

Advocating for Underserved Victims in California: The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

Why should VOCA funds be distributed to underserved community organizations?

Throughout California, there are community organizations working on the front lines, providing health, healing and trauma recovery services. Often founded by victims of violence, these grassroots groups have a deep understanding of the impact of crime on both families and communities. They work with hard-to-reach and underserved crime victims – people who are typically not reached by the traditional infrastructure of victim services funded and supported by the state. Investments in these types of grassroots organizations will have a tremendous impact on linking survivors to the services that can help them to recover and avoid future harm.

State-based advocacy tools to bring VOCA funding to your community

The tremendous increase in VOCA funds will be wasted if the communities most affected by violence are not at the center of the investment strategy. To succeed in expanding the distribution of VOCA funds to previously underserved populations, organizations will need a multi-pronged approach:

- Elevate the voices of crime survivors by joining Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice.
- Build state-based advocacy capacity that will engage VOCA administrators to direct funding to hard-to-reach crime survivors.
- Raise awareness about who is most likely to be harmed but least likely to be recognized or served as victims of crime.
- Identify and build relationships with key decision-makers.

Two toolkits are available to provide assistance:

- Californians for Safety and Justice's Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and the Need for Advocacy toolkit helps organizations learn to advocate on behalf of underserved crime victims.
- Equal Justice USA's Apply for VOCA Funding toolkit helps organizations navigate the grant application process.



Why is this issue important?

Underserved populations – particularly African Americans and Latinos are disproportionately impacted by violent crime and violent crime that results in death.

- African Americans and Latinos in California are more likely to have been the victim of three or more crimes in the past five years.
- Victims of violent crime are more likely to be low-income, young (especially under 30), and Latino or African American.
- Many repeat victims have difficulty accessing trauma and victim services.
- From 2012-2014, almost 23 percent (781) of homicide victims in California were young men of color. Since 2005, the majority of homicide victims have been young Latino males.
- Young men of color accounted for 17.4% of non-fatal hospitalizations and 24.6% of deaths due to assault injuries in 2014.

For more information:

Aswad Thomas

916-201-0051

aswad@safeandjust.org

