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OVC FY 2013 Crime Victim Compensation Program Initiative Project Summary Report



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Acknowledgments

This Project Summary Report is made possible by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, and U.S. Department of Justice's Crime Victim Compensation Program Initiative under Grant Award 2013-VF-GX-K012.

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California Victim Compensation Program
Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board
January 2016

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Introduction

The California Victim Compensation Program (CalVCP) of the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board (VCGCB) provides financial assistance to victims of violent crime when they have losses that are not reimbursable by another source. VCGCB sought and obtained funds from the 2013 Crime Victim Compensation Program Initiative, awarded by the United States Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), to identify underserved crime victim communities on California, determine unmet needs and gaps in victim services, and assist in the development of program improvements to address those gaps.

Serving California's crime victims is an enormous challenge because the state is culturally and geographically diverse. Using strategies such as research, data analysis, and legislative action, CalVCP took a systematic approach to addressing the vision the United States Department of Justice set forth.

CalVCP utilized OVC funding to complete a comprehensive program assessment that included data collection, research, and surveys and interviews with crime victims, mental health providers, community-based organizations (CBOs), and government agencies. The result of this work provided an in-depth profile of California's underserved victims, their unmet needs, the barriers that prevent victims from fully accessing services and compensation, as well as challenges faced in reaching underserved populations.

CalVCP's Baseline Compensation Data

As the first step of the extensive program assessment described above, CalVCP developed a Baseline Data Report to determine victim compensation utilization in California from crimes that occurred in 2010. CalVCP examined quantitative compensation figures and California's demographic and crime statistics. CalVCP also analyzed the total amount of compensation paid by the type of benefit requested such as medical, mental health, funeral and burial, relocation, and income and support loss requests.

The following are key findings from the Baseline Data Report:

- CalVCP received 52,886 applications for crimes occurring in 2010
 - Of the applications received, 43,555 applicants were eligible for the program
 - 46% of eligible applicants requested and received compensation
 - 49% of eligible applicants did not submit a request for compensation
 - The median compensation paid per applicant was \$1,853

- 26,126 (49.4%) applicants identified as Hispanic, 14,491 (27.4%) as White, 8,409 (15.9%) as African American, and 1,957 (3.7%) as Asian or Pacific Islander
- Of the \$69.2 million that CalVCP distributed to direct and derivative applicants, \$25.5 million (37%) was for applicants’ medical expenses, and \$20.9 million (30%) was for mental health costs
- Survivors of homicide victims received \$34.4 million and direct victims of assault received \$13.8 million, totalling a large share (69%) of compensation compared to other crimes
- Direct victim applicants were 40% male and 60% female
- Young adults (age 40 and below) accounted for 80% of total applicants and represented 75% of those provided compensation
- Of 163,957¹ violent crimes reported in California in 2010, 28,515 direct victims of those reported crimes filed applications for compensation with CalVCP, amounting to 17.5% of reported violent crimes
 - Of 1,809 reported cases of homicide, 1,530 survivors of deceased victims filed claims with CalVCP (85%)
 - Of 8,325 reported cases of forcible rape, 2,920 direct victims filed claims with CalVCP (35%)
 - Of 95,723 reported cases of aggravated assault, 21,697 direct victims filed claims with CalVCP (23%)
 - Of 58,100 reported cases of robbery, 2,368 direct victims filed claims with CalVCP (4%)

Underserved Victims of Crime in California

CalVCP conducted a statewide needs assessment to identify California’s underserved victims of crime and evaluate their access to compensation and services. CBOs, government agencies, and mental health service providers were surveyed to identify underserved communities and unmet needs utilizing questions that required closed-ended responses, rating scales, and yes or no answers.

CalVCP also conducted a literature review of academic research on victimology to identify underserved populations.

The following underserved communities were identified in the Needs Assessment Report:

- People with disabilities
- The deaf and hard of hearing
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ)
- Victims of human trafficking
- American Indians and tribal communities

¹ The California Department of Justice reports and publishes crime data according to two categories: “Violent Crimes” and “Property Crimes” (Crime in California 2010-Kamala D. Harris, Attorney General, California Department of Justice). Violent crimes include homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

- Communities affected by gang violence
- Elderly (65 and older)
- Persons with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Immigrants
- Immigrants from indigenous communities in Mexico
- Persons of Asian-Pacific Islander descent
- Crime victims who are homeless or lack stable housing
- Rural and frontier communities

Gaps in Access to the Victim Compensation Program

Findings of the Baseline Data and Needs Assessment Reports were synthesized, culminating in a Gap Analysis Report that identified the following unmet needs and barriers to accessing compensation and victim services in California:

- Fear is a major barrier to reporting crimes, which often prevents program eligibility and compensation. Crimes are sometimes unreported in underserved communities due to fear of law enforcement (LE), retaliation or deportation, safety concerns, shame, blame, and other factors.
- Only some of the underserved communities across California are reached by organizations that provide victim services. Victim advocates and trauma-informed victim and community services must be in or available to communities to be effective. Advocates provide the human connection, which is the key to victims accessing services.
- CalVCP's limitations on some benefits prevent the Program from meeting the financial needs of some victims. For example, the current funeral and relocation benefit limits do not fully cover the majority of victims' losses. Additionally, transportation expenses or wage loss due to legal appointments or court appearances are not covered benefits.
- Linguistically and culturally appropriate communications from CalVCP are lacking. CalVCP needs to communicate with victims in their own language.
- Enhanced collaboration is needed between CalVCP, California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), and other state and local agencies to increase access to appropriate services for underserved communities throughout the state.

- Advocates, service providers, CBOs, and others who assist victims need continual training and up-to-date information about CalVCP. When training and education about victim compensation is institutionalized, more victims will receive help.
- There has been a decline in the number of system-based advocates over the past decade, resulting in a reduction in submitted applications.
- The statewide average claimant rate was 17.5%² in 2010 and the eight counties with the lowest claimant rate were Plumas [4%], Nevada [8%], Tehama [9%], Imperial [9%], Mono [10%], Kern [11%], Stanislaus [12%], and Fresno [12%].
- CalVCP needs to make technological improvements to enhance the efficiency and accessibility of victim compensation service delivery. CalVCP was awarded the OVC Technology Capacity Grant which is funding California's required information technology project planning phase. This is the first step in addressing this gap.

Strategies to Increase Access for All California Victims

Using the information from the Baseline Data, Need Assessment, and Gap Analysis Reports, CalVCP outlined strategies in an Implementation Plan to increase awareness of and access to compensation and victim services. These strategies were designed to address the identified gaps, remove barriers to both compensation and victim services, and better meet the needs of California's crime victims, especially the underserved.

Objective 1: Increase awareness, accessibility, and responsiveness through translation of CalVCP documents and materials.

Strategy 1.1: Translate the CalVCP Application, principal brochure, and correspondence.

The need to communicate in an individual's preferred language is essential. CalVCP will contract with a language services provider to translate the program application, principal brochure, and frequently utilized correspondence in 13 languages identified as widely used in California: Arabic, Chinese, East Armenian, Farsi, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

Objective 2: Increase awareness, accessibility, and quality of service delivery through training and outreach to advocates, service providers, LE, and medical personnel.

² The claimant rate was calculated by dividing reported crimes per 100,000 population by CalVCP claimants per 100,000 population.

Strategy 2.1: Conduct two regional conferences for system-based and CBO advocates, service providers, LE, mental health professionals, and medical personnel.

CalVCP will host two regional conferences in northern and southern California titled “Strategic Collaborations for Reaching the Underserved Victims of Crime.” Topics will include:

- Findings on Underserved Victim Populations in California
- Innovative Strategies for Reaching Marginalized Victim Populations
- Making the Criminal Justice System Accessible to Underserved Victims
- Reaching Underserved Victims
- Vicarious Trauma and Self-Care
- Building Collaboration and Partnerships with Providers of Victim Services
- Breaking Down Barriers to Accessing CalVCP Benefits
- Victim Keynotes: Elizabeth Smart (Northern) and Azim Khamisa (Southern)

Strategy 2.2: Partner with the University of California, Davis (UCD) Campus Police Department to conduct a training conference for LE.

CalVCP will partner with UCD to conduct a two day training conference April 11-12, 2016, with a possible second date in San Diego in November 2016, titled “Leave No Victim Behind.” The goal of the conference is to help LE better understand the communities they serve and begin to close existing gaps between LE and the community. CalVCP will present Compensation Program Initiative grant findings and subject matter experts will present strategies to reach and serve underserved populations with themes similar to CalVCP’s two regional conferences as described in strategy 2.1.

Strategy 2.3: Develop and implement a Collaboration Plan.

The Needs Assessment Report highlighted the need for enhanced coordination and collaboration between CalVCP, CalOES, and other state and local victim service providers. CalVCP’s Collaboration Plan activities are the following:

- Conduct outreach presentations to the Boards at the California Department of Consumer Affairs that license services providers in an effort achieve joint messaging regarding CalVCP to licensees.

- Maintain and strengthen relations with advocates at Victim Witness Centers, community-based organizations, Family Justice Centers, and victim service providers to increase utilization of CalVCP.
- Increase connections and collaboration opportunities with victim service providers to promote awareness and participation in CalVCP.
- Create a partner database to maintain contact information and send periodic announcements and updates to community based organizations and other victim services professionals to increase access to victim compensation.
- Provide tools and materials to CalVCP satellite offices to enable uniform outreach to community based organizations.
- Invite subject matter experts to provide quarterly Trauma-Informed Services Workshops for CalVCP staff and stakeholders in order to enhance understanding of issues affecting victims of crime.

Objective 3: Increase accessibility and quality of service delivery through innovative information technology solutions.

Strategy 3.1: Provide web-based eLearning training courses for the general public, victim-witness advocates, CBO advocates, mental health professionals, and medical personnel.

Five (5) self-paced web-based eLearning training courses will be developed by an eLearning contractor with curriculum content provided by CalVCP subject matter experts. The Contractor will develop the web-based eLearning training courses for the following audiences, at the specified lengths:

- General Public/All External Stakeholders: 10 minutes
- Mental Health Professionals: 90 minutes
- Medical Personnel: 60 minutes
- CBO Advocates: 2 hours
- Victim Witness Advocates: 4 hours

Strategy 3.2: Disseminate education materials to external stakeholders.

CalVCP will create audience specific toolkits for Family Justice Centers, first responders, Victim Witness Centers, trauma recovery centers, governmental agencies, and CBO's, containing audience appropriate brochures, fact sheets, first responder cards, posters, and contact information for additional resources.

Summary

The Crime Victim Compensation Program Initiative grant gave CalVCP the opportunity to perform an analysis of victim statistics showing who currently utilize program services and populations who encounter barriers in seeking compensation and services. Baseline data was established using crime and census data for 2010 and provided information about who applied for and utilized compensation. The needs assessment identified underserved victim communities, unmet needs, and barriers to accessing services and compensation. Strategies were identified to close these gaps and better meet the needs of communities that were not effectively being served in the past.

Through program enhancement, translation, collaboration, and training, CalVCP will better serve crime victims in underserved communities and increase the number of applications received from these populations.