI “restore the balance of justice” for victims;
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/pubs/crimevictimsfundfs/> *(or link to website with your NCVRW information and salute to U.S. Attorneys and FBI)* **#VOCA4Victims**

- Include the following salutation on your website or at the bottom of all emails related to your 2014 NCVRW activities:

(Your organization) salutes our U.S. Attorney (*name*), Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent in Charge (*name*), and their staff for their diligent investigation and prosecution of Federal criminal cases that result in convictions with fines and assessments that support services for crime victims and survivors through the Crime Victims Fund (please visit <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/pubs/crimevictimsfundfs/> for additional information)

For More Information

Please contact National Crime Victims’ Rights Week Community Awareness Project Consultant Anne Seymour via email at annesey@atlantech.net; or by telephone at 202.547.1732.



2014 NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

Sunday April 6 – Saturday April 12, 2014

30 Years

Restoring the Balance of Justice

Certificate of Appreciation

Presented to

**In recognition of the 30th Anniversary of the
Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and
for your outstanding efforts supporting
crime victims, survivors and victim assistance programs
through the Crime Victims Fund.**

Date

Presented by