It’s Regional Time!

Regional Conferences are a Spring tradition for the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards. This year, the Western Regional convenes in Salt Lake City, Utah, April 9—11, and the Eastern Regional will be held from April 29—May 1 in Providence, Rhode Island.

The agenda for each conference has shaped up into discussions focused on taking programs to the next level — “going from good to great,” as Association Secretary Laura Banks Reed once said of her aspirations for her District of Columbia program. Utah Program Director Gary Scheller has been particularly active in examining his program’s eligibility requirements and benefits, and he’s gathered a number of experts and seasoned professionals to help examine such things as the “meaning of cooperation,” and the difficulties sexual assault victims have in gaining access to compensation. Improving restitution recovery, building trust in relationships with Native American victims, and managing mental health claims also will be addressed by experts on those issues. In Rhode Island, Compensation Administrator Melba De pena has led a thorough examination of her own program over the last year, and will share how she is moving forward on expansion and reform. The financial consequences of sexual assault, and how compensation programs can do a better job of helping these victims, will be one focal point for participants. Ensuring that evidence-based mental-health treatments are encouraged and supported is on the table as well, with experts helping sort through the good and the bad in therapy, especially for child victims. Improving outreach, claims processing, and decision making also are up for discussion. And the experience of responding to mass violence will be related by our colleagues in Arizona, Colorado, and Connecticut.

As usual in our Regionals, the emphasis is on exploring issues in small groups, where compensation managers and staff can ask individual questions and share successful strategies. Much of the excitement at these conferences comes from learning directly from those who are advancing their programs in new ways and taking a fresh look at operational issues.

Regional issues, such as the impact of Medicaid expansion and mandatory individual insurance requirements, also will be discussed.

Thirty state compensation programs are expected at both Regionals, a great showing. We look forward to learning together and sharing ideas that move the field forward.
The beginning of the year is always a busy one for our member programs, as well as for the Association. Each of us focuses on our legislative sessions, preparing budgets and considering programmatic changes. The Association provides support in responding to member requests relating to these matters, and begins planning Regional and National Conferences. We also join with our colleagues in allied organizations in an annual effort to ensure that the VOCA cap is as high as possible. This task has been particularly challenging this year because of federal budget and sequestration concerns.

We have been engaging with the federal Office for Victims of Crime on a number of matters, and I recently attended a meeting hosted by OVC in Washington, D.C., with a group of other state compensation and assistance managers. We discussed a number of issues with Joye Frost and her staff, including how sequestration might affect the various types of grants OVC administers. As we have been updating you, it appears that these cuts will not affect VOCA compensation grants. OVC legal staff spoke about regulations being drafted to replace the current “guidelines” governing compensation grants, but no major changes are expected. Other organizations in the victims field will be asked for input on the draft, which will not be released for some time. OVC’s Vision 21 Report may be made public soon, defining new priorities and making the case for more funding for various services. Joye discussed a new discretionary grant opportunity for compensation programs to develop or enhance innovative strategies, especially with regard to underserved populations. We also heard about OVC’s plans to develop “apps” for mobile devices.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our conferences in 2013!

President’s Message from Gene McCleskey

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VOCA Cap Rises, but Budget Cuts Will Affect State Grants

**VOCA Assistance Grants Likely To Bear Brunt of Cuts**

VOCA compensation grants may emerge unscathed from this year’s budget scuffle in Congress, but state assistance grants likely will bear the full impact of sequestration cuts, management and administrative costs, and the shifting of funds by the Department of Justice to other purposes.

If past experience is a guide — and there is no indication so far that it will not be — cuts to VOCA funds, and costs assessed for federal grant management, occur at a level above the point at which compensation grants are calculated. This means that the amount available for compensation grants remains more than sufficient to provide every state a 60%-of-state-payout grant. But the effect of any reduction on VOCA funding is that less remains for VOCA assistance grants, since they receive any amounts left over after all other VOCA purposes are met. In strong years for the VOCA Fund, this means VOCA assistance grants rise, as in 2011, when assistance grants totaled $428 million, compared to $181 million for compensation grants. But assistance grants dropped to $377 million in 2012, and may suffer another 7% drop if all the potential cuts, costs, and shifting of funds occur.

**Transitions . . .**

**Devon McDonald** now serves as the supervisor of the compensation program in the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute, working with Victim Compensation and Services Division Director Mary Neddo. Devon is a recent law school graduate with a background in criminal justice.

**Jeffrey Blystone** is the new Victim Compensation Assistance Program manager in Pennsylvania. Jeff has spent 20 years in state government, most recently as a director with the Department of Health, providing oversight of programs on a variety of public health issues.

**Kristy Ring** has announced her retirement, effective in July, after more than 30 years with the New Mexico Crime Victims Reparation Commission, most recently as its director. Kristy has been active in the Association throughout her career, attending Regionals and the National each year and serving on our Board. She has distinguished herself in leading both compensation and assistance efforts in her state. We thank Kristy for her outstanding service and wish her all the best!

**National Conference Set for September 9-12 in Portland**

The Association will hold its 2013 National Conference from September 9th to 12th in Portland, Oregon. We’re working with the Office for Victims of Crime to present this conference, and we’ll have more detailed information soon for all programs.

We hope you’ll put this on your calendars, and we look forward to seeing you then!

**National Crime Victims Rights Week**

*April 21-27, 2013*  
*New Challenges. New Solutions.*
Western Regional Agenda

Tuesday, April 9
8:30 – 8:50 a.m. Welcomes and Introductions
8:50 – 10:00 a.m. State Roundtable: Current Challenges and Strategies - Each state describes program developments in the past year.
10:00 – 10:15 a.m. Break
10:15 – 11:25 a.m.: Helping Sexual Assault Victims - An expert addresses issues relating to trauma, treatment, and forensic exams.
11:25 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. Lunch on your own
12:45 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Effective Restitution Recovery - Program managers share new ways to create and improve collection capabilities.
1:30 – 2:30 p.m. Restitution Laws and Litigation - A renowned academic and Supreme Court litigator shares the latest on laws and judicial rulings.
2:30 – 2:50 p.m. Break
2:50 – 4:30 p.m. Victim Cooperation: What Does It Mean? A distinguished panel of advocates, police, and compensation programs explores eligibility issues.

Wednesday, April 10
8:30 – 9:30 a.m. Lessons Learned in Managing Compensation and Assistance
Focus is on how the two types of victim services can interact effectively.
10:00 – 10:15 a.m. Break
10:15 – 11:30 a.m. Manager/Staff Small-Group Discussions - Participants can raise and discuss individual problems relating to managing staff and working efficiently.
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch on your own
1:00 – 1:50 p.m. Gangs and Crime Victims - An expert examines the facts, the myths, and the tough issues for compensation programs.
1:50 – 2:30 p.m. Compensation for Native American Crime Victims - A concentrated effort to build relationships with tribal communities will be described.
2:30 – 2:45 p.m. Break
2:45 – 3:30 p.m. Managing Mental Health Claims - Psychiatric nurses will help us understand how programs can manage mental claims effectively.
3:30 – 4:15 p.m. Fostering Change, and Responding to Mass Violence: Lessons learned in Arizona and Colorado will be the focus of this session.

Thursday, April 11
7:30 – 9:00 a.m. Closing Discussion: Future Challenges and Directions
Eastern-Southern Regional Agenda

**Monday, April 29**
3:30 - 5:00 p.m. **State Roundtable:** Each state describes program developments in the past year, highlighting successes and noting challenges.

**Tuesday, April 30**
8:30 - 9:00 a.m. **Defining the Issues: Going from Good to Great** - Participants explore what challenges and issues they face in “taking it to the next level.”
9:00 - 10:00 a.m. **Helping Child Victims with Effective Treatments** – An expert will help sort through what evidence-based treatments have proven to work for child victims.
10:00 - 10:20 a.m. **Break**
10:20 - 11:30 a.m. **Managing Mental Health Counseling: Alternatives for Compensation Programs** – A compensation manager will describe the approach his program takes to ensure effective treatment and control costs, focusing on competence and accountability.
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. **Lunch on your own**
1:00 - 1:30 p.m. **National Challenges for States** - A discussion of impacts on compensation programs of national health care reform, changes in state and VOCA funding, and demographic and crime trends.
1:30 - 2:30 p.m. **Financial Consequences for Sexual Assault Victims** – A researcher shares her work on the needs of sexual assault victims, and what compensation programs can do to help.
2:30 - 2:50 p.m. **Break**
2:50 - 3:15 p.m. **Taking It to the Next Level:** Group Discussion: Participants suggest changes that will make their programs more responsive and effective.
3:15 - 4:30 p.m. Small-Group Discussions: **Problem-Solving on Program Challenges** – Based on individual interest, participants will join small-group discussions on improving claims processing; revising requirements; enhancing benefits; increasing funding.

**Wednesday, May 1**
8:30 - 9:15 a.m. **Effective Outreach: Keys to Success** — Building relationships with advocates and others through trust and reliability is the focus of this presentation.
9:15 - 10:15 a.m. **Taking It to the Next Level** - Small groups will report back on yesterday’s discussions on claims processing, requirements, benefits, and funding
10:15 - 10:30 a.m. **Closing Roundtable and Adjournment**
Some Recent Inquiries

The Association provides help to its member programs on a wide variety of information and technical assistance requests. Sometimes we seek input from our officers and board of directors, which serve as an advisory board; at other times, we run questions by all program managers.

Below are a couple of recent inquiries we've responded to. Let us know if you have a question and we'll do our best to get you an answer —

Compensation in Mexico?

Does Mexico have a crime victim compensation program? With many Americans traveling to this neighboring country, the question is particularly pertinent.

In 2005, the State Department found that Mexico did not have a compensation program. We checked with the Texas victim compensation program, which has made numerous inquiries of Mexican officials over the years, and got this information:

The Mexican government does not provide monetary compensation to victims of crime. Unlike the system in the United States, where compensation payments and victim assistance services are made possible through public funds, in Mexico only the perpetrator has a legal obligation to pay for damages. Some Mexican states provide victims with psychological, legal, and medical assistance, but this varies across Mexico. The quality and availability of victim assistance programs depend mainly on each state's budget. As a general rule, the border Mexican states do not provide assistance.

The International Directory is archived on OVC's website; contact us if you need help locating it.

Emergency HIV Prophylaxis?

An emerging issue for compensation programs is whether they can cover HIV-prevention medication (nPep is the name for the prescription). It’s expensive (approximately $2,000), and it needs to be taken immediately after the crime, so a victim must get her prescription filled quickly. While many compensation programs with special forensic-payment procedures can reimburse an exam facility for providing the victim with a a starter pack of from 3 to 7 days, the rest of the month-long prescription has to be filled later by an outside pharmacy, and most programs cannot pay for that through their forensic exam procedures. This means a victim has to file a regular claim, which means she has to report and cooperate with police, and the claim must be approved quickly. Then some way of paying pharmacies up front must be found, since they won’t dispense the medication without payment or a guarantee of payment, and many victims can’t afford the it themselves and wait for reimbursement. (Note that nPep isn’t recommended for every victim; medical professionals are expected to assess risk factors such as the HIV status of the offender, the prevalence of the disease in the local population, and tissue trauma or injury that would make transmission more likely. The medication is very harsh, and many victims are unable to complete a full month of it.)

New York’s Office of Victim Services (OVC) has found solutions to the challenges of covering this medication. While OVS does operate a special forensic-exam payment procedure, it can only cover a 7-day starter pack through that means. The cost for the remaining 21 days has to come in on a regular claim. So how can it turn these claims around so quickly to ensure payment for the full course?

First, recent legislation allows sexual assault victims to qualify for regular compensation benefits simply by submitting to the forensic exam. So the program doesn’t have to look for a police investigative report; the victim is already eligible. Second, several senior staff are assigned to handle emergency claims, so the program can make immediate decisions. Once the claim is approved, and the victim goes to the pharmacy, OVS makes use of a state procurement card to make payment by phone or electronically. If the pharmacy happens not to accept the procurement card, a check is cut from a special account controlled directly by OVS and expedited to the pharmacy overnight.

While other states are working with hospitals and pharmacies to work out payment challenges, it appears that in New York a combination of a change to eligibility requirements, and a procurement card for making payment, have made a big difference.
National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards

Training Calendar 2013

National Training Conference

September 9-12, 2013
Portland, Oregon

More information will be available soon
The conference is open to all victim compensation program managers, staff and board members

NACVCB Regional Conferences

Salt Lake City, Utah
April 9-11

Providence, Rhode Island
April 29—May 1

Information has been sent to all member programs
Contact us at 703-780-3200