

Victim Assistance Funding – Office of the Governor Trusted Programs Maintain Level VOCA Funding

Request: Appropriate an additional \$62 million in general revenue to the Office of the Governor Trusted Programs to ensure level funding for lifesaving services for child and adult victims of crime.

This request will not increase services, but rather **maintain current funding levels** until federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding is restored. **Without this support, cuts to direct services will occur.**

SB1 and HB1 both include \$115 million to help offset the loss of federal VOCA funds. However, to ensure current services are maintained, the total need is \$177 million. Therefore, an additional \$62 million is still required to maintain level services for crime victims in FY26-27.

Background

The federal Crime Victims Fund established by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is a critical funding source for victim services throughout Texas and is supported by criminal fines and fees paid by defendants. The funding is appropriated by Congress and flows from the federal Department of Justice through the Public Safety Office at the Office of the Governor to victim service providers who offer the following essential direct services to Texas victims of human trafficking, stalking, domestic violence, child abuse, and rape:

- Crisis Intervention
- Emergency Shelter
- Emergency Transportation
- Victim & Family Advocacy
- Counseling & Mental Health
- Forensic Services
- Specialized Investigation & Prosecution
- Case Management & Care Coordination
- Criminal Justice Advocacy

Funding Needed to Maintain Services for Victims of Crime

Decreased revenues from federal criminal fines and fees created a sustainability and cash flow issue with VOCA funds. Congress passed the VOCA Fix to Sustain Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 (VOCA Fix) in July 2021 to help address this cash flow issue and shore up the sustainability of VOCA funds. However, this fix continues to take time to refill the VOCA fund. As a result, and despite a recent uptick in fund balances, federal VOCA funding has continued to be unstable, and without action at the state level there would have been significant cuts to crime victims services in Texas.

Recognizing the critical interdependencies of both state and federal funds that support services for victims of crime in our state, the Texas Legislature utilized one-time American Rescue Plan Act funding, as well as state general revenue funding as a bridge to restore federal VOCA reductions for FY22 through FY25.

There is still a pressing need to supplement VOCA funding in FY26-27 to ensure existing services are available for victims of crime and to support our law enforcement and prosecution partners in maintaining public safety. Based off projections from the Office of the Governor, even with the \$115 million already included in SB1 and HB1 as filed, **without an additional \$62 million appropriated by the state, crime victim service providers will receive a decrease in FY26-27 funding resulting in a decrease in services.** Any reductions to this funding will directly result in fewer services for victims of crime in Texas.