

Victim Compensation Certification (VCC): Best Practices in Completing the VCC Form Webinar Transcript

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Alina Gomez: Hello and welcome to the best practices in completing the Victim Compensation Certification form. My name is Alina Gomez, and I'm a grant management specialist with the State Victim Resource Division for the Office for Victims of Crime. Today, our learning objectives are to understand how to accurately complete the Victim Compensation Certification form and to learn best practices to ensure that the victim compensation program understands the VCC requirements. Remember that the Victim Compensation Certification form is key to accurately calculating future funding for your compensation programs.

For the certification requirements, each state, including territories, that applies for the VOCA Victim Compensation fund must submit annually the VOCA Victim Compensation Certification. They must retain records supporting the data entered in the form. They must maintain a policy that describes the calculation, have the certification form completed and reviewed by the individuals with specialized knowledge on the completion of the form and the compensation program, and have the entity's authorized representative sign the certification. We will review all of these steps in the webinar today.

The certification form data provided is used by OVC to calculate allocations for VOCA-eligible crime victim compensation programs, so it is important that you do not overcertify or undercertify the VCC form. As we review today, we will be outlining how to accurately report on the VCC form to avoid overcertification or undercertification.

Now we will go through a line by line walk through of the VCC form. So, the first part of the VCC form you will complete here has the name of your state, territory, UEI number, and the state of the administering agency. The UEI number can be found in JustGrants, and you want to ensure that you are reporting on the correct reporting period. Yes, the

reporting period is October 2023 to September 2024. We are looking back so that we can project future funding allocations.

The Line A. The total amount. Here you want to enter the total amount of expenditures incurred by the compensation program for payments to or on behalf of crime victims from all funding sources relevant to the fiscal year. Again, the fiscal year that I just mentioned, October 1st, 2023, to September 30th, 2024. It is a common error to only include federal funding. We are asking for the total expenditures and costs for compensation. It must include payments for forensic sexual assault examinations and payments made with the American Rescue Plan Act. Do not include costs other than compensation payments, such as administration costs.

Line B. Now, line B will be broken into four subsections. The first one is line B1, VOCA grant funds. Here, you want to enter the total amount of VOCA Crime Victim Compensation grant funds expended to pay compensation during the federal fiscal year. If funds for more than one grant were expended, enter the applicable VOCA grant years in the spaces provided. Do not include amounts expended for costs other than the compensation payments. Again, do not include the administrative costs.

Refunds. Refunds reported in line B2 include refunds from open VOCA awards as well as closed VOCA awards. You want to enter the amounts paid to or on behalf of victims of crime that are returned to the states during the fiscal year. While compensation programs are not federally required to track refunds, it is a best practice to have a policy and procedure in place to include—to be able to track these refunds, so you are including them here in line B2.

Line B3. Property damage or loss payments. Here, you want to enter the amounts paid to or on behalf of crime victims for property damages and losses. The guidelines prohibit compensation for damages and loss with limited exceptions. However, there are some states that do have—that expand their guidelines and rules to compensate for some property damages. Please review the guidelines to make sure that you are reporting consistent with your policy and procedure.

Line B4. You're going to enter any deductions. Examples of deductions include the AEAP federal funds, which are funds granted after a mass violence incident, or medical marijuana payment. If you have questions about this, please work closely with your grant manager to ensure that you are entering the correct deductions.

Line C. This is going to sum up lines B1 through B4. The form does automatically calculate this amount, so you shouldn't need to do anything here. It's going to automatically calculate.

Line D. Again, this is going to enter line A total amount minus line C, the deductions, and the form will calculate this amount automatically.

Line E. This is recovery personnel costs. Some state or territory programs use compensation funds to support personnel costs. Some do not, so this may not apply to your state, but if you do support personnel costs with the compensation funding, enter here the salary and benefits costs allocable to seeking recoveries for individual employees whose primary responsibility is directly and specifically related to recovery costs. It is very important here to remember to submit supporting documentation. So, again, if you enter personnel costs here, you must attach supporting documentation, which includes time sheets and job descriptions that substantiate amount of the recovery cost claimed and that the employee's primary responsibility is directly and specifically related to recovery efforts. A common error here is that supporting documentation is not submitted, and so we do as grant managers have to reject the VCC form and have you complete it again and resubmit. So please, remember your supporting documentation.

Line F. The total state payments and recovery costs eligible for matching VOCA grant awards. Again, the form automatically calculates this amount for you.

Certification. So, once the form is completed, you must certify—and this is legally binding—that all of the information you submitted in this form is accurate and correct.

It's very important—and I'm going to read the last line here on certification because it's very important—that once it's signed, you're agreeing to the following: I understand that in the event of overcertification, OVC will take the necessary steps to recover funds that were awarded in error; and that in the event of undercertification, no supplemental payments to the state or territory will be issued to correct the error. That is why it is so important to accurately and completely complete your VCC form.

And then at the end, you have to have an authorized representative certify and sign here. Again, a common error is that there are maybe a financial staff member or another person on staff that is completing the form, but they are not the authorized representative in JustGrants and they, therefore, they cannot sign it. It has to be reviewed and signed by the authorized representative.

So, here we're going to review some best practices to track expenses. Throughout the webinar, I have discussed documentation and policies and procedures. For step—tip one for best practice is to retain documentation to report all decisions made. Does your state or territory have the documentation to record how you came up with your totals or confirming that you're not overcertifying or undercertifying?

A best practice for document retention is often a claims management system. That's something that we recommend, or having a process for paper documentation. Two, we want to document eligibility and ineligibility. You want to be able to show how individual claims and expenses track with your program's statutes and rules. And third, you want to have a detailed policy. This is going to make it much easier to ensure that you're making consistent decisions when paying out claims or denying claims. A best practice is to review policies periodically to make sure that there aren't any out-of-date policies that can negatively impact your completion of the form.

To wrap up, we would like to share some resources, including the VOCA Victim Compensation Guidelines, the DOJ Financial Guide, and the online Grants Management Training. You can click on these links to get more information.

Thank you for your time today, and if you have any questions, please contact your OVC grant manager. They'll be more than happy to help. Any questions? Thank you so much!