



Frequently Asked Questions about the Victims of Crime Act and Crime Victims' Fund

1. What is VOCA and the CVF?

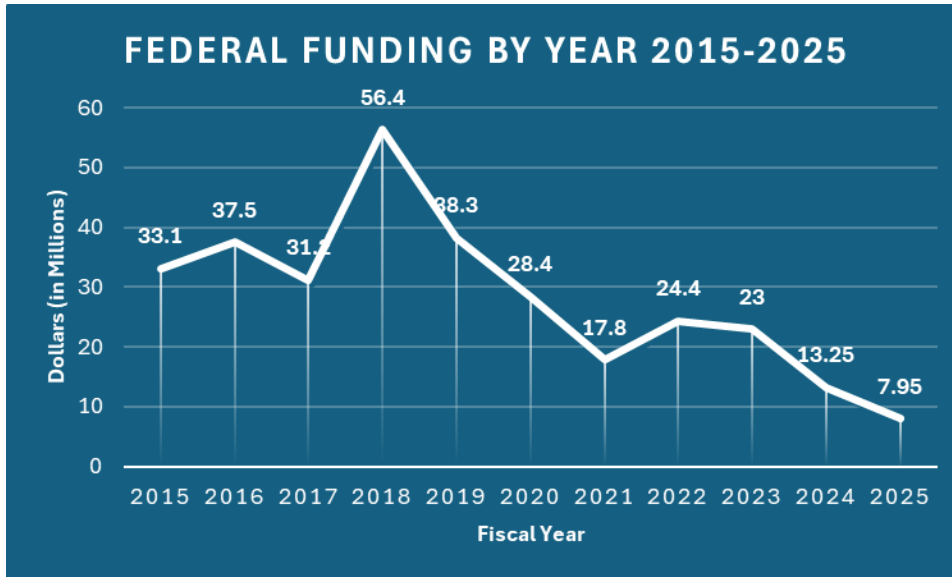
The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is the federal government's main way of funding Crime Victims' Services. VOCA works by directing all of the money generated from fines and fees (not taxpayer dollars) collected through federal prosecutions of crime to be directed to the Crime Victims' Fund (CVF). CVF money can then be appropriated by Congress to fund Crime Victims' Services programs.

2. How is the CVF filled?

While all fines and fees from federal prosecutions go into the CVF, the most important filler is white collar prosecutions. White collar prosecutions have an essential combination— not only are they associated with massive financial penalties, but the people and businesses which commit these offenses are *much* more likely to be able to pay than individual actors committing crimes like robbery.

3. How large is Minnesota's VOCA award?

This fluctuates by year. As the CVF is filled through prosecutions and Congress has to pass the appropriation to award the money, the amount awarded can vary. Below is a chart of the past ten years of VOCA awards to Minnesota. You can see that our highest ever VOCA award was \$56.4 million in 2018. The FY25 number is based off of an estimated 40% cut to VOCA from FY24, which is what coalitions have been told to expect, though at this time no FY25 budget has been fully passed. Under this projection, Crime Victims' Services funding is at the lowest payout in over a decade.



4. Why have VOCA awards collapsed?

The primary reason for the initial VOCA collapse was a change made in 2017. In 2017, the federal government switched its prosecutorial strategy for most white collar crimes to a “deferred prosecution” model. This allows offenders to pay a fine, make changes to prevent the crime from recurring, and avoid an official prosecution. Even though fines were still being paid, there was no official prosecution, and deferred prosecution money was not going into the CVF. It took a few years for this policy change to manifest in lower CVF payments, and the CVF has never recovered.

Congress did pass a “VOCA Fix” act in 2021 which closed this loophole and allowed deferred prosecution money to flow into the CVF. This is much appreciated, though it has not yet created a substantial increase in CVF funding.

5. What percentage of Minnesota’s Crime Victims’ Services community is federally funded?

In FY25, about 14% of government funds supporting Minnesota Crime Victims’ Services are federal. At VOCA’s peak in FY18, about 70% of government funds supporting Crime Victims’ Services were federal. The loss of federal funds have caused serious challenges for advocacy service providers, who have had to cut services, implement hiring freezes, and spend more time fundraising and contingency planning.

Federal funding cuts are particularly bleak for technical assistance providers and tribal programs. Technical assistance (TA) providers are Crime Victims’ Services organizations which serve direct service providers by providing training, coordination, and expertise. They are advocates who improve the performance and efficiency of other advocates. TA providers are

disproportionately federally funded, and many will have to shut down entirely if federal funding continues to collapse or is withheld. Examples of TA providers include: coalitions who coordinate direct service providers activities, strategies, and policy initiatives; legal TA providers who give legal guidance and counsel to survivors and their advocates; culturally specific TA providers who help programs relate to survivors from diverse cultural backgrounds; and training TA providers who provide training and expertise to direct service providers, law enforcement, government agencies, and private entities.

Tribal programs, especially when based on reservations, are also often disproportionately federally funded. According to the Association of American Indian Affairs, Alaska Native and American Indians are 2.5 times more likely to be the victim of violent crime and 2 times as likely to be the victim of rape or sexual assault compared to all other races. Preserving and expanding the Crime Victims' Services available to Native people, and ensuring that those services are run by and targeted specifically towards Native people, must be a major priority for our movement.