

Violent Crime Victims Advisory Commission (VCAC)
Q3 Meeting Minutes

Date: Friday, October 24, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Attendance: Amanda Pyron, Dr. Rachel Garthe, Edwin Galetti, Erica Katava, Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra, Kathy Daniher, Maria Garza, Melissa Ellison, and Xochitl Guerrero. **Absent:** Dr. Sonia Mathies-Dinizulu, State’s Attorney Julia Rietz, Chief Lally

1. Opening and Welcome (10:00 – 10:05 a.m.)

Theresa Geary opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, and provided a brief overview of the meeting format and technology procedures.

2. Roll Call and Approval of Minutes (10:05 – 10:10 a.m.)

VCAC Chair Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra conducted roll call and verified attendance. Quorum was met.

The Commission reviewed and approved the minutes from the previous quarterly meeting.

3. Administrative Updates (10:10 – 10:20 a.m.)

Christelle Perez (Illinois Attorney General’s Office) provided administrative updates, including:

- Coordination items relevant to agency partners
- Announcements regarding upcoming trainings
- Reminder of the upcoming VCVA grant application timeline

No Commission action was required during this segment.

4. Framing Remarks from the Chair (10:20 – 10:30 a.m.)

Dr. Bocanegra offered context for the Q3 meeting, emphasizing:

- Trends affecting victim services statewide, including substantial federal funding losses
- The need for evidence-based strategies to fill emerging gaps in the victim service and violence prevention landscape
- The importance of VCVA funding in sustaining trauma-informed recovery supports across Illinois

These remarks framed the relevance of the day’s presentations to Commission deliberations.

5. Presentation: Illinois Plan for Violence Prevention (10:30 – 11:10 a.m.)

Presenter: Dr. Rachel Garthe, University of Illinois

Dr. Garthe presented an overview of the *Illinois Plan for Violence Prevention*, including:

- Key statewide and regional violence-related trends
- Risk and protective factors driving victimization across multiple Illinois regions
- Recommendations for both primary and secondary prevention, such as strengthening community infrastructure, expanding trauma-informed prevention programs, and enhancing cross-sector collaboration

She emphasized the importance of supporting individuals at elevated risk of harm and the role of evidence-based strategies in preventing cycles of violence.

Q&A occurred within the allotted time.

6. Presentation: Building a Comprehensive and Continuous Care Model (11:10 – 11:40 a.m.)

Presenter: Edwin Galletti, UCAN

Mr. Galletti discussed UCAN's work to build a statewide, data-driven care model for individuals exposed to or at risk of violence. Topics included:

- Outreach and early engagement strategies
- Intensive supports for individuals who have experienced violence
- Long-term pathways to stability involving mental health, mentoring, family supports, and workforce engagement
- Use of data to guide service delivery, strengthen organizational capacity, and measure outcomes

He also highlighted UCAN's role in building capacity among Illinois providers and underscored the need for early, preventive investments.

7. Committee Deliberation: VCVA Funding Recommendation (11:40 – 11:55 a.m.)

Facilitator: Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra

Dr. Bocanegra opened the deliberation by reminding Commissioners that the Violent Crime Victims Advisory Commission (VCAC) has the authority to make recommendations regarding the administration of funds under the Violent Crime Victims Assistance Act (VCVA), 725 ILCS 240, including recommendations intended to ensure that funds remain responsive to the evolving needs of victims of violent crime across Illinois. She noted that the Commission's advisory role includes identifying emerging service gaps and recommending funding approaches that align with the Act's purposes while responding to changes in the victim services landscape. The Chair emphasized that the Commission has an ongoing responsibility to ensure that VCVA resources continue to support programs that advance recovery, healing, and safety for victims of violent crime, particularly in light of the recent reductions in federal victim service funding affecting many programs statewide.

The Chair also noted that contemporary research increasingly demonstrates a significant overlap between victimization and later involvement in violence, often referred to as the victim-offender overlap. As a result, individuals who have experienced repeated exposure to violence may appear within criminal justice systems even while carrying significant histories of victimization. Commissioners discussed the importance of expanding the Commission's lens to include individuals affected by a continuum of harm, recognizing that early engagement and support can reduce future victimization and strengthen trust between communities and public institutions.

Several Commissioners noted that Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs are uniquely positioned to reach individuals who have experienced extensive exposure to violence and trauma and who are often the least likely to access traditional victim services through existing models. These programs frequently operate through trusted community relationships and provide trauma-informed supports aimed at interrupting cycles of harm.

Based on these considerations, the Chair presented a proposed recommendation for the Commission's consideration. The proposal suggested that the Commission recommend that VCVA funding be made available to organizations working with individuals at risk of violence and victimization when program activities advance the purposes of the Violent Crime Victims Assistance Act, including activities that:

- Support healing and recovery from exposure to violence
- Reduce the likelihood of future victimization
- Interrupt cycles of violence and harm
- Strengthen protective factors for individuals and communities

The Chair clarified that this recommendation would be consistent with the Commission's advisory authority under the Act and would serve to expand eligibility criteria within existing statutory purposes, rather than create new program categories outside the scope of the law. The Commission was then asked to deliberate and vote on two related motions.

Motion 1: Expansion of Eligible Program Strategies

Motion:

To recommend that eligible VCVA program areas include strategies that intentionally engage individuals whose prior experiences of violence may contribute to their involvement with the criminal justice system, provided that program activities advance the purposes of the Violent Crime Victims Assistance Act.

Motion introduced by: Melissa Ellison

Seconded by: Amanda Pyron

A brief discussion followed regarding how this expansion would recognize the continuum of harm experienced by many victims and support programs designed to interrupt cycles of violence through trauma-informed services and community-based engagement.

The Chair confirmed that quorum was present.

Vote:

Edwin Galletti – Yes

Dr. Rachel Garthe – Yes

Maria Garza – Yes

Erica Katava – Yes

Xochitl Guerrero – Yes

Kathy Daniher – Yes

Amanda Pyron – Yes

Melissa Ellison – Yes

Chair Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra – Yes

With **nine votes in favor and no votes opposed**, the motion passed.

Motion 2: Consideration of Priority Population Designation

Following the passage of the first motion, the Commission considered whether to recommend specifying a **priority population** within the expanded eligibility category, such as youth or individuals at particular life stages.

A clarification was requested regarding the rationale for identifying a priority population and the urgency of such a designation. Commissioners discussed whether prioritizing a specific group could unintentionally exclude or deprioritize other marginalized survivors who experience significant harm but may fall outside the designated category.

Several Commissioners expressed concern that establishing a single priority population could limit flexibility and overlook the diverse ways individuals experience victimization across communities.

After discussion, the Commission considered a motion not to designate a priority population within the recommended eligibility category, thereby allowing the funding opportunity to remain open to individuals across demographic groups and life stages.

Motion introduced by: Maria Garza

Seconded by: Edwin Galletti

Vote:

All Commissioners present voted **Yes**.

The motion passed unanimously.

8. Public Comment and Closing (11:55 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.)

Members of the public were invited to provide comments (two minutes per speaker).

Dr. Bocanegra concluded the meeting with a summary of next steps and noted that the next quarterly meeting date would be announced by the Office of the Illinois Attorney General.