CRIME VICTIMS LEGAL NETWORK

GRANT REPORT

2022-2025

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INTRODUCTION

The NY Crime Victims Legal Network (CVLN) is a partnership of civil legal organizations and victim assistance programs that receive funding from the New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS). All OVS-funded organizations are members of CVLN. They work together to connect victims of crime with civil legal information, resources, and assistance through our online resource, *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*.

Through federal Vision 21 funding, the NY Crime Victims Legal Network began as a project in 2015 with founding partners Empire Justice Center, Pro Bono Net, the Center for Human Services Research at the University at Albany, and OVS. After a comprehensive planning process, which included an 18-month needs assessment that identified existing gaps in civil legal services for crime victims and gauged the level of interest in using technology to meet those needs, in October 2018 the founding partners launched NY Crime Victims Legal Help as a pilot in Erie, Niagara, and Genesee counties. It was expanded to all counties in New York State outside of New York City in 2019, with New York City resources included in early 2020.

The work of the founding partners was and continues to be guided by the expertise of a statewide Advisory Committee. Their goal is to make it easier for victims of crime to obtain information and services to address the civil legal needs that arise from their crime victimization.

In the past three years, both CVLN and *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* have seen tremendous growth.

This report highlights some of the accomplishments of CVLN founding partners and the usage of *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* during the OVS grant period of 10/1/22-9/30/25.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: EMPIRE JUSTICE CENTER

The CVLN lead partner is Empire Justice Center. Empire Justice Center is a non-profit law firm that has helped protect and strengthen the rights of millions of New Yorkers since 1973. Through a 360-degree approach that includes litigation, education, and policy advocacy, they use the law to make access to justice more equitable.

The CVLN Team at Empire Justice Center consists of a Project Leader, two Regional Attorney Coordinators, and a Program & Marketing Manager. Although the team was fully staffed for only 19 of the 36 months of the grant period, they either met or far exceeded all their required deliverables.

Below are some of the highlights of their work the past three years.

- Convened **34** forums for OVS-funded attorneys and paralegals. These forums provide an opportunity for legal staff who work with crime victims to learn or be updated on a variety of topics and seek strategic legal advice from each other.
- Responded to **255** technical assistance requests (i.e., legal research, case consultation, and strategic guidance).
- Hosted **22** webinars offered to OVS-funded staff across the state. The webinars, along with the forums and technical assistance, are part of the statewide support and coordination they provide to OVS funded programs.
- Provided information and referrals to **229** crime victims who contacted them through *NY Crime Victims Legal Help's* "Contact Us" page and through OVS's Resource Connect.
- Conducted **17** presentations about *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* designed to raise public awareness and education and to inform crime victims of their rights and available services.
- Maintained a social media presence through Facebook and X to promote Know Your Rights resources and available services to crime victims.
- Published **17** newsletters and **25** broadcast emails to inform crime victims providers about new laws, resources, cases, and events.
- Updated, as needed, legal content on the Know Your Rights area of the website, including adding a page on "Tax Debt" in the Money & Financial Issues section.
- Convened the CVLN Advisory Committee annually, where they updated the members on the work they have done, sought their guidance for the upcoming work, and asked for their assistance promoting *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* and sharing their expertise at a forum or a webinar.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: EMPIRE JUSTICE CENTER

State Support Work

The crime victim field has long recognized the importance of coordination and collaboration in its ability to serve clients. To facilitate the delivery of direct services and to enhance providers' knowledge base, the CVLN Team at Empire Justice Center provided support to OVS-funded programs across the state in the following ways:

Technical Assistance

The Regional Attorney Coordinators played a key role in the development and nurturing of a community of practice for civil legal professionals assisting crime victims. One of their main responsibilities was the provision of technical assistance - legal research, case consultation, strategic problem-solving, and referral information - to OVS-funded attorneys across the state.

During this grant period, the CVLN Team responded to **255 technical assistance requests**. While some of the requests were easy to provide due to the expertise and knowledge of the team, others were more complicated and required extensive legal research or multiple meetings with court personnel or external contacts. Technical assistance topics included:

- Addressing victim safety concerns when Family Court Temporary Orders of Protection are being mailed out before law enforcement serves the respondents
- Crime Victim Compensation denials
- Whether Child Support Magistrates can ask about someone's immigration status
- What to do when police refuse to give a police report to a victim who needs it for victim compensation purposes
- Son of Sam Law
- Obligation of the Department of Social Services (DSS) to accommodate a domestic violence victim's need for a support animal when DSS is placing the victim in emergency housing
- What to do when a request for accommodation in court is denied
- Assistance in editing an appellate brief in a case involving a transgender domestic violence victim
- Whether and how a deaf parent of a child who is a victim of bullying at school can have the grandmother act as the child's representative at school

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: EMPIRE JUSTICE CENTER

- Whether there are employment protections for victims working without work authorization
- What to do when police don't enforce a stay away Order of Protection
- Domestic Violence Advocate confidentiality
- Strategy for settlement conference in a Division of Human Rights case for a victim of school bullying and discrimination against the school district
- Obligation of parents to support a child after evicting them for abusive behavior
- DSS's handling of shelter requests from undocumented domestic violence victims
- Determining if law enforcement can charge for service of Family Offense Petitions with Temporary Orders of Protection
- Reviewing amicus briefs that support domestic violence victims who are wrongfully being targeted by the Administration for Children's Services

Information and Referrals

The majority of requests for information and referrals received by the CVLN Team at Empire Justice Center come from the "Contact Us" page on the *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* website and OVS Resource Connect. The team does its best to refer victims to advocates and attorneys within the network, and if possible, provide a warm referral, i.e., the partner organization agrees to accept the victim referral.

The number of requests received increased when the visibility of the "Contact" link on the website was improved. Additionally, when Google Ads run, there is an increase in users visiting our site and a corresponding increase in requests for assistance.

An analysis of the information & referrals provided in the third grant year (10/1/24-9/30/25) shows that the top victimization types are domestic violence and sexual assault, followed by robbery/theft and homicide. The top areas from where the inquiries came are the NYC region, followed by Monroe and Nassau counties.

2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
49	41	139

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: EMPIRE JUSTICE CENTER

Forums

The CVLN Team convened monthly forums for OVS-funded attorneys and legal staff to promote communication and collaboration amongst providers, identify and address regional or statewide trends and concerns that impact victims, and provide legal information and practice tips to help providers better serve victims of crime. Forum topics included:

- Discovery Reform
- Introducing Cyber Abuse Evidence in Court
- Legislative Updates
- LGBTQ+ Issues and Protections
- NYS Address Confidentiality Program
- Qualified Domestic Relations Orders
- Restitution in Family Court
- Tenants' Right to Compel Repairs from Landlords
- Domestic Violence Employment and Unemployment Protections

Webinars

When the CVLN Team recognized that a topic would be of interest to a larger audience, they shared the information in the form of a webinar.

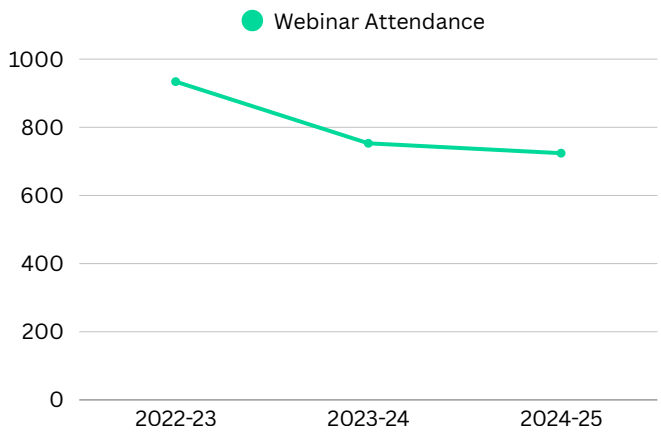
Over the course of the grant period, the CVLN Team hosted a total of **22 webinars with 2,411 attendees.** There were eight webinars in the first grant year, eight in the second, and six in the third. While most of the presenters were staff funded by OVS or from OVS-funded organizations, on occasion, the CVLN Team was able to secure outside expertise, such as the Federal Trade Commission, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and Victim Rights Law Center.

The Public Benefits webinar in 2025 received the highest attendance – 221 – and the highest registration, 389.

The next most attended webinar was the Emergency Risk Protection Order webinar with 160 attendees and 266 registrants.

The average number of people who attended a webinar was 110.

Please see below for a list of our webinars over the three-year grant period.



SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: EMPIRE JUSTICE CENTER

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Violence Against Women Act's Housing Protections	Extreme Risk Protection Orders: What They Are and Why You Should Know about Them	Tenant Advocacy Basics for Non-Housing Attorneys
Financial Abuse and LGBTQ+ Survivors	Restitution and Civil Enforcement Tools, Part 1	Adult Name Change Basics for Advocates
Who Is a Parent? The State of NY Legal Landscape Impacting LGBTQ+ Families	Restitution and Civil Enforcement Tools, Part 2	How Public Benefits May Help Victims of Domestic Violence and Other Crimes
Elder Abuse Remedies: Combating Financial Exploitation and Ousting the Abusive Caretaker	Scams, Cons, and Fraudulent Schemes: How Advocates Can Help Victims of Crime	The Intersection of Intimate Partner Violence and HIV/AIDS
Abuse Through the Years	Immigration Relief for Crime Victims	Melanie's Law: A Moderated Discussion
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Culture Training Series, Part 1	Credit Reporting and Identity Theft	Domestic Violence Survivors and their Housing Rights
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Culture Training Series, Part 2	Trauma-Informed Supervision: Fostering Resilience & Maintaining Boundaries, Part 1	
FairhearinghelpNY.org: What it is, and how it can help you and your clients	Trauma-Informed Supervision: Fostering Resilience & Maintaining Boundaries, Part 2	

Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credits were offered for most of the webinars. Almost all the webinars are available to members of the Advocate Gateway section of *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: EMPIRE JUSTICE CENTER

Webinar Feedback

Below is feedback that was provided anonymously through webinar evaluations from CVLN's many technical assistance webinars throughout the grant period.

"As with all EJC CLE programs, this was excellent. Very well organized and thorough. The information was both interesting and useful."

"Excellent presentation. Thank you for hosting."

"Thank you!! Very informative and great presentation - a lot of information provided in an easy-to-understand way."

"Excellent program!"

"I really enjoyed the presentation and I felt the speakers were well prepared on the topics. I do feel like I have learned something new and may use this information in the future."

"Thank you for this great presentation!"

"It was wonderful information! Thank you for taking the time to prepare."

"Presenters provided very useful links to handouts that can be so helpful in my work as an advocate for crime victims. I really enjoyed this presentation, thank you. :)"

"Great training, excellent materials."

"This was a phenomenal presentation. I learned so much."

"This course was one of the best CLEs I've ever attended. The presenters, the slides, the materials - all top notch. So much information was delivered in a short amount of time and it was easily understandable. The presenters stayed on course without going too fast or ever getting boring. I came away wanting to practice more in the public benefits arena. Thank you!"

"Everything was well-thought out & presented."

"I found this program extremely informative. Thank you for all your time and effort that was put into this. Now we can share what we learned with others."

"Thank you. This is great information."

"This was one of the more organized, interesting, and informative trainings that I have attended recently. It was clear the presenters were knowledgeable and prepared."

"Speaker was exceptional. Format was outstanding."

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: EMPIRE JUSTICE CENTER

Coalitions and Multi-Disciplinary Team Involvement

Members of the CVLN Team participated in several crime victim coalitions, task forces, and multi-disciplinary teams not only to share and gain information but also to help address the various needs of victims. Groups they were involved with include:

- Capital Region Crime Victim Coalition
- Cyber Abuse Task Force
- Domestic Violence Community Coordination Council – Warren & Washington Counties
- Erie County Coalition Against Family Violence
- New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Regional Meetings
- Southern Tier Region Crime Victim Coalition
- Western New York Crime Victim Coalition

Additionally, a member of the CVLN Team served on the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services panel for the Law Enforcement Domestic Incident Model Policy update.

Finally, the CVLN Project Leader has served on the OVS Advisory Council since January 2020, leading it as Co-President in 2024 and 2025. The Advisory Council assists in the formulation of policies related to the field of victim services and provides recommendations to OVS to improve the delivery of services.

Newsletters, Broadcast Emails, and Listserv

Through newsletters, broadcast emails, and a listserv, the CVLN Team kept the legal network and victim advocates informed of important changes in the law, events and trainings, and new resources for clients. Some of the information shared included:

- Resources related to tech safety
- Information about CVLN partners
- Domestic Violence fatality statistics
- Resources for parents of murdered children
- Implementation of a new domestic and gender-based violence screening protocol in the Child Support Program
- Proposed legislation and new laws that protect survivors
- CVLN Partner Organization Spotlights
- Recent published court decisions
- Tips for remote mediation
- Understanding tonic immobility
- Race and victimization studies
- NYS Bar Association guidelines on the use of generative AI
- Resources for special populations of victims, such as veterans and people with disabilities
- Blog posts on topics of interest to crime victim providers

Our newsletters and broadcast emails are sent to an audience of about 350 advocates with an average **open rate of 35.2%**.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: CENTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES RESEARCH

With over 30 years of experience in social service research and evaluation, the Center for Human Services Research (CHSR) is dedicated to developing empirically-based knowledge to improve the design and delivery of services that address social issues and meet community needs. CHSR completed the original needs assessment that formed the basis of the development of the *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* website. Over the course of the past three years, CHSR has analyzed quantitative and qualitative data and co-presented at conferences.

Below are some of the highlights of their work these past three years.

- Analyzed data from Google Analytics to track website traffic. This data provides information about the reach of the website and the most highly visited content.
- Conducted an in-depth analysis of a sample of chats from LiveHelp. Chat transcripts were coded to discern visitors' needs and if agents were able to meet those needs with information and resources on the site.
- Conducted online focus groups with service providers to inform the utility of the website and any needed modifications and enhancements. Participants suggested some changes to design (e.g., more clearly identifying the accessibility and translation icons) and language (e.g., defining what a 'victim advocate' is).
- Co-presented about *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* in three different forums:
  - OVS Speakers Bureau: November 2022
  - OVS Conference: August 2023
  - NYS Community Action Association conference: September 2024

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: PRO BONO NET

Pro Bono Net is the technology partner for CVLN. Pro Bono Net is a national nonprofit organization that uses technology to expand access to justice and strengthen civil legal services. Through its digital platforms, technical expertise, and partnerships with legal services organizations, Pro Bono Net builds and maintains tools that help connect low-income individuals and survivors of crime to accurate legal information and services.

During the October 2022 to September 2025 grant period, Pro Bono Net was responsible for the full technical infrastructure, platform maintenance, accessibility engineering, LiveHelp services, analytics, and implementation of all legal content authored by Empire Justice Center.

Below are some of the highlights of their work these past three years.

- Maintained and enhanced the *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* platform through ongoing performance monitoring, security updates, system upgrades, and infrastructure support to ensure consistent access to all CVLN tools statewide.
- Conducted one comprehensive accessibility audit of the platform and developed a phased WCAG 2.1 AA / Title II compliance roadmap, positioning CVLN for compliance with upcoming federal accessibility regulations.
- Contracted with a website designer to support the development and implementation of a refreshed CVLN logo, strengthening the project's visual identity and brand consistency across the platform.
- Contracted with an SEO specialist to conduct a comprehensive search engine optimization review of *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*, and implemented the highest-priority technical SEO recommendations, improving site performance, search visibility, and user access to CVLN resources.
- Strengthened the Legal Help Directory infrastructure, including directory API improvements, search accuracy enhancements, and ongoing upkeep of over 160 referral profiles for victim-serving organizations across New York State
- Maintained and enhanced the LiveHelp chat infrastructure supporting crime victims across New York State, ensuring reliability, accessibility, and usability for both users and trained volunteers. In addition, supported a volunteer workforce averaging approximately 36 trained LiveHelp operators per quarter over the three-year period, maintaining a stable and responsive service capacity.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: PRO BONO NET

- Strengthened analytics and reporting systems, including GA4 tagging and data structures, to support evaluation, reporting, and continuous improvement in collaboration with Empire Justice Center and the Center for Human Services Research.

- Began technical planning and development for updates to the Victim Compensation Navigator to align with the Fair Access to Victim Compensation Act taking effect December 31, 2025, translating Empire Justice Center's legal guidance into platform specifications and engineering work.

- Provided ongoing technical implementation of all Empire Justice Center legal content updates across Know Your Rights, the Legal Help Directory, and CVLN tools, ensuring accuracy, functionality, and accessibility at every stage.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES: FOUNDING PARTNERS

Outreach Events and Awards

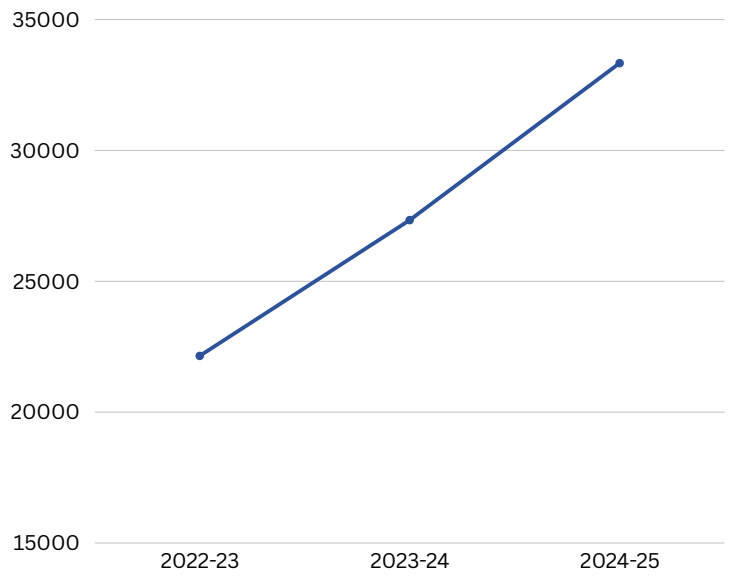
During the past three years, the founding partners met regularly and worked together to accomplish their primary purpose: maintaining and improving the resources on the *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* website. They co-presented at conferences, attended tabling events, and celebrated successes, including receiving the National Crime Victim Law Institute's 2023 Victims' Rights Partnership Award in March 2024.

Top: OVS Conference 8.2025, Susan Dietzel (CHSR), Laura Dwyer & Remla Parthasarathy (Empire Justice); NYSCAA Conference 9.2024, Jackie Segouin (Empire Justice); NYSBA Haywood Burns Memorial Award Recipient 4.2024, Remla Parthasarathy
Bottom: 4.2024, Wantee Ramkaran & Tim Baran (PBN) with Remla Parthasarathy; NCVLI 2023 Victims' Rights Partnership Award; 4.2024, Laura Dwyer, Remla Parthasarathy, Elizabeth Cronin (OVS), Tim Baran

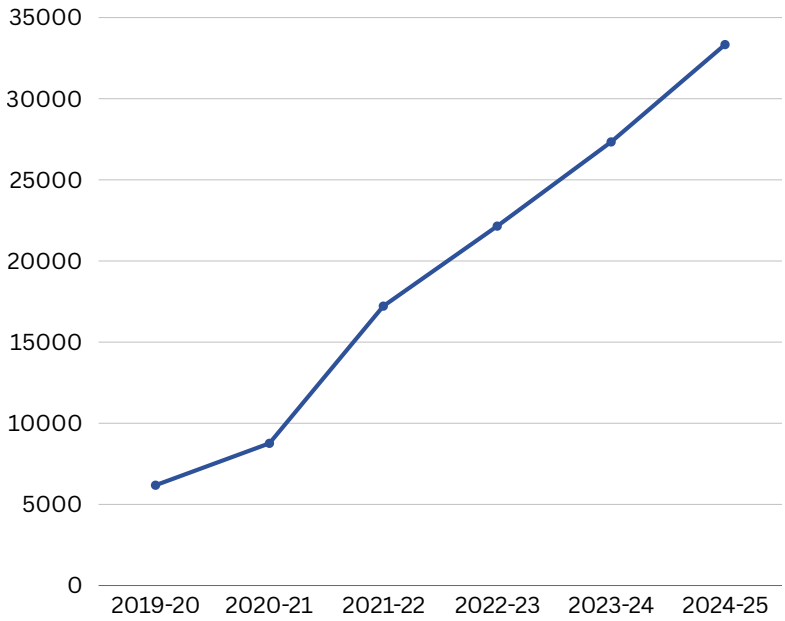
WEBSITE ANALYTICS

Total Number of Website Users

Traffic to *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* continues to increase steadily each year. In the first year of this grant period there were 22,149 users, 27,337 users in year two and 33,335 users in year three.

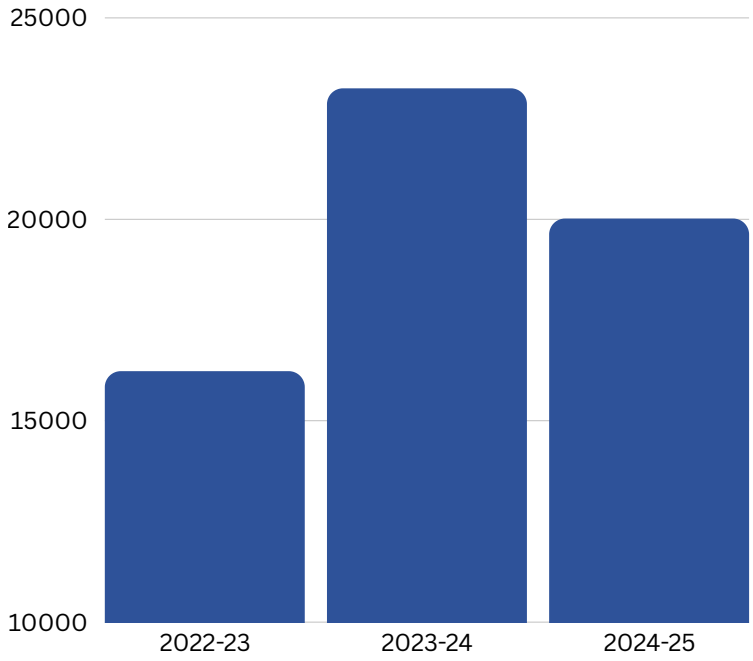


Total Number of Website Users Since Launch

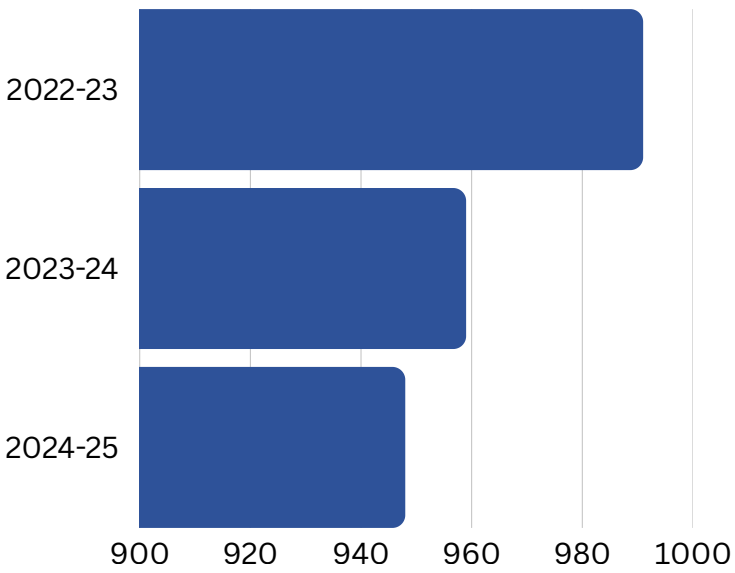


VICTIM COMPENSATION GUIDE

The Victim Compensation Online Claim Application Guide continues to be the most visited section of the website since its launch in October 2021. It was accessed 16,230 times in year one, 23,251 times in year two, and 20,019 times in year three.



Victim Compensation Guide Pageviews



Claim Navigator Usage

Victim Compensation Claim Navigator

The Claim Navigator was developed to help crime victims determine if they are eligible for victim compensation and the type of claim they can apply for.

The Claim Navigator was used over 900 times each year of the grant.

The Guide and Navigator will be updated to reflect the Fair Access to Victim Compensation Act taking effect December 31, 2025.

Legal Help Directory

The Legal Help Directory was created to make it easier for crime victims to be connected with a legal provider. All OVS-funded organizations with an attorney services grant are listed in *NY Crime Victims Legal Help's* Legal Help Directory as a top result. Counties in New York City continuously rank in the top four counties searched. There were 10,341 searches on the Legal Help Directory during the three year grant period

Top Counties Searched Outside of NYC

YEAR 2

01. ALBANY
02. MONROE
03. NASSAU
04. SUFFOLK
05. ERIE

YEAR 3

ALBANY 01.
SUFFOLK 02.
MONROE 03.
NASSUA 04.
ERIE 05.

Top Topics Searched

YEAR 2

01. VICTIMS' RIGHTS: CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION
02. DV & OTHER VICTIMIZATION: SEXUAL ABUSE & ASSAULT
03. VICTIMS' RIGHTS: RESTITUTION
04. DV & OTHER VICTIMIZATION: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE
05. IMMIGRATION: U VISA

YEAR 3

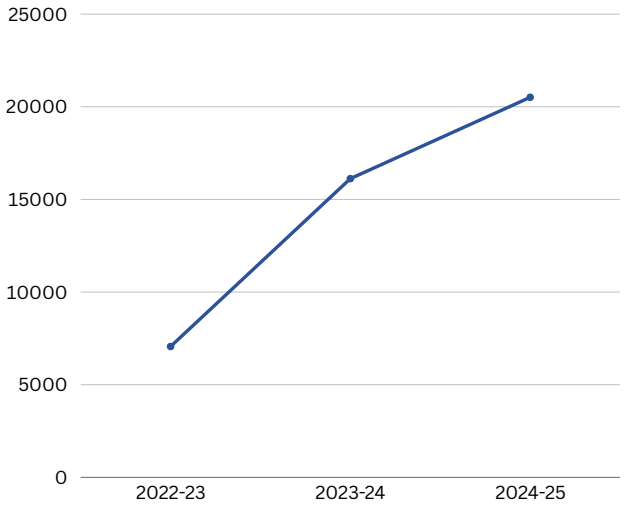
VICTIMS' RIGHTS: CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION 01.
DV & OTHER VICTIMIZATION: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE 02.
SAFETY: ORDERS OF PROTECTION FROM FAMILY COURT 03.
FAMILY: CUSTODY 04.
FAMILY: DIVORCE 05.

*Year 1 Legal Help Directory data was not available due to a transfer in Google Analytic dashboards.

Know Your Rights

The Know Your Rights section of the website consists of nine different topic sections. These topics were identified as top areas of concern by both victims of crime and providers during CHSR's 2017 needs assessment, "Civil Legal Needs of Crime in New York State." The pageviews for the Know Your Rights section more than doubled from year one to year three of this grant period. In the last year of the grant period, there were over 20,000 pageviews of the entire Know Your Rights section.

The most visited topic areas each year of the grant period are below.



Know Your Rights Pageviews

YEAR 1

01. FORECLOSURE
02. ORDERS OF PROTECTION FROM FAMILY COURT
03. HATE CRIMES
04. YOUR RIGHTS AS A CRIME VICTIM
05. EVICTION

YEAR 2

01. ORDERS OF PROTECTION FROM FAMILY COURT
02. HOUSING - CRIME PREVENTION
03. HATE CRIMES
04. NYS ADDRESS CONFIDENTITALITY PROGRAM
05. FINANCIAL FRAUD & SCAMS

YEAR 3

01. ORDERS OF PROTECTION FROM FAMILY COURT
02. PROTECTION FOR DV VICTIMS
03. VAWA SELF-PETITION
04. EMPLOYMENT PROTECTIONS FOR DV VICTIMS
05. HATE CRIMES

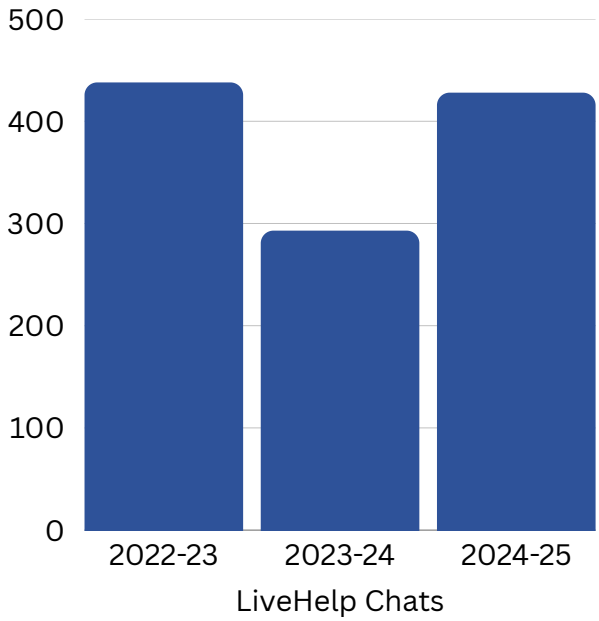
LiveHelp

LiveHelp continued to play a vital role in connecting victims of crime with the civil legal information and resources they need. Powered by Pro Bono Net, LiveHelp provides real-time navigation support for users who may be in crisis, overwhelmed, or unsure where to begin.

Chat Volume and User Engagement

From October 2022 to September 2025, LiveHelp supported **1,159 chats**, with engagement increasing significantly during 2025, reaching a high of **144 chats in 2025 Q4**.

Chats often involved sensitive, complex issues - including safety planning, housing instability, financial needs, and uncertainty about legal processes. LiveHelp agents assisted users in locating appropriate Know Your Rights content, finding organizations in the Legal Help Directory, and navigating tools such as the Victim Compensation Guide and Navigator.



Volunteer Workforce and Training

Across the three-year period, LiveHelp maintained a strong and consistent volunteer base, averaging approximately **36 trained operators per quarter**.

Volunteers received training on:

- navigating CVLN content
- trauma-informed and survivor-centered communication
- handling inquiries from users who may be unsafe, overwhelmed, or confused
- referring users to accurate, up-to-date resources
- supporting Spanish-speaking users

Pro Bono Net maintained the technical infrastructure that enabled volunteers to respond effectively while Empire Justice Center ensured the underlying legal information is accurate.

LiveHelp Analysis

Our research partners at CHSR analyzed 464 of the 689* chats that were initiated between 1/1/23 – 12/31/24. The analysis provided some insight into the users of LiveHelp. Two-thirds of the LiveHelp users indicated the type of crime they experienced, over half indicated a desire for legal information and/or an attorney, and a third requested information pertaining to victim compensation. The analysis will also help with the training of LiveHelp agents.

*225 chats were excluded from analysis either because the issue occurred outside NYS or due to lack of sufficient chat exchange to adequately analyze.

LiveHelp

Themes From 2024–2025 Transcripts

A review of recent chat transcripts showed recurring themes:

- difficulty navigating victim compensation and reimbursement processes
- urgent safety concerns and questions about protective orders
- housing issues, including emergency relocation and landlord problems
- financial hardship, including medical bills, wage loss, and debt
- confusion about court procedures or rights after a crime
- emotional overwhelm and the need for supportive, plain-language guidance

LiveHelp agents provided grounding, direction, and concrete next steps during moments when users often feel lost or alone.

Overall Impact

During the grant period, LiveHelp remained a critical access point for victims of crime who may not know where to begin or may not feel safe calling an organization directly. It provided compassionate, real-time assistance while connecting users to authoritative legal information, trauma resources, and appropriate service providers. The steady growth in engagement reflected both the need for this support and the effectiveness of ongoing improvements delivered through the CVLN partnership.

Feedback

The following feedback was provided anonymously to LiveHelp agents.

"You were very helpful"

"Thank you so much!"

"You have been a great help, thank you again"

"I appreciate your help"

"Thank you, I will check with all the resources you provided. Thank you again."

"That greatly helps! Thank you so much"

"You are AWESOME!! Truly thank you so much and be safe"

"Thank you for your time and help."

"I will speak to an advocate to see what else I can do at this point. The link you sent was most helpful, as I have not seen that information.

Thank you for your help."

"Ahhh thank you for something concrete."

"Thank you for your kind info"

CONCLUSION

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