



CRIME VICTIMS COMPENSATION: PROGRAM NEEDS IN WASHINGTON STATE

Issue

Crime Victims Compensation (CVC) pays for sexual assault forensic exams to provide prosecutors with the forensic evidence they need to hold offenders accountable.

CVC can cover the costs of medical and mental health treatment or burials once other insurance has been exhausted. This means that survivors of all crimes, including sexual assault, have access to the care they need to heal.

Every CVC claim is unique because every crime victim's needs are unique. Also, crime rates vary from year to year. This means that the amount CVC pays to victims and service providers also varies each year.

Funding for CVC comes solely from fines paid by offenders on the federal and state level - through the state general fund.

The CVC program in Washington has been impacted by the state budget deficit. The program must currently reduce its budget by approximately 1.5 million dollars. To meet this, the program has sought to streamline operations and reduce some of the benefits offered to victims of crime.

Benefit changes include elimination of permanent partial disability and vehicle modifications. As a Coalition we strongly encourage that a sunset date be set on these proposed benefit eliminations, so that in times of a more robust budget, benefits can be restored.

Crime victim benefits were significantly reduced last year. A sunset date was established to review these reductions in 2015. It is critical that both last year's changes and the currently proposed changes be reviewed upon sunset so that assistance to crime victims is not progressively undercut.

The CVC program was established to support victims. When benefits are continually pared down due to budget needs, we lose the intent of the funding and the ability to support victims with their needs. Reductions to this program have real and significant impacts in the lives of victims.

We highly encourage the legislature to place a sunset date on any benefit reduction that may occur this year.

Quite simply, when crime victims lose - we all lose!

The Coalition supports:

- The legislature to set a sunset date on the elimination of partial permanent disability benefits and on vehicle modification benefits.
- To re-establish benefits reduced in 2010 upon sunset date of 2015.
- To maintain a stable CVC budget and reasonable eligibility requirements that meet victims' needs to provide healing to victims.

Solution

History

Crime Victims Compensation (CVC) is a state program that pays for sexual assault forensic exams, and, if a victim reports the crime to law enforcement, other costs associated with crime, including medical or mental health treatment. CVC pays only after other forms of insurance have been exhausted.

Washington State is not alone - all 50 states have a program to compensate victims. The first such program was created in 1965. The Washington State Legislature passed the Crime Victims Compensation Act in 1973. CVC is administered by the Department of Labor & Industries.

In 1984, the United States Congress passed the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) which established a Crime Victims Fund (CVF). The CVF collects fees from offenders and then disperses funds to each state for Crime Victims

Compensation, as well as victim assistance programs. In 2001, the USA PATRIOT Act increased the federal payout formula from 40 percent to 60 percent of state expenditures.



CVC is the “payer of last resort” in Washington State and across the country. This means that private or public insurance and similar sources must be exhausted before CVC will step in to cover costs. Victims are required to cooperate with criminal investigations, beginning with filing a report.

The exception is the Sexual Assault Forensic Exam - the sole purpose of which is to collect evidence for possible prosecution - any other treatment at the time of the exam is only covered if the victim files a report.

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