

News & Features

Announcements

New Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Formula Victim Assistance Rule

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) announces that the [final rule for its Victims of Crime Act \(VOCA\) Formula Victim Assistance Grant Program](#) became effective on August 8, 2016. The final rule sets forth the parameters for the use of funds under OVC's Victim Assistance Program. OVC consulted extensively with the crime victim services field in developing the rule, and published a notice of proposed rulemaking (78 FR 52877) on August 27, 2013, which solicited public comments. OVC has taken these comments, as well as comments received during the inter-agency review process, into consideration in this final rule.

- It applies to any OVC Formula Victim Assistance Program grants awarded by OVC after the effective date.
- However, FY16 grant funding obligated by a state before the award date AND before the effective date (i.e., pre-award costs incurred before the effective date) are not subject to the rule, and remain under the [VOCA Assistance Guidelines](#), though a state may choose to apply the rule to those funds.
- Funds under grants awarded by OVC before the rule's effective date continue to be subject to the Guidelines, but a state may choose to apply the rule to any unobligated funding at the state or subrecipient levels under such a grant.
- Such discretionary decisions to apply the rule should be documented to facilitate monitoring and audit.

The final rule provides greater clarity and more flexibility to state VOCA victim assistance administering agencies to support a continuum of services to crime victims, including:

- comprehensive legal assistance,
- transitional housing,
- expanded coverage of relocation expenses, and
- the use of funds for forensic interviews and medical examinations.

The rule clarifies the requirements regarding services to underserved victims, and continues to provide that victims of elder abuse, human trafficking, and other crimes are eligible for VOCA-funded assistance. The rule removes existing language that restricts the use of VOCA funding to support services to victims in detention and correctional facilities.

OVC will publish a summary of changes made by the rule, as well as questions and answers as they arise, on the [OVC website](#).