



Courage • Strength • Resilience

Annual Report

FY 2017-18



pennsylvania
OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE

Giving Crime Victims a Voice



December 27, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

The Office of Victim Advocate is pleased to announce the release of our Annual Report for fiscal year 2017 - 2018. While it is not a legislative requirement for the Office of Victim Advocate to submit such a report, in the spirit of transparency, I feel strongly that the Commonwealth be informed of the exceptional work being done and the services provided to crime victim/survivors.

The Office of Victim Advocate is responsible for elevating the voices, needs and concerns of all crime victims/survivors within the post-sentencing process in Pennsylvania. As the Victim Advocate, it is my unique and honored role to ensure those voices are heard at all levels of government.

As you will see in the following report, the past two years have been times of significant growth in staffing and service delivery. Five years into my six-year term of office, and I am proud of the achievements we have been able to make in increasing registration and awareness, we have:

- opened an initial satellite office by partnering with the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, creating a much needed state presence and ensuring all crime victims/survivors receive timely notification of their post-conviction rights and services
- created the first in the nation position centered on assisting incarcerated victims/survivors of physical assault within our state correctional facilities
- opened our second satellite office within the Office of Attorney General
- added multiple new staff positions including a Policy Director, Special Assistant, Supervisor and several new Victim Assistance Coordinators increasing the staff complement from 16 (in 2013) to 29
- successfully advocated for the passage of Marsy's Law and continue to work towards its final passage and implementation in 2019
- advocated on behalf of hundreds of high profile victims/survivors of crime as a result of the 40th Grand Jury presentation and the sentencing of Bill Cosby
- relocated to a new office space, more than doubling our square footage at the River Front Office Complex

This report reflects those accomplishments, and I welcome your continued support of the work we do, as well as your support of all crime victims/survivors in the Commonwealth.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Storm, Commonwealth Victim Advocate



Registrations

Only those registered with OVA receive notifications of the movement of their offender and will be provided opportunity to provide input when their offender is being reviewed for parole eligibility. Registering victims/survivors with OVA is crucial in order to facilitate all of the rights afforded to them under current law. Victims/survivors are eligible for registration at the time an offender is sentenced to state incarceration or supervision.

By law, it is incumbent upon the district attorney (DA) to supply the crime victim/survivor with information about OVA. OVA has advocated to the legislature that it be made mandatory through law that the DA provide OVA with victim/survivor information so that we may fully inform them of their rights thus ensuring every crime victim/survivor in Pennsylvania is fully empowered.

Total active OVA registrations: 47,100

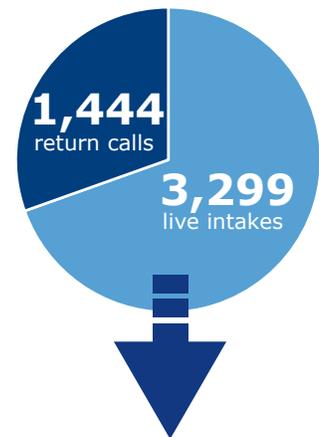
- includes SORNA registrations: 4,070



Intake Assessment & Referral Unit

As of March 19, the Intake Assessment and Referral Unit (IARU) was piloted to answer the higher demand of crime victims/survivors calling in for support. Previously, calls were fielded by the available coordinator in no particular organized or

trackable method, while coordinators were simultaneously completing a number of other tasks. To not only give more focused attention to assignments, but to dedicate select coordinators solely to assisting, deescalating, and assessing the needs of crime victims/survivors, we have streamlined our services. The IARU is currently staffed by 4 coordinators and one supervisor, and has provided the opportunity to help clients in a more holistic and trauma informed approach.



resulting in

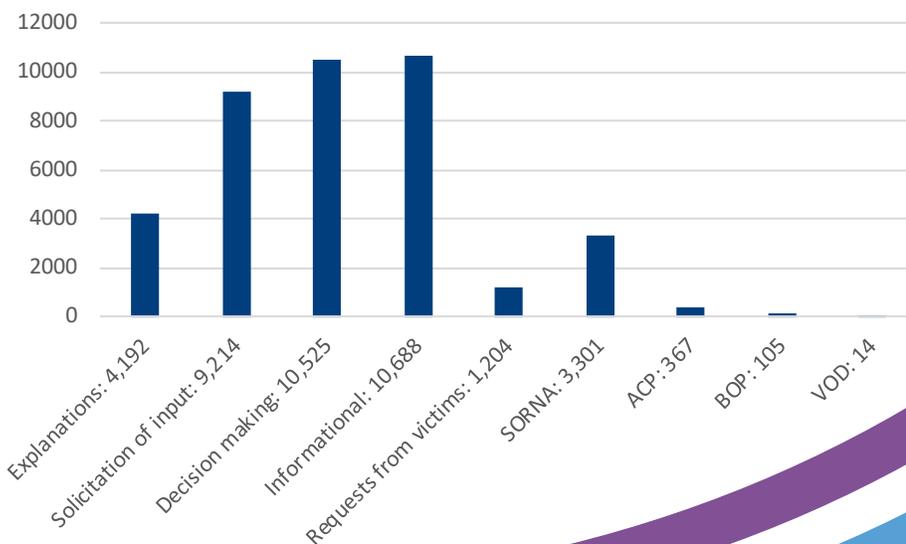
5,018 tasks

Daily average: 68 calls per day



Notifications

Victims/survivors registered with OVA receive a variety of notifications regarding the status of their offender(s).





Programs

Inmate Apology Bank

Victims/survivors of crime may wonder whether their offender has taken responsibility or feels remorse for their actions. Likewise, offenders may want to accept responsibility for their actions and acknowledge the harm they caused. The Inmate Apology Bank (IAB) was created for victims/survivors who are interested in receiving an apology letter from the offender in their case. IAB allows letters to be written and received without violating policies that prohibit offenders from contacting victims/survivors.



Institutional Victim/Survivor Assistance

Incarcerated victims/survivors of crime deserve and have a legal right to services just like any other crime victim/survivor, whether their victimization happened prior to incarceration or while serving their sentence. Staff who are assaulted while on the job in a state institution should be afforded all the same rights and services as any other crime victim/survivor in the Commonwealth. OVA now has an advocate dedicated to providing free and confidential services to anyone who has an active or pending criminal case where they are identified as the crime victim/survivor or anyone who is physically assaulted while incarcerated or working in a state facility.



Most visits last 45 min to 1 hour.

- SCI Cambridge Springs: 1 inmate, 2 visits
- SCI Smithfield: 1 inmate, 1 visit
 - 1 phone call session with 1 inmate
- SCI Muncy: 2 inmates, 18 visits

Address Confidentiality Program

The ACP is available to victims/survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking, as well their household members. The program provides an alternate mailing address to keep their actual home address out of public records where their perpetrator may find their location.

68 registrations **436 current adults, 440 children**



featuring





Victim/Survivor Input

Testimony

Crime victims/survivors have the right to provide input to a panel of board members when their offender becomes eligible for parole. OVA assists victims/survivors in preparing their testimony to be provided in writing or in person.

**615 In Person
Testimony Requests**



976 Attendees

featuring



Board of Pardons

OVA provides support and accompaniment services to victims/survivors who choose to testify during the Board of Pardons process. There is an increased number of offenders filing for commutation consideration and receiving merit review; and therefore, an increased need for these services for victims/survivors. As this program is relatively new, OVA continues to strive for additional meaningful ways to support victims/survivors during this process.

Victim Offender Dialogue

As of April 1, 2018, OVA now has a full time Victim Offender Dialogue (VOD) Coordinator. The goal of having a full time coordinator is to eliminate the current waiting list of almost a year and be able to start the VOD process shortly after the request as long as both parties are in agreement. VOD program updates include a full-time VOD coordinator, video conferencing intakes, and streamlining victim/survivor intakes.

50 facilitators



managing

27 active files



including

18 new intake requests



from victims



Trainings

Impact of Crime Class

Upon our request to Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel, this class was made mandatory at all state correctional institutions in 2017. OVA works diligently throughout the year to provide subject matter expertise to facilitators and logistic support for this course. In addition, staff members from OVA spoke at 6 classes this year.

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Basic Training Academy

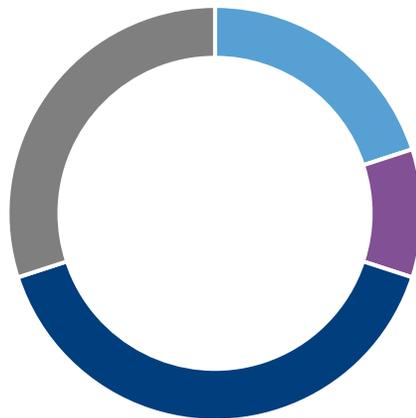
Three trainings provided for a total of 200 attendees. Classes included state and county parole agents and probation officers.

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Address Confidentiality Program

Six trainings were provided on ACP this year at various conferences, making community and service providers aware of the safety benefits of the program.

Other Victim Awareness Trainings



- Foundational Academy: 2
- Institutional Victim Awareness: 1
- Corrections Counselor Training: 4
- Transitional Housing Unit: 3



Community Impact

Resilient Voices

The path to healing is different for everyone. Often times, for survivors and others affected by crime, healing leads to a desire to speak – to embrace their voice and share their personal experience with others. The goal of the Resilient Voices Program is to provide a space for survivors to share their experience, strength and hope. Members are offered opportunities to speak at community events throughout the year.

48 total speakers

14 new members added



Pajama Drive

OVA hosts a pajama drive for foster children across PA each year. This year, thirteen counties participated and received a total of over 3,500 pajamas for children in their communities. This is an increase from 700 pajamas that were collected and delivered to Dauphin County last year.

Pictured right are county representatives who collected pajamas at the quarterly Pennsylvania Children and Youth Association meeting.



Day of Responsibility

The Day of Responsibility provides offenders with the opportunity to reflect on the impact their crimes have had on victims/survivors, families and communities. Accepting responsibility for their crimes, as well as making amends, are key components during this day. OVA was honored to participate with 12 correctional institutions this year.

Awareness Days

Throughout the year, OVA staff participated in various awareness days. Pictures below are staff wearing teal for National Sexual Assault Awareness Day. By participating in days like this, we signal to survivors that we believe them and we support them. It can also open a conversation about facts, statistics and resources that are available in your own community.





Community Impact *continued*

Speaking/Rallies/Events

The Victim Advocate is charged, by statute, to represent the voice of the victim/survivor community throughout all levels of government in Pennsylvania. This is accomplished in the following ways:

Legislation and Policy Advocacy

Marsy's Law passed both the House and Senate chambers this year and will be presented for a final passage to amend the PA constitution in early 2019. Marsy's Law will elevate existing rights for victims, as such, this is a primary agenda item of the Victim Advocate.



Marsy's Law Kick Off Meeting



Marsy's Law Press Event



Support of Karen's Law



Marsy's Law for Crime Victims' Rights Week



Press event with Governor for sexual misconduct website

Partnerships and Events



Philadelphia Homicide Support Group



Finding Jenn's Voice



Staff walk 5K for sexual assault awareness



National Crime Victims' Rights Week Rally



Community Impact *continued*

Speaking/Rallies/Events *continued*

Representing Victims/Survivors in the Media

The Victim Advocate was interviewed for three documentaries this year - one on Crime Victims' Compensation for University of Pennsylvania, and two on juvenile lifer issues for both Temple University and National Public Radio (NPR).

Additionally, Ms. Storm was invited to offer the keynote address at the Jefferson Hospital Sexual Assault Conference and to speak at the PA Press Club about victims' rights. Various news interviews occurred throughout the year, including one at Capitol Beat Fox 43 in response to the #metoo movement and sexual misconduct realities coming to light so broadly.



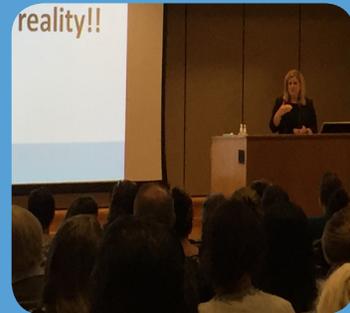
Capitol Beat Fox 43



Speaking at PA Press Club



Victims' Compensation Documentary for UPenn



Jefferson Hospital Sexual Assault Conference Keynote

What an Honor it Was!

In light of the #metoo movement and the Time's Up campaign, the Victim Advocate was selected as one of a few of advocates from across the country to attend the Trump State of the Union Address to continue to raise awareness of the issues around sexual violence and misconduct. Congressman Dwight Evans asked Ms. Storm to accompany him as a special guest. They spent the day together in DC doing media interviews and raising much needed awareness about issues impacting victims/survivors.



Hosting APPA

OVA hosted the National American Probation & Parole Association Annual Conference in Philadelphia which brought together over 2,000 criminal justice professionals - a record!



Secretary Wetzel and Senator Street

Hosting NAVAC

PA was chosen to host the National Association of Victim Services in Corrections conference.





Looking to the Future

Although this report may seem exhaustive, our work is far from complete. As we look toward the future, we plan to further shape our strategic vision for the following initiatives:

- advocating for the final passage and implementation of Marsy's Law, statute of limitations reform, restitution bills, justice reinvestment and more
- meeting the needs of the juvenile community through Restorative Group Conferencing programs
- developing a framework for county and state crisis response in the aftermath of mass violence
- revisiting the Restitution Taskforce
- increasing training and public awareness

As always, we thank you. For taking the time to learn about the programs that are so vital to supporting the victim/survivor community, and for standing with us to elevate their voices. We look forward to another year in service.

The Office of Victim Advocate is dedicated to

representing, protecting and advancing

the individual & collective rights of crime victims.



Staff Responsibilities

All of the programs and services you've read about would not be possible without this dedicated and amazing group of employees. Should you have questions or needs related to a specific area, please feel free to contact our office at 1.800.563.6399 or ra-ovainfo@pa.gov and ask to speak with the appropriate staff member listed below.

Jennifer Storm, Commonwealth Victim Advocate

Senior Staff:

Pennie Hockenberry, Policy Director

Ashley N. Walkowiak, Executive Assistant

Tanner D. Widdowson, Director of Victim Services

Karen Laird, Director of Outreach and Programming

Tara Gross, Victim Assistance Supervisor

Renee Bressler, Special Assistant

**contact at rebressler@pa.gov for scheduling the Victim Advocate*

Victim Assistance Coordinators in our central office include:

Mike Arceo-Maddy

Tatiana McConnell

Pam Behr

- Restitution

Melissa Merolla

- Board of Pardons

Heather Cattron

- Institutional Victim Assistance

Nina Morris

Nicole Evans

- Inmate Apology Bank

Vicki Palmer

- Board of Pardons

Mandy Goddard

Amanda Shradley

- Victim/Offender Dialogue

Missy Hunsberger

Gerald "JR" Waltemyer

- Address Confidentiality Program

Heather Julius

- In Person Victim Testimony

June Wilson-Moore

- Sex Offender Registration Notification Act

Jessica Kasaback

Lisa Martire

- Victim Awareness Education Classes, Resilient Voices

Victim Assistance Coordinators in the field include:

Annette Gantz, Office of Attorney General

Vacant, Philadelphia District Attorney's Office