



Pennsylvania
**Commission on Crime
and Delinquency**

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Contact: Ali Gantz, algantz@pa.gov

**Shapiro-Davis Administration and Statewide Advocates Highlight
Victims' Rights Week, Governor Shapiro's Proposed \$9 Million
Investment in Victim Compensation**



Harrisburg, PA — In honor of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, the **Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)** and **Office of Victim Advocate**, teamed up with statewide victim advocacy organizations to highlight the importance of supporting survivors, raising awareness of their rights, and Governor Shapiro's proposed \$9 million investment in the Victims Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP) in the 2025-26 state budget.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week highlights the importance of ensuring that victims of crime receive the support, protection, and justice they deserve. Last year, over 323,000 Pennsylvanians were victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, gun violence, assault, human trafficking, homicide, and other crimes.

"Ensuring that victims are informed, respected, and supported throughout their healing journey is our top priority. No crime victim should have to worry about paying for medical care, no family should face the stress of funeral costs, and no survivor of sexual assault should have to choose between healing and financial hardship," said **Kathy Buckley, Director of PCCD's Office of Victims' Services**. "This week is about making

sure victims know their rights—including their right to financial support to help through some of their most difficult times.”

A critical resource available to Pennsylvania residents is PCCD’s VCAP, which provides financial assistance to victims for expenses incurred as a result of a crime. Each year, VCAP receives an average of 12,000 claims for eligible expenses, including medical and counseling expenses, loss of earnings, loss of support, stolen cash, relocation, funeral costs, crime scene cleanup, and more. Over the past five years, PCCD has paid more than 67,000 VCAP claims totaling \$67 million in eligible expenses for residents across all 67 Pennsylvania counties.

"The right to be restored to pre-victimization economic status is a crime victim's right provided by Pennsylvania law," said **Suzanne V. Estrella, Esq., Commonwealth Victim Advocate**. "The victims compensation fund is a lifeline for crime survivors blindsided by the often devastating and rippling effects of violent crime."

VCAP partners with 887 Pennsylvania police departments to analyze crime reports for eligible expenses quickly, ensuring timely financial assistance for victims. Last year, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania State Police, PCCD streamlined the process, [reducing report turnaround time from months to days](#), expediting support for those in need.

In recent years, VCAP’s expenses have exceeded deposits into the fund, depleting it to a critically low level. Governor Shapiro's proposed \$9 million investment in VCAP for the 2025-26 state budget is pivotal to help stabilize the fund in the short term, ensuring continued support for Pennsylvanians when they need it most.

“Children’s Advocacy Centers provide a comprehensive array of services to abused children in PA, facilitating a collaborative response with child welfare, law enforcement, prosecution, and medical and mental health providers, to ensure that children are safe and have the services necessary for healing,” said **Rebecca Buckham, Communications Manager of Children’s Advocacy Centers of Pennsylvania**. “In 2024, CACs served 14,590 children, and 4,881 of those children received medical evaluations, the vast majority of which were funded with Victims Compensation funding.”

PCCD supports [child advocacy centers](#) and multidisciplinary investigative teams statewide and also provides funding to over [200 victim service programs](#) across Pennsylvania to support essential services for individuals who have experienced crime victimization, including counseling, emergency shelter and safe housing, notification of criminal justice events, crisis intervention, hotlines and crisis counseling, and emergency justice-related assistance. These services ensure that survivors of crime have access to the necessary resources to be supported and are empowered by victim advocates who stand with them in their journey.

“Survivors of sexual violence depend on life-changing services to support them throughout their healing journey. It takes courage to come forward and get a forensic

rape exam,” said **Gabriella Romeo, Public Policy Director at the Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect**. “These exams are at no cost to survivors because of funding from VCAP. This is a vital resource for survivors, assuring they can seek immediate medical care and not worry about payment.”

"PCADV is committed to building stronger and safer communities by creating pathways to safety and justice for victims of domestic violence," said **Jenna Mehnert Baker, Policy Director at the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence**. "Each year, PCADV's network of 59 local domestic violence programs provides free and confidential services to meet the complex needs of nearly 90,000 victims and their children across Pennsylvania."

Crime Victims' Rights

Under state law, victims of crime in Pennsylvania are entitled to specific rights designed to provide them with a voice in the aftermath of a crime. If you or someone you know is a victim of a crime in Pennsylvania, your rights are as follows:

1. Support Services – You can get support from victim services organizations, including counseling and assistance through VCAP.
2. Being Treated with Respect – You have the right to be treated with dignity and fairness by law enforcement and the courts.
3. Information About Your Case – You can ask for updates about your case and the perpetrator's status.
4. Help with Court Processes – You can have someone explain legal procedures to you.
5. Protection from Abuse – You can ask for protection if you're a survivor of domestic violence or sexual assault and you feel unsafe.
6. Input in Sentencing – You can share how the crime affected you before the judge who decides the sentence.
7. Notice of Offender's Release – You can be notified if the offender is released from jail or prison.
8. Restitution – You may be able to receive money to cover losses caused by the crime.
9. Confidentiality – Your personal information should be kept private as much as possible.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of crime, contact your [local victim service organization](#) for resources and support. A [full list of rights](#) and available resources are available on PCCD's [Crime Victims website](#).

Photos/video from today's press conference can be found on [PAcast.com](#).

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