

Support the VOCA Bridge

\$60M needed to bridge impending cuts to VOCA programs to maintain victim services.

What is the VOCA Bridge?

The **VOCA Bridge** is a multi-year \$60 million funding request to the Massachusetts Legislature to bridge impending cuts to VOCA programs to maintain victim services. A state investment will support and stabilize critical victim service programs throughout the Commonwealth and ensure access to trauma-informed services remain accessible.

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funding:

MOVA is the sole administrator of federal Victim of Crime Act's (VOCA) funding in Massachusetts. VOCA is not funded by taxpayers, but rather originates from monetary penalties associated with federal criminal convictions.

VOCA dollars are the only funding source available for services to all victims of crime.

Funding available for VOCA grants is historically low. The future of victim services in the Commonwealth is in jeopardy as a result of significantly reduced annual federal funding and limited new deposits into the [Crime Victims Fund](#).

The result: Any decrease in the funds available for distribution results in a decrease in the number of victims and survivors that are served as well as potential loss of essential staff for victim service programs.

Impact on Massachusetts

VOCA grant awards, administered by MOVA, have steadily declined since FY18 mirroring the reductions in the VOCA fund, while demand for services has increased:



Massachusetts' FY21 award is at a 5-year low, approximately 35% less than the previous year. This means there is less funding to support services for crime victims as the need has increased and shifted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reduced available dollars will impact funding to services that impact all victims of crime including children's advocacy centers, sexual assault programs, domestic violence programs, homicide bereavement programs, victim legal assistance services, elder abuse programs and other services to underserved crime victims who were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Federal Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23):

MOVA funds 161 programs through the VOCA funding stream and approximately 72% of grant awards support staffing in community based and law enforcement programs. **On July 1, 2022, all programs funded by MOVA will have services and staffing reduced without a critical, lifeline investment from the state.** We anticipate continued reductions through FY25 as we manage and administer several years of reduced funding.

This includes populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and disproportionately impacted by violence- often the same communities. Marginalized populations need culturally specific programming that values diversity, understands racial inequalities, and develops services and supports to meet the unique needs of each community. Cuts to services would be especially devastating to already underserved populations.

Governor Baker recently filed **H.4479 *An Act making appropriations for fiscal year 2022 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects*** which fully funds the VOCA Bridge for the next three years. Legislative support of H.4479 is needed to avoid an interruption in services.

Resolution from the federal government:

MOVA worked closely with victim service stakeholders nationally to advocate for critical changes to the VOCA statute to provide sustainability to the Crime Victims Fund and ensure continued services nationally and here in Massachusetts. On July 20, 2021 our bill, *VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021*, was signed into law by President Biden.

As of January 2022, the federal Office for Victims of Crime is already reporting increased deposits into the Crime Victims Fund compared to the previous year. MOVA anticipates the Fund will return to a healthy balance over the next several years. **However, while a monumental victory for the victim service community, passage of the law does not immediately impact MOVA's reduced funding for FY23, FY24 and FY25.**

Request:

Support and expeditiously pass H.4479 to ensure the sustainability of services throughout the Commonwealth