State VOCA Educational Phone Script

Find your Pennsylvania State Senator and/or State Representative

When connected to a staffer or voicemail:

"Good **morning / afternoon**. My name is **[NAME]** and I'm a constituent from **[YOUR CITY / COUNTY]**. I'm reaching out today as someone who works directly with victims of crime in our community.

"I'd like to thank **[Representative / Senator NAME]** for supporting crime victims through another infusion of emergency funding for the Victims Compensation Assistance Program and increasing funding for rape crisis centers in our most recent state budget, and for continuing to support programs that serve victims and survivors in our community. I also want to make them aware of an urgent issue that is threatening the stability of our state victim services infrastructure.

"For more than 40 years, federal Victims of Crime Act, or VOCA, grants have been a reliable cornerstone of Pennsylvania's response to crime:

- "VOCA-funded programs provide a lifeline to people who have experienced domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, exploitation, and other crimes, often at the moment when they are most vulnerable.
- "These services help Pennsylvanians find safety, navigate the justice system, access emergency assistance, receive counseling, and begin rebuilding their lives.
- "Additionally, VOCA reimburses most state expenses to Pennsylvania's Victim Compensation Assistance Program, which helps offset the financial costs faced by crime victims, such as medical, counseling, funeral, and relocation expenses.

"Unfortunately, deposits to the federal Crime Victims Fund – which supports VOCA grants – have dropped drastically in recent years, from a high of $13 billion in 2018 to an anticipated $620 million for the start of 2027—the lowest opening balance for the fund in 26 years.

"These declines have forced Pennsylvania to impose two reductions totaling 12.5% to VOCA-funded programs, which have posed significant challenges for our organization, including **[briefly describe your impacts, e.g., reductions in staff or services. Examples below:**

- **Cutting critical positions such as** [advocate, counselor, therapist, attorney, shelter, administrative positions, etc.].
- **Reducing/eliminating essential services such as** [shelter and housing programs, court/medical accompaniment, crisis response and on-call advocacy, counseling, therapy and trauma treatment, legal representation and civil legal assistance, etc.]

"Pennsylvania's annual VOCA award is expected to continue declining, and programs are now facing a significant cut next year, and up to an 80% reduction in the next two years if no action is taken.

"Several states have stepped in with stopgap solutions to, at the very least, keep critical victims' services doors open.

"I am reaching out to make you aware of this situation and the impact it's already having on our community. I am happy to coordinate a visit for **[Representative / Senator NAME]** and staff to **[YOUR ORGANIZATION]** in **[YOUR CITY]** to offer a firsthand view of how these programs operate and the critical role that VOCA plays in supporting our most vulnerable neighbors.

"Thank you for your time and consideration."

State VOCA Educational Email Template

Find your Pennsylvania State Senator and/or State Representative

Subject: Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funding

Dear **[Representative / Senator NAME]**,

My name is **[NAME]** and I'm a constituent from **[YOUR CITY / COUNTY]** who works directly with victims of crime in our community. I'd like to thank you for supporting crime victims through another infusion of emergency funding for the Victims Compensation Assistance Program and increased funding for rape crisis centers in our most recent state budget, and for continuing to support programs that serve victims and survivors in our community.

I also want to make you aware of an urgent issue that is threatening the stability of our state victim services infrastructure. For more than 40 years, federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants have been a reliable cornerstone of Pennsylvania's response to crime:

- VOCA-funded programs provide a lifeline to people who have experienced domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, exploitation, and other crimes, often when they are most vulnerable.
- These services help Pennsylvanians find safety, navigate the justice system, access emergency assistance, receive counseling, and begin rebuilding their lives.
- Additionally, VOCA reimburses most state expenses to Pennsylvania's Victim Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP), which helps offset the financial costs faced by crime victims, such as medical, counseling, funeral, and relocation expenses.

Unfortunately, deposits to the federal Crime Victims Fund – which supports VOCA grants – have dropped drastically in recent years, from a high of $13 billion in 2018 to an anticipated $620 million for the start of 2027—the lowest opening balance for the fund in 26 years.

These declines have forced Pennsylvania to impose two reductions to VOCA-funded programs. This 12.5% reduction has posed significant challenges for our organization, including **[briefly describe your impacts, e.g., reductions in staff or services. Examples below:**

- **Cutting critical positions such as** [advocate, counselor, therapist, attorney, shelter, administrative positions, etc.].
- **Reducing/eliminating essential services such as** [shelter and housing programs, court/medical accompaniment, crisis response and on-call advocacy, counseling, therapy and trauma treatment, legal representation and civil legal assistance, etc.]

Pennsylvania's annual VOCA award is expected to continue declining, and programs are now facing a significant cut next year, and up to an 80% reduction in the next two years if no action is taken.

As you know, state budgets and local providers have worked hard over the last decade to stretch limited resources, but there is a dire limit to how much more the system can absorb. Several states have stepped in with stopgap solutions to, at the very least, keep critical victims' services doors open.

I am reaching out to make you aware of this situation and the impact it's already having on our community. If interested, I am happy to coordinate a visit for you and your staff to **[YOUR ORGANIZATION]** in **[YOUR CITY]** to offer a firsthand view of how these programs operate and the critical role that VOCA plays in supporting our most vulnerable neighbors. Thank you for your time and consideration.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency's (PCCD) Office of Victims' Services (OVS) has assembled key information, resources, and updates about the VOCA funding crisis on their website. I encourage you to visit the page to learn more.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME, TITLE]
[YOUR ORGANIZATION]
[YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS]
[YOUR PHONE NUMBER]