

VOCA Stakeholder Meeting

12.14.23

Jeriane welcomes everyone and shares this is a recorded meeting. She reminds everyone to put their name and agency they are within the chat. She recalls what was shared at the hearing. The fund is not stable, so the indication is that the fund will be decreasing. We have put together a document outlining things we can do to stabilize the fund. She turns the meeting over to Pat L. Pat shares that the ARPA and GR funds will not be available for the next contract year. We will be about 25M short for next year if funds don't come in.

Jeriane reminds that this is one of the hardest funds to distribute. She reminds that what we are presenting is only a proposal. She gives the deadline of December 29th for their feedback. Do you agree? Yes or no? What piece do you agree or disagree with? What do you propose we do? The meeting minutes from the stakeholder groups are all on the website. Since July we have compiled comments, delivered information to the legislature and the governor's office. We are trying to do what the majority wants. There are 180 providers, with 180 different ways to do it. Please share what you want to see happen. We are keeping a spreadsheet of every agency to put feedback in. It will also be given to the General Assembly.

Everyone will get copies of the letter that was sent to the General Assembly. Jeriane went over the details in the letter. She then goes into the VOCA Synopsis. She reminds that all of the stakeholder meetings are on the website. After she finished she opened the floor.

All documents have been posted to the VOCA web-site at <https://dss.mo.gov/dfas/victims-of-crime-act/>

We will post a Question and answer sheet out soon on the questions below. You can also reach out to the VOCA unit for more information.

Comments from the chat:

Lisa Fleming, Rose Brooks Center:

In regards to the proposed \$750,000 cap- With the unmet needs published statewide in 2022, Kansas City had 21,112 domestic violence victims with unmet needs; the whole state reported 36,025. This means 59% of unmet need for domestic violence victims is the Kansas City region, yet the largest cuts to funding are in the Kansas City region.

Jamie Willis:

When do you plan to send out these documents? They are difficult to read on the screen, especially as you are scrolling.

Ken Chapman:

We will send out documents upon the conclusion of this meeting.

Jessica Hill, Safe House:

Can you address technical assistance funds. What are the grant requirements for providing technical assistance? How is the amount of funding decided? Who is eligible to receive them?

Josh King, MOCSA:

Just reviewing the document, the proposed cap at \$750,000 will disproportionately impact victims in the Kansas City region and the region's ability to serve survivors. The cap does not reflect the geographical reality of crime and violence in Missouri. Kansas City has a disproportionately high level of multiple forms of crime, so it is appropriate and necessary for significant VOCA funds to continue to be allocated to this region where they are needed most. Reducing contracts and/or potentially implementing a statewide award maximum will create the most significant burden on the Kansas City region specifically, and will create catastrophic effects for victims of crime in one of the most violent cities in Missouri and the nation. We have several recommendations that we would be happy to share, to replace this \$750,000 proposed cap and ensure VOCA dollars are allocated to the regions based on the equitable distribution of victim service demand.

Jenny:

Can you slowly scroll through the chart with the proposed funding again, please?

Julie Meranda:

Send feedback to: FSD.VOCAUnit@dss.mo.gov

Angela Hirsch – RACS:

This recommendation is for the FY25 funding cycle...can you provide an ETA as to when final decisions will be made regarding these recommendations?

Katie Dalton, CVC:

Just wanting to confirm that the 750K cap for a 12 month award?

Josh King, MOCSA:

Kansas City—and just Jackson County alone—has the highest number of reports of child abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect, of all 114 counties in Missouri. This region accounts for 25% of all reported rapes in the state—that means 1 of every 4 rapes occurs in Kansas City, and the rest of the entire state makes up the remainder. By DSS's annual report on child abuse and neglect, when comparing the four-county Kansas City region to other Missouri metropolitan areas, Kansas City has more Child Abuse and Neglect Reports, and more Children reported, than any other metropolitan area. For example, in the 2022 report there are close to 11,000 reports in the 4-county Greater Kansas City Missouri metro, and the next highest is Saint Louis with 8,000.

Sara Brammer:

- o Synergy provides emergency shelter, housing, and counseling to victims across the lifespan in Missouri. With a total of 39,704 annual bed nights provided to victims.
- o Of the 251,908 bed nights provided to victims in the state of Missouri in 2022, Synergy provides 16% of these nights.
- o Of the 105,775 bed nights provided in the Kansas City Region in 2022, Synergy provides 38% of these nights.
- o We already don't have enough VOCA dollars to meet demand. We have a waitlist of over 250 Missouri victims.

- o This funding reduction for our agency would result in cutting the equivalency of 10 full-time staff which is 23% of our victim service workforce. Resulting in a catastrophic loss of court and hospital advocacy, clinical services, and safe bed nights. This loss would impact all of our victim service staff.
- o VOCA makes up 23% of Synergy's budget for victim services.

MaryAnne Metheny:

Can you repeat where we send our comments. Thank you

Julie Meranda:

FSD.VOCAUnit@dss.mo.gov

Sara Brammer:

Total amount you are trying to reduce?

Josh King, MOCSA:

MOCSA is the only rape crisis center in Missouri and the largest in the United States. MOCSA would experience significant, negative impacts from a \$750,000 cap. MOCSA provides 33% of all sexual assault hotline calls in Missouri. We provide evidence-based therapy to 79% of SA counseling clients. Kansas City has the greatest rates and needs of sexual violence victimization. In response, MOCSA provides 57% of Missouri's public awareness presentations and serves 71% of all of Missouri's participants in outreach (28 CFR 94.119(j)). Implementing the proposed cap for our agency specifically would mean 4 out of 5 sexual violence counseling clients in Missouri will see their only resource for sexual assault counseling defunded. This could have serious implications statewide for meeting the minimum VOCA allocation compliance with the federal Office on Victims of Crime.

Debra Cotton:

What is the rationale for potentially establishing a minimum award amount (if I am understanding correctly)?

Katie C, House Of Hope:

Rural shelters take about 95% of KC's overflow.

Sara Brammer:

- o The proposal is recommending that providers in the Kansas City region experience more than a 50% reduction in funding. This would lead to a massive reduction in services and force Kansas City agencies to attempt to refer clients out to rural providers who do not have the capacity, resources, or space to accommodate this overflow. It will produce undue hardship and burden on both victims and the rural providers already in need of resources. Reducing funding for Kansas City providers will lead to a major increase in unmet needs and lead to an influx of referrals to other agencies across the state.

Jessica Hill, Safe House:

Of the organizations that could be pass-through agencies: MOCADSV, Kids First, Mo CASA, etc. How many do not have board members that do not receive VOCA funds?

Josh King, MOCSA:

Recommendation instead of \$750,000 cap: prioritize direct victim-service 501(c)(3) organizations with the history and track record of effective VOCA program delivery. Victim services are the clear intent of

VOCA. We ask that organizations receive priority based on their successful history of delivering VOCA programming and victim services, and the fidelity to evidence-based methods and direct service provision (as opposed to referral-only programs or untested practices).

Sara Brammer:

Disproportionately consequencing the Kansas City region is not a fair solution either.

Jessica Hill, Safe House:

Sorry - how many do not have any board members that receive VOCA funds?

Jessica Hill, Safe House:

Is there any intention to request additional GR funds to supplement the federal funds?

Sara Brammer:

What is the TOTAL CUT you want to make

Josh King, MOCSA:

Recommendation instead of the cap: only accept bids from existing contractors, not new contractors. While we absolutely understand the competitive bid nature of this funding, allocating a decreasing number of dollars to an increasing number of contractors results in layoffs, loss of expertise, costly program startups, and unnecessary duplication of services, with less efficacy and effectiveness. Please prioritize the agencies who already have successful track records with VOCA services. This is much more prudent for the utilization of VOCA dollars than reducing budgets for tried-and-true programs to make way for duplicitous and less effective initiatives. Rather than asking existing providers to collaborate with new programs, DSS can invite those who are interested in creating new programs to instead collaborate with existing providers. New agencies launching new programs when funding is so limited will only create strain and duplication in an already underfunded range of programs.

Jessica Hill, Safe House:

Where can we find the list of agencies/types of services that are eligible for VOCA funding?

Sara Brammer:

A recommendation is to work with all of the provider agencies to encourage the Governor and State Legislature to add additional funds to VOCA. We also feel the equitable solution to a shortfall would be to share a percentage reduction with all of the providers. That would be difficult for all of us but not cause a lethal blow to only a few agencies in one geographic location. Thank you for considering that solution.

Zach Woolsey:

Has there been any feedback from the governors office on the likelihood of adding more of the loss in funding directly into the state budget? The state has a large budget surplus at the moment and \$25 million isn't that much considering the thousands of survivors helped every year. It seems like it should be an easy sell to me.

kelly pedigo:

What would happen to applications that only consist of expenses relating to one advocate? Their budget being approximately \$60,000? Would they be shut down or have to request more funding?

Josh King, MOCSA:

With the cap, the Kansas City region will create service loss, KC providers will be forced to refer clients out to rural providers who do not have the capacity, resources, or space to accommodate this overflow. It will produce undue hardship and burden on both victims and the rural providers already in need of resources. Reducing funding for Kansas City providers is ultimately asking nearby rural partners to shoulder the burden and absorb the massive influx of clients Kansas City will no longer be able to accommodate, should the award cap be implemented.

Lori Haney/Citizens Against Spouse Abuse:

In the previous stakeholders meeting, who were all of the entities that comprised the smaller stakeholders group (i.e. MO Kids First, MO CASA, MOCADSV...)?

Jill Quaid:

Just checking - so you are saying any organization can apply for for being a one of the five organizations to administer the funding?

Juliana Greenfield:

I know VOCA funds were not depleted in some of the years when monies were at a high level. I am curious what happened to those unallocated funds in those years. Were they returned to the feds or allocated in some other way?

Martha Sander, Council on Families in Crisis:

The proposals that have the cap. Just so we all understand...will this be funding that can be counted on each year

Marla Svoboda:

Our community partners, including police and hospitals, will stop screening and referring dv victims if services are not available. This comes down to the lives of victims. Please consider where the greatest needs are as has been stated above about the KC region.

Jenny:

Will the contracts be awarded for three years?

Juliana Greenfield:

Thank you for addressing my question!

Josh King, MOCSA:

For the 10 agencies you mentioned, how much of the service provision do those 10 agencies make up for federal reporting and minimum allocations? If it's 23% of the funding but 50% of the victims served, reducing the budgets of those 10 agencies could cause the state to not achieve their federally required minimums.

Debi Koelkebeck:

In the last NFO, there were priority areas identified. Were these considered in the proposal?

Julie West:

Have there been any agencies deemed to not be good stewards of VOCA funds? And if so, are those agencies going to continue to receive funding through any processes?

Martha Sander, Council on Families in Crisis:

Maybe I didn't ask my question very well. Basically, what I am asking is that the strategy you are presenting would give agencies some consistent funding, over time, that is NOT competitively bid every year. So, we may have a cap of XX dollars this year and in 2 years, there is a 10% reduction that applies across the cap amount ... leaving agencies funded to the best of ability of funds available. We will not have to compete for the funds every year, correct?

Debra Cotton:

Other states are undoubtedly facing the same tough choices. How are they addressing this? Any idea?

Jill Wondel, House of Refuge:

Can you answer Kelly's question about the minimum - if our agency currently receives less than \$200,000, would we lose our funding, or need to request a funding increase?

Martha Sander, Council on Families in Crisis:

Thank you

Josh King, MOCSA:

I apologize, I meant: how many victims served by those 10 agencies are reported for federal compliance, and what is the proportion of those numbers compared to those reported statewide? I certainly agree all services are important and the quality and value of services is so hard to compare! As you said, it's not about services or quality, but about the dollars utilized and the numbers reported. If part of the rationale is looking at 10 agencies getting 23% of the funds, it also seems appropriate to ask how changing that will could impact the number of victims served.

Lori Haney/Citizens Against Spouse Abuse:

When will we receive the letter and supporting documents?

Josh King, MOCSA:

Also, I am sorry if I missed it: how was the amount of \$750,000 determined?

Ken Chapman:

Thank you to the intermediary interpreters for providing services to deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals on the call.

kelly pedigo:

Thank you. That makes more sense.

Ken Chapman:

We will send out documents upon the conclusion of this meeting.

Brandi Bair - Hope House:

Is there an average amount of recaptured funds that are available for reinvestment?

Martha Sander, Council on Families in Crisis:

Do you know when match will be coming back on VOCA?

Josh King, MOCSA:

Thank you for reading my questions, and for your perspective on not comparing apples to apples. We've certainly seen an increase in time-per-service and severity of symptoms. I appreciate you all thinking through all of these things!

Laura Farmer:

Thank you for all of the information!

Martha Sander, Council on Families in Crisis:

Thank you for the information. I know it is hard all the way around.

Michael Turner:

We appreciate the work put into this, and for all of the advocacy from all of the partner agencies to help delay the cliff we have been hearing about for the past few years.

Juliana Greenfield:

You will send the materials shared in the meeting, correct?

Julie West:

This ultimately has to be approved by the legislature, correct?

Myron Gray:

Will the recording be made available to us?

Attendees:

Suzanne Wilber, Genesis: A place of New Beginnings
Sara Brammer, Synergy Services
Gina Clement, Capitol City CASA
Blair Schilling, Harmony House
Anne Crites, The Victim Center
Laura Zahnd, MOCADSV
Courtney Davis, I Pour Life
Meg Boyko, Missouri KidsFirst
Hannah Moore, Safe Connections
Rebecca Griffith, Russell House
Tiffani Clark, Synergy Services
Ben McBride, I Pour Life
Esmeralda Grande, Law Department Municipal Court
Holly Porter, Compass A Safe Place
Laura Willeke, Child Protection Center
Kelly Pedigo, Safe Passage
Susan Hickman, Lafayette House
Eddie Ross, Diamond Diva Empowerment Foundation
Marla Svoboda, Rose Brooks Center
Matthew Huffman, MOCADSV
Eric Keith, Legal Services of Eastern MO
Asma Waheed, Lydia's House
Kathy Yohe, ACCIS
Rachel Lenk, St. Charles CO Prosecutors Office

Rochelle Parker, Child Abuse Prevention Association
Betsy Barnes, Mid-Missouri Legal Services
Tyler Bernsen- Children's Advocacy Services of Greater St. Louis
Connie Pendergrass, 37th Judicial CASA
Alicia Kolb, DSS
Aaprara Mills, MADD
Gloria McQueen, Women of Grace
Gail Dickson, ARCHS
Frankie Babaian, CASA of STL
Deb Cotten, Alive
Erin Swafford, Synergy Services
Jessica Seitz, Missouri KidsFirst
Dr. Gloria Johnson, Life Source Consultants
Jennifer Howard, CASA of STL
Scott Mason, Rose Brooks Center
Donna Franz, Selah Place of Oregon County
Amy Couture, Rose Brooks Center
Leanne Reese, Missouri CASA Association
Angie Blumel, Jackson County CASA
Lori Haney, Citizens Against Spouse Abuse
Judith Kile, COPE
Karla Frye, Life Source Consultants
Alicia Knickman, CASA of Jefferson County
Debi Koelkebeck, Jasper County CASA
DeAnna Alonso, CMFCAA
Alisa White, Survival Adult Abuse Center, Inc
Jill Quaid, Central Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association
Jessica Woolbright, St. Marthas
Wende Ochoa, Turning Point Advocacy Services
Kristina Jones, Child Abuse Prevention Association
Kim Dixon, Safe House of Women
Angie Blumel, CASA