

# SUPPORT CONNECTICUT'S STATEWIDE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

CCADV FY26-27 State Budget Request

(revised January 2025)

## THE ASK

CCADV and our 18 member organizations are requesting **\$1,000,000** in state funding **through the Department of Social Services** to support **Safe Connect, Connecticut's statewide domestic violence hotline**.

Reduced federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding has left several core domestic violence services in an unstable position. All states have been facing this problem, which for the past three years in Connecticut has been addressed with one-time ARPA funding generously allocated by the Governor and General Assembly.

CCADV and our 18 member organizations have worked diligently over the past year to examine both the needs of survivors and our services, determining where resources can be shifted to meet growing needs within the confines of shrinking funding while minimizing the elimination of services. Providing **\$1,000,000** in state funding to help stabilize the statewide hotline is a critical step in protecting the state's domestic violence service system.

## HOW WE GOT HERE - BACKGROUND ON VOCA FUNDING

For years Connecticut, like many other states, has relied heavily on federal funding available through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) to support a variety of victim services. Critical domestic violence services in both court-based and community-based settings have been funded by VOCA grants, including all domestic violence court-based advocates in Connecticut and the entire statewide domestic violence hotline, Safe Connect, since its inception in 2019.

VOCA is funded through the federal Crime Victims Fund (CVF), which is solely financed through fines and fees paid by those corporations or individuals involved in federal criminal cases, largely white-collar crime. This contrasts with many other federal formula grants that receive appropriations funded by taxpayer dollars, resulting in volatility to the CVF and amount of monies available for grant allocations.

In federal fiscal year 2018, there was a substantial increase in funds released from VOCA, in part due to a large settlement in a federal court case that generated a large deposit into the CVF. In the years that have followed, this large deposit and release of funds has proven to be an anomaly. Available VOCA funds have steadily declined since FFY18, impacting all states, not just Connecticut. **In October 2024, the director of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) publicly questioned the Fund's solvency.**

	FFY15	FFY16	FFY17	FFY18	FFY19	FFY20	FFY21	FFY22	FFY23	FFY24	FFY25 President Proposed
Federal Cap	\$2.36b	\$3.042b	\$2.50b	\$4.40b	\$3.50b	\$2.64b	\$2.015b	\$2.60b	\$1.90b	\$1.35b	\$1.5b
State Victim Assistance Grants	\$1.96b	\$2.2b	\$1.8b	\$3.3b	\$2.25b	\$1.67b	\$1.04b	\$1.43b	\$1.34b	\$779m	\$1.03b
CT Allocation	\$22m	\$24.7m	\$20.4m	\$36.45m	\$24.54m	\$18.13m	\$11.79m	\$15.63m	\$14.74m	\$8.54m	\$9.1m

The CT General Assembly allocated \$48 million in one-time ARPA/Covid relief funds to fill the federal VOCA funding gap during state fiscal years 2023 (\$14,865,300), 2024 (\$13,175,000) and 2025 (\$20,000,000). This one-time state funding, coupled with the practice of Judicial Branch Office of Victim Services (OVS), Connecticut's VOCA administrator, to spread its VOCA Assistance allocations over multiple years to help buffer against CVF volatility, has allowed OVS to maintain mostly level funding to all current VOCA-funded providers at a total funding amount of approximately \$29 million through state fiscal year 2025.

As ARPA funds will no longer be available after state fiscal year 2025, Connecticut VOCA-funded providers are bracing for a funding reduction. Although initially anticipating a 70% reduction (\$29 million down to \$9 million), Judicial Branch OVS has informed providers that it will release approximately \$21,000,000 in grants for FY26, resulting in an approximate 30% reduction.

## WHY STATE FUNDING IS NEEDED TO STABILIZE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

CCADV and our 18 member organizations currently receive approximately \$8.5 million in VOCA funding:

- \$6.2 million that funds member services, including \$5.2 million in VOCA Assistance grants and \$1 million in match dollars from the Judicial Branch (approx. \$900,000 from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund from fines & fees paid by defendants and \$100,000 in state general funds). These services include court-based advocacy and community-based advocacy including assistance with obtaining basic needs (e.g., housing, medical, food, social services, transportation, etc.), as well as lead one-on-one counseling and support groups.
- \$2.3 million in VOCA Assistance grants that funds the statewide domestic violence hotline, Safe Connect, operated at CCADV. Safe Connect was established in 2019 following a large influx of funds to VOCA and was intended to achieve two main goals: 1) create a single, coordinated, statewide entry point for domestic violence services, and 2) alleviate some of the burden from members having to answer hotline calls and not receiving any funding to do so.

**A 30% funding reduction would result in total available funding for domestic violence services of approximately \$6 million. As such, CCADV is seeking state funding for Safe Connect so that the remaining VOCA funding can be directed to our member organizations for the provision of both court- and community-based advocacy services.**

Also of note is the fact that domestic violence services in Connecticut have, in recent years, received a smaller proportion of available VOCA funds when compared to the overall number of victims served. According to grant reporting provided by Judicial Branch OVS on VOCA grant funds provided to federal Office for Victims of Crime priority crime categories in FY23, domestic violence clients accounted for 74.5% of total clients served while only 42% of available funding was directed to domestic violence services. This resulted in an average of \$260 spent per domestic violence victim, compared to \$1,485 spent per victim in “underserved” categories, \$868 per child abuse victim, and \$849 per sexual assault victim.

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## ASSESSING THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE SYSTEM FOR EFFICIENCIES

In anticipation of cuts to VOCA funding and in consideration that Safe Connect was a service added when Connecticut received the large influx of funding following federal fiscal year 2018, **CCADV has worked closely with our membership and a consultant with expertise in call center operations to identify ways that the operation of Safe Connect could be streamlined while meeting the needs of both victims and CCADV's 18 member organizations.**

Revised policies and protocols have been implemented to **reduce the overall operational cost of Safe Connect from approximately \$2.5 million annually to \$1.6 million annually.** This includes a reduction in the number of FTEs from 27 to 16 (41% reduction).

**Despite this reduction, the streamlined operation will allow Safe Connect to handle the same volume of contacts (approx. 25,000 annually).** This includes implementation of a Universal Intake across Safe Connect and the member organizations. While Safe Connect will offer fewer initial services, thereby reducing per-call time, they will initiate a warm transfer to an advocate at the local CCADV member organization for continued assistance and service provision.

To help offset anticipated VOCA cuts, CCADV recently sought and obtained approximately \$240,000 from the federal U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development that passes through the CT Department of Housing to support 3 Safe Connect coordinators who specialize in housing coordinated entry procedures. Additionally, CCADV receives approximately \$246,000 from the Judicial Branch for Safe Connect to provide 24/7 victim notification as part of the Domestic Violence Offender GPS Monitoring Program expanded by the General Assembly in 2023. Additional funding needed for operation of Safe Connect will be sought through private philanthropy.

### HOW VOCA FUNDING SUPPORTS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

(annual avg FY22 - 24)



Safe Connect/statewide hotline

**24,982 CONTACTS**



Crisis counseling & safety planning

**132,701 SERVICES**



Individual counseling

**62,579 SERVICES**



Court-based advocacy

**36,275 SERVICES**



Intervention with an employer, creditor, landlord, or childcare

**32,627 SERVICES**

## SAFE CONNECT'S IMPACT

Launched in 2019, Safe Connect created a single, coordinated, statewide entry point for domestic violence services. Prior to Safe Connect, each individual CCADV member organization was responsible for providing 24/7 hotline coverage but did not receive any funding to do so. When originally established in the 1980s, the hotline system was set-up to route calls to the appropriate local CCADV member organization based on where the landline for the incoming call was located. Fast forward to 2019, and the increased use of cell phones and the ability of consumers to retain a phone number even if they move had rendered the original system of call routing obsolete and often resulted in survivors having to make multiple calls to get connected to their local CCADV member organization. As a coordinated point of entry, it also allows callers with other needs unrelated to domestic violence, such as substance use or mental health, to be connected to those services without disrupting the work of local domestic violence advocates so that they may dedicate their time to serving survivors. Maintaining Safe Connect is key to a successful survivor-centered, trauma-informed domestic violence service system in Connecticut.

(annual avg FY22 - 24)



**24,982 CONTACTS**

**12,106 VICTIMS**



### TOP 3 SERVICE REQUESTS:

- Shelter/housing
- Legal aid/representation
- Financial assistance

## PLEASE SUPPORT THE NEEDS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Please support our request for **\$1,000,000** in state funding **through the Department of Social Services** to support **Safe Connect, Connecticut's statewide domestic violence hotline.**

CCADV and our 18 member organizations have thoroughly and thoughtfully examined our service system in consideration of ongoing funding challenges. We want to be clear that the needs among survivors and their children have not reduced. Service numbers across the state remain steady and survivor needs have only grown more complex, especially during a prolonged period of economic uncertainty felt across the country.

That does not mean that our system is not able to consistently examine itself and seek efficiencies, which we have done. As we mentioned above, CCADV and our member organizations will seek a combination of the reduced VOCA Assistance grants, state funding, and private fundraising to support those services that we have collectively identified as priorities. By shifting some responsibilities across staff, creating more efficient procedures, and eliminating some less impactful services, CCADV and our 18 members organizations believe that we can meet the core needs of survivors despite what will amount to a 14% reduction in member advocates for the specific services referenced above and a 41% reduction in Safe Connect hotline advocates.

We are not blind to the needs of so many across our state and the difficult decisions that face our state leaders. We also know that, when not addressed, the long-term issues that domestic violence survivors face can have a greater economic burden on the state. CCADV and our 18 members believe we have done our due diligence to operate efficiently and effectively and hope that you will support these services by providing **\$1,000,000** in state funding **through the Department of Social Services** to support **Safe Connect, Connecticut's statewide domestic violence hotline.**

## OUR MEMBERS



BRIDGEPORT



DANBURY



United Services, Inc.  
Creating healthy communities

DAYVILLE/WILLIMANTIC



ENFIELD



GREENWICH



HARTFORD



NEW BRITAIN



NEW HAVEN/SHELTON



TORRINGTON



LAKEVILLE



MERIDEN



MIDDLETOWN



NEW LONDON



NORWALK/STAMFORD



WATERBURY