

Advisory Committee on Sexual and Domestic Violence

Meadowdale Library

Large Meeting Room

4301 Meadowdale Boulevard

North Chesterfield, VA 23234

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Final Minutes

Committee Members Present: Maria Altonen, Elvira De la Cruz (arrived at 11:00 a.m.), Marva Dunn, Senator Barbara Favola, Nancy Fowler, Pyowook Han (virtually), Kate Hanger, Kristen Howard, Krista Martinez, Marybeth Matthews-Adkins, Karli Meagher, Kike Oliver, Delegate Irene Shin (virtually until arrival at 11:11 a.m.), Kristina Vadas, Sanu Dieng-Cooper for Kristi VanAudenhove (virtually), Michelle Ellis Young

Committee Members Absent: Claudia Lopez-Muniz, Adrian Perry

Members of the Public Present: Kristina Hagen (Delegate Irene Shin's office), Eileen Longenecker and Rachel DeGraba (Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia), Su Jung Park (Korean Community Services Center of Greater Washington)

DCJS Staff Present: Andi Martin, Anya Shaffer, Amber Stanwix, Andrea Sutton

Welcome and Introductions

Marybeth Adkins, Committee Vice-Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m. A quorum was present. Marybeth welcomed new committee members, Karli Meagher, representing the Family Resource Center, and Michelle Ellis Young, representing YWCA South Hampton Roads. Committee members introduced themselves.

Pursuant to the committee's electronic meeting policy, the following members who participated virtually stated the nature of the reason for their remote participation as follows:

- Due to the concerning weather forecast for severe storms, Pyowook Han attended the meeting virtually from Northern Virginia.
- Sanu Dieng-Cooper attended the meeting on behalf of Kristi VanAudenhove. Sanu had other meetings to attend, which would not be possible had she traveled to this meeting, so she participated virtually.

Approval of December 11, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Kate Hanger made a motion to approve the December 11, 2024, meeting minutes. Kristina Vadas seconded the motion. The committee voted to approve the minutes, unanimously.

State Agency Funding Updates

- Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services – Kristina Vadas reported the following:
 - Virginia’s federal fiscal year 2024 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) award totals \$19,866,137, down from \$34,605,387 in FFY 2023. DCJS anticipates a similar award in FFY 2025.
 - DCJS is nearing the end of the 3rd quarter for the Victims Services Grant Program (VSGP) competitive and noncompetitive grants, Victim Witness Grant Program (VWGP), Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Victim Fund (VSDVVF), and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).
 - All ARPA funding ends 6/30/25.
 - The state fiscal year 2026 funding opportunities for the two VSGP grants are currently open. These are both for continuation applicants only. Due date for both is 3/19/25 at 5:00 p.m.
 - VSTOP awards are in their second year of a 24-month award.
 - New CY 2025 Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP) grant awards started on 1/1/25; 30 awards totaling \$970,586.
 - The federal Improving Criminal Justice Responses (ICJR) grant, received by DCJS in partnership with four other statewide organizations, ends in September 2025; a new federal ICJR funding opportunity was recently removed from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) website.
 - Federal SASP and STOP funding opportunities were originally slated for release on 2/25/25 and 3/4/25 respectively; however, an OVW staff person said that they “are currently in a holding pattern” on releasing grant funding opportunities/solicitations.
- Virginia Department of Health – Maria Altonen reported the following:
 - VDH’s Rape Prevention Education (RPE) grant, which is on a 5-year grant cycle, ended January 31, 2025. The new grant cycle was to begin February 1, 2025; however, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funds were delayed resulting in VDH being unable to send out new contracts. Last week, VDH received notice of their award from CDC. VDH is working on subcontracts now. Awards will be retroactive to February 1, 2025.
- Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development – Kike Oliver reported the following:
 - The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development completed their 2025 Housing Trust Fund – Homeless Reduction Grant competitive application cycle. Funding for this program supports those who are experiencing homelessness to access permanent housing. Applicants will be informed directly regarding the status of their applications. If

you have any additional questions regarding this matter, please contact Ara Mendoza at ara.mendoza@dhcd.virginia.gov.

- The federal awards were announced for the 2024 Continuum of Care Program Competition in January 2025. Funding for this program also supports those who are experiencing homelessness to access permanent housing. DHCD applies for these funds on behalf of the rural communities of the Virginia Balance of State Continuum of Care. If you have any additional questions regarding this matter, please contact Dr. Darl Wilburn at darl.wilburn@dhcd.virginia.gov.
- Virginia Department of Social Services – Nancy Fowler reported the following:
 - The Domestic Violence Services for Underserved Populations grant will end June 30, 2025. A new request for applications (RFA) will be posted this month (March 2025) for new applications.
 - The Domestic Violence Prevention Services grants have one more year in the grant cycle. VDSS will release a new solicitation in spring 2026.
 - ARPA grants for sexual and domestic violence services will end June 30, 2025.
 - ARPA grants for vaccine testing and access to mobile health services end September 30, 2025.
 - VDSS anticipates unspent ARPA funds due to a lack of applicants. They are looking into the feasibility of using these funds to purchase items needed by sexual and domestic violence organizations at a local level. The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (VSDVAA) is working with VDSS in determining needed items. The committee discussed various options for items that could and could not be purchased with these funds.
 - VDSS released a RFA for domestic violence services in the area previously served by Southside Center for Violence Prevention. Two contracts are pending.

Past Business

- Language Access Work Group
 - The Language Access Work Group will reconvene soon; the group was waiting until after the General Assembly Session. Sanu Dieng-Cooper and Courtenay Schwartz from the Action Alliance will convene the group. There should be a report at the June committee meeting.

New Business

- 2025 General Assembly Session
 - Senator Favola informed the committee that the budget currently being reviewed by the Governor includes additional state general funds for victim services grants, above what was allocated last year in the biennium budget; however, there remains a gap in funding for programs due to federal VOCA decreases.

- Delegate Shin informed the committee of a bill she sponsored that would allow for telehealth sexual assault forensic services, increasing access to care. Another bill would establish the Virginia Forensic Nursing Advisory Council under VDH.
 - Senator Favola requested feedback about how the General Assembly can facilitate connections with victim service providers and other entities, such as law enforcement and hospitals, to create a more seamless system for people to access services.
 - The committee discussed needing increased connections to local foundations for additional financial support.
 - The committee discussed the need to better communicate to the General Assembly the needs of Virginia’s victim-serving organizations and their funding concerns, including the general landscape of victim services across the Commonwealth. Kate Hanger with the Virginia Victim Assistance Network (VVAN) said that she’d share two reports (*attached*).
- **Impact of Recent Federal Actions**
Committee members shared recent changes to their programming due to federal actions:
 - Elvira De la Cruz reported that people are not accessing their services at the same rate that they were previously.
 - Marybeth Matthews-Adkins reported that her agency in southwest Virginia lost two federal grants: one supported a domestic violence housing project and the other supported funding for food boxes.
 - Nancy Fowler from VDSS reported that her agency was working on an application for a federal grant that would support collaboration between domestic violence programs and local departments of social services for children’s services, but the federal notice of funding opportunity was cancelled.
 - Delegate Shin reported that the Virginia House of Delegates established a new committee called the House Emergency Committee on the Impacts of Federal Workforce and Funding Reductions. The committee conducted a study, the results of which indicate a heavy reliance on federal funding, particularly in the southwest part of Virginia. Information about the committee can be found on this website:
<https://studies.viriniageneralassembly.gov/meetings/2070>
 - Marva Dunn reported that the VSDVAA is working on a webinar or workshop that will include how to ask for funding and self-care for staff.
 - Michelle Ellis Young reported that program staff are experiencing stress and anxiety regarding all of the federal actions.

Other Member Announcements

Sanu Dieng-Cooper (VSDVAA) reported that for the next session of the General Assembly, the VSDVAA plans to readdress the need for continuous, dedicated funding to ensure investment of state funds for sexual and domestic violence agencies. VSDVAA is also waiting to see whether the gun surrender bill and loophole bill that they supported are vetoed or signed by the Governor.

Public Comment

Elieen Longenecker (OES) informed the committee that Karl Hade, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, submitted a request to the language access work group, through Sanu Dieng-Cooper, that the workgroup invite Office of Executive Secretary staff to workgroup meetings. Hearing that the workgroup will be meeting soon, Elieen reiterated Mr. Hade's request.

2025 Meeting Dates: June 4, 2025, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (virtual)

September 10, 2025, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (in-person)

December 3, 2025, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (virtual)

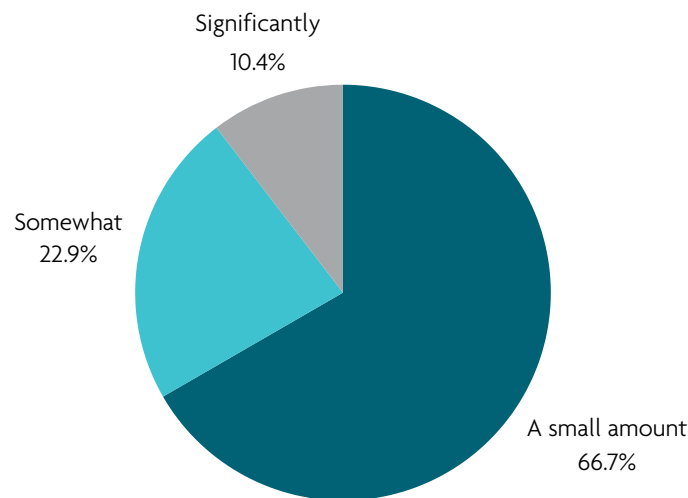
Closing

Marybeth Matthews-Adkins adjourned the meeting at 12:06 p.m.

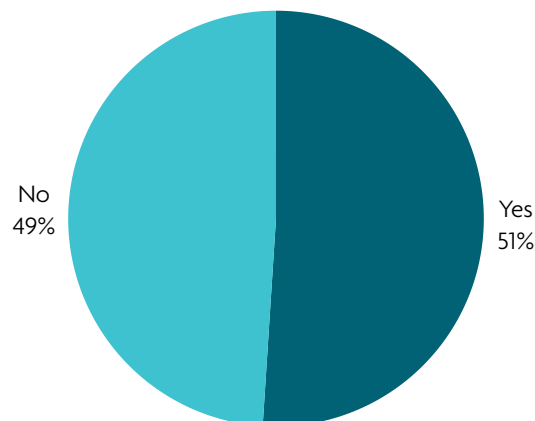
Victim/Witness Funding Needs Assessment - 2025

In December of 2024, VVAN asked Virginia's 114 Victim/Witness Assistance Programs to answer six questions to determine the impact insufficient funding is having on their programs and the victims they serve. To date, 100 programs have completed the survey.

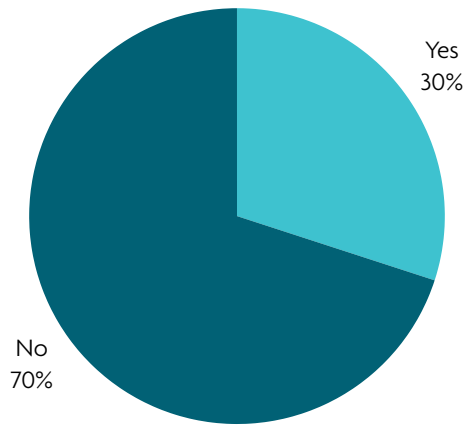
1 - To what degree did the additional VWGP funding your program received in FY2025 increase capacity?



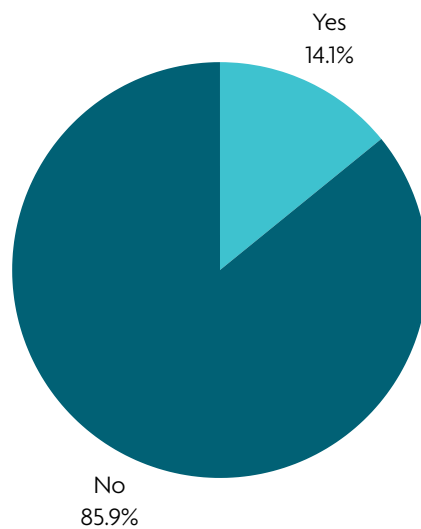
2 - Do any of your full-time staff work additional jobs to make ends meet?



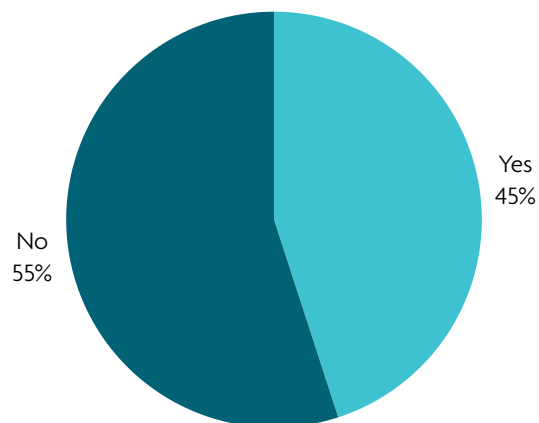
3 - Is your program fully staffed to the extent that you can meet ALL the needs of ALL victims in your locality?



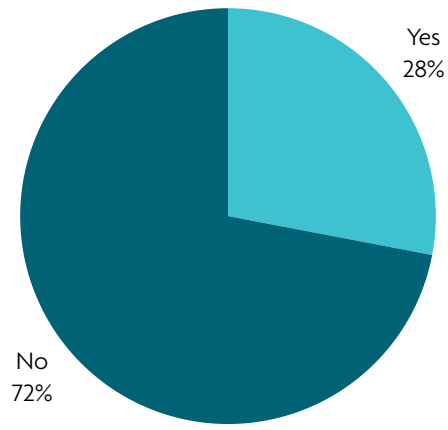
4 - Does your funding allow you to offer sufficient salaries and benefits to attract and retain qualified and experienced staff?



5 - Are you or any of your staff paying for program expenses out of your own pockets?



6 - Do you have sufficient funding to pay for training?



3/6/2025

VICTIM/WITNESS FUNDING NEEDS

The Need

Victim/Witness programs need an additional \$3,790,000-\$4,140,000 in order to function at their proper capacity.

While victims' rights are codified in statute and the Virginia constitution, 57% of programs report that their current funding does not allow them to meet the needs of the victims in their service area

Current Funding

Victim/Witness programs are primarily funded through funds administered by the Department of Criminal and Justice Services (DCJS)

- In FY23:
 - 70% of this funding came from the federal grant awarded by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)
 - 28% of it came from the State Special Fund
 - Just under 2% came from the State General Fund
- In FY24, the VOCA award has been decreased by 10%, but State Funds have not adjusted to meet this discrepancy

Virginia code entitles specific rights to victims of crime, and 70% of the funding for these rights comes from the federal government, this means 70% of victims' rights in Virginia fall at the discretion of the federal government

Thankfully, 64% of programs receive some funding from their locality

- However, for over half of the programs that do receive local support, that local funding covers a maximum of 20% of their budget

Quantifiable Costs

38% of programs are unable to remain fully-staffed

- Some programs require an additional part-time staff member to aid with administrative work or take on a smaller case load
- Some programs need 3 additional full-time staff members to adequately fulfill the program's case load
- This accounts for roughly 41 additional staff members across the state
- With a \$50,000 salary and \$25,000 benefits package, adding these necessary staff members will cost \$3,075,000

14% of programs cannot afford to offer benefits to their full-time staff

- This accounts for 16 staff members across the state
- A \$25,000 benefits package for each of these advocates will cost \$528,759

48% of programs have staff who pay from program expenses out-of-pocket

- This amounts to a statewide total of roughly \$130,000

Staffing Context

71% of programs are unable to offer competitive salaries to both hire, and retain, qualified staff members

43% of programs report that full-time staff members must work a second job to supplement their income

The salary range for full-time directors across the state spans from as low as \$35,000 to over \$100,000

- That is a spread of \$65,000+ between individuals who hold the same job, and locality size alone cannot account for this wide of a spread
- Half of the directors in the state make less than \$55,000

49% of programs only have one full-time staff member

- Every locality has at least two courts, General District Court and Juvenile Domestic Relations Court, and many have even more
- In at least 49% of localities, there are not enough Victim/Witness advocate to match the number of courts they are responsible for

Increasing Crime

The Virginia State Police "Crime in Virginia" reports show an overall increase in crime rates

- The number of incidents reported increased by 4.8% from 2020 to 2022
- There was a 30.8% increase in violent crime from 2020 to 2022

There are currently about 325 Victim/Witness advocates across the Commonwealth

The number of victims of Crimes Against Persons has increased from 84,137 in 2020 to 92,628 in 2022 (Virginia State Police "Crime in Virginia" Reports 2020, 2022)

- This translates to a 10% increase in the number of victims each advocate works with in a year
- This coupled with the increasing number of jury trials means there is not enough time or enough advocates to reach every victim

This increase in crime rate and number of victims is met with a 10% reduction in VOCA funding for Victim/Witness programs

- 49% of programs expect that this will require them to reduce the number of staff they are able to keep which will bring the current number of 325 advocates down even further