



OVC Fact Sheet

JANUARY 2002

VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT CRIME VICTIMS FUND

The Crime Victims Fund (hereinafter referred to as “the Fund”), established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA), is a major funding source for victim services throughout the country. Millions of dollars have been deposited into the Fund each year from criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties, and special assessments collected by U.S. Attorneys’ Offices, federal U.S. courts, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. To date, Fund dollars have always come from offenders convicted of federal crimes, not from taxpayers. New legislation has expanded the sources from which Fund deposits may come. The recently passed (October 2001) Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA Patriot Act) provides authority for the deposit of gifts, bequests, or donations from private entities into the Fund. This means that beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2002, deposits into the Fund may come from criminal fines, penalties, and special assessments as well as gifts, bequests, or donations from private entities.

When the Fund was authorized in 1984, a cap was placed on how much could be deposited into it for the first 8 years. The amount of money deposited into the Fund has fluctuated from year to year. The figure on page 2 depicts the amount of money deposited into the Fund each fiscal year from 1985 through 2001.¹ Lifting of the cap in 1993 allowed for the deposit of all criminal fines, forfeited bail bonds, penalties, and special assessments authorized by VOCA to support crime victim program activities. In FY 2000, Congress reinstated a cap on the Fund and determined that the following amounts would be available for release annually: \$500 million in FY 2000, \$537.5 million in FY 2001, and \$550 million in FY 2002.

How Are Fund Deposits Disbursed?

■ **Child Abuse.** Up to \$20 million is used annually to improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases. The money is divided between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (up to \$17 million)

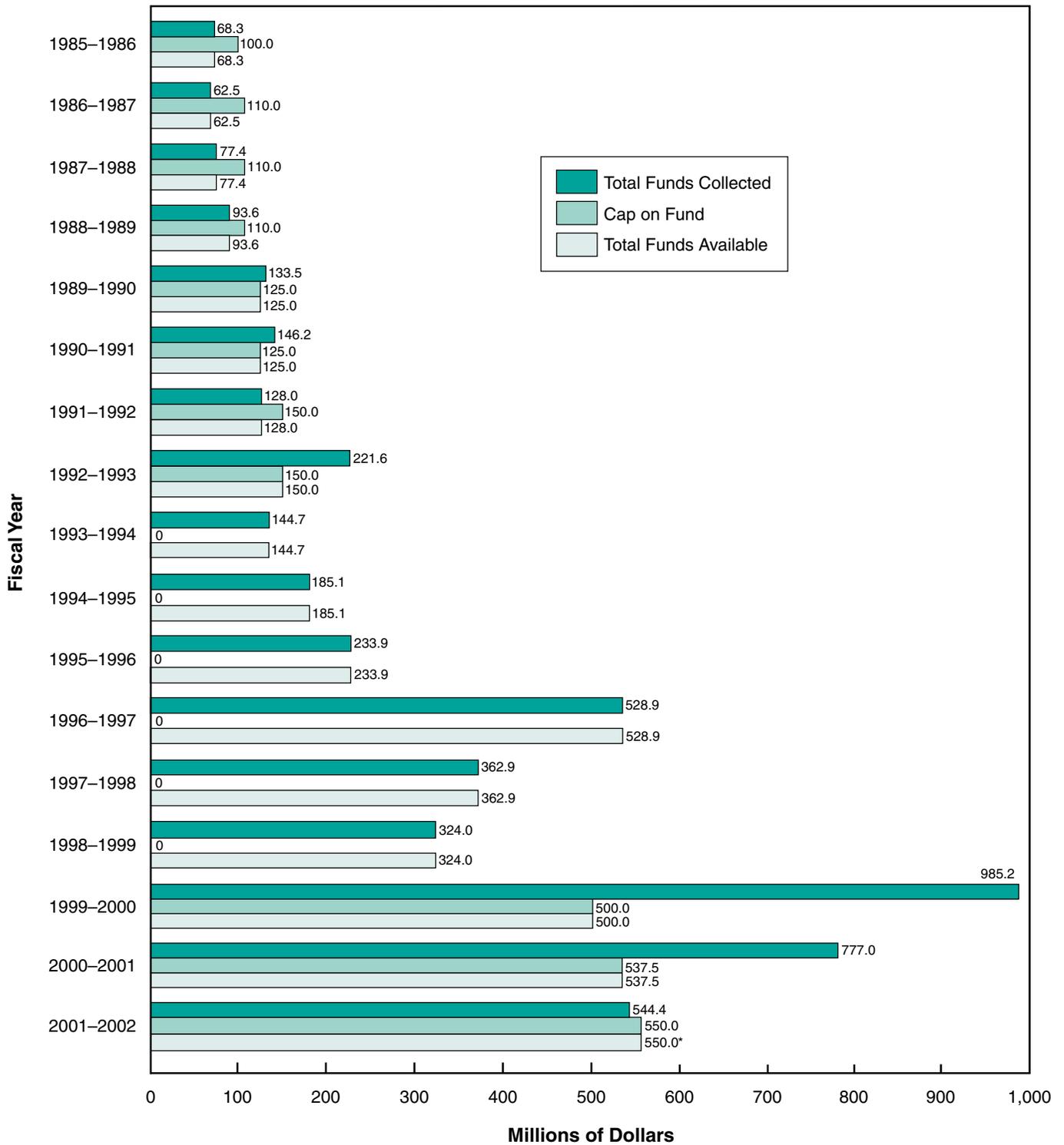
and the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) (up to \$3 million). OVC uses the portion it administers exclusively to help American Indian populations and their governing organizations improve the skills necessary to investigate and prosecute child abuse cases, particularly in regard to identifying and handling cases of child sexual abuse.

- **Federal Criminal Justice System.** Since FY 2000, an unspecified amount of the Fund has been allocated each year to the federal criminal justice system (\$22.1 million in FY 2000 and \$25.1 million in FY 2001 and \$25.1 million in FY 2002) to improve services to victims of federal crimes.
- **Emergency Reserve.** Up to \$50 million may be set aside by the OVC Director and placed in an Emergency Reserve account. The Emergency Reserve funds can be used for two purposes:²
 - To provide funds to assist victims of terrorism or mass violence.

¹ Money deposited in the Fund in one year is used to support programs authorized by VOCA in the next or subsequent year.

² Recently passed legislation (USA Patriot Act, October 2001) authorized the transfer of emergency supplemental appropriation funding into the Emergency Reserve account to assist victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

Crime Victims Fund



* Fiscal year 2001 fund collections have been augmented by funds collected but not used in previous years due to the cap.

- ❑ To fund the International Terrorism Victim Compensation Program.

■ **Distributions.** The remaining Fund deposits are distributed as follows:

- ❑ 47.5 percent to state compensation programs.
- ❑ 47.5 percent to state assistance programs.
- ❑ 5 percent for discretionary activities such as demonstration projects, training, technical assistance, program evaluation and compliance, fellowships, clinical internships, and other assistance to improve and expand the delivery of services to federal crime victims.

Victim Compensation

What Is Crime Victim Compensation?

Crime victim compensation is a direct reimbursement to or on behalf of a crime victim for the following crime-related expenses:

- Medical costs.
- Funeral and burial costs.
- Mental health counseling.
- Lost wages or loss of support.

Other compensable expenses may include the replacement or repair of eyeglasses or other corrective lenses, dental services and devices, prosthetic devices, and crime scene cleanup.

What Is a Crime Victim Compensation Program?

Every state administers a crime victim compensation program that provides financial assistance to victims of both federal and state crimes. Although each state compensation program is administered independently, most programs have similar eligibility requirements and

offer a comparable range of benefits. Maximum awards generally range from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

The typical compensation program requires victims to report crimes to law enforcement within 3 days of the offense and to file claims within a fixed period of time (usually 2 years). Most states can extend these time limits for good cause. If other financial resources such as private health and property insurance are available to the victim, the program pays only to the extent that these resources do not cover the loss.

Which States Receive VOCA Compensation Grants?

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam receive VOCA compensation grants. A state is eligible for a VOCA compensation grant if it meets the criteria set forth in VOCA and OVC program guidelines. Examples of these criteria include that states must provide services for victims of federal crimes and compensation to people who are victimized within the state (even when the victim resides in another state). The amount of VOCA compensation grant funding a state receives is based on a percentage of the payments to crime victims from state funding sources in the previous year.

Victim Assistance

What Is Victim Assistance?

Victim assistance includes, but is not limited to, the following services:

- Crisis intervention.
- Emergency shelter.
- Emergency transportation.
- Counseling.
- Criminal justice advocacy.

Nearly 6,100 VOCA awards are made by states annually to organizations to provide

these and other services to victims of crime.

Which States and Territories Receive VOCA Victim Assistance Grants?

All states and most territories receive an annual VOCA victim assistance grant. The 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico each receive a base amount of \$500,000. The territories of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and American Samoa each receive a base amount of \$200,000. Additional funds are distributed to states and territories based on population. States and territories competitively award VOCA assistance funds to local community-based organizations that provide services directly to victims of crime.

How Do States and Territories Determine Which Organizations Will Receive VOCA Victim Assistance Grants?

Each state and territory determines which organizations will receive funding based on the eligibility requirements for subrecipient programs contained in VOCA, the victim assistance guidelines promulgated by OVC, and the needs of crime victims within that state or territory. Most funding is awarded on a competitive basis.

VOCA assistance funds may be used only for direct services to crime victims. Services such as offender rehabilitation, criminal justice improvements, and crime prevention activities cannot be supported with VOCA victim assistance funds.

Discretionary Funds

What Is the Purpose of Discretionary Funds?

VOCA authorizes OVC to use discretionary funds to improve and

enhance the skills, knowledge, and abilities of victim service providers. Each year, OVC develops a program plan that identifies the training and technical assistance and demonstration initiatives that should be funded in the coming year with discretionary funds available from the Fund.

How Are Discretionary Funds Used?

Discretionary funds are used for two types of activities:

- National-scope training and technical assistance to include the following:
 - ❑ Carrying out program evaluations.
 - ❑ Carrying out and evaluating demonstration programs.
 - ❑ Conducting special workshops.
 - ❑ Supporting victims' rights compliance efforts.
 - ❑ Developing training curricula.
 - ❑ Establishing fellowships and clinical internships.
 - ❑ Identifying and disseminating promising practices in victim services.

- ❑ Supporting efforts to raise national awareness of victims' rights and needs.
- ❑ Training professionals who work in victim services and allied fields.
- ❑ Delivering technical assistance.
- Services and support for federal crime victims to include the following:
 - ❑ Developing materials that inform federal crime victims of their rights and the services available to them.
 - ❑ Supporting programs that establish new and expand existing services for federal crime victims.
 - ❑ Training federal criminal justice system personnel on victims' issues.

For More Information

For more information about the Crime Victims Fund, contact

Office for Victims of Crime
U.S. Department of Justice

810 Seventh Street NW., Eighth Floor
Washington, DC 20531
202-307-5983
Fax: 202-514-6383
Web site: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc

For copies of this fact sheet, other OVC publications, or information on additional victim-related resources, please contact

Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center (OVCRC)
P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
1-800-627-6872 or 301-519-5500
(TTY 1-877-712-9279)
Web site: www.ncjrs.org
E-mail: askovc@ojp.usdoj.gov

Or order OVC publications online at www.puborder.ncjrs.org.

The Office for Victims of Crime is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

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