

# STUDY OF ADULT AND CHILD VICTIM SERVICES

## SUMMARY OF COUNCIL WORK

CRIMINAL JUSTICE OVERSIGHT COUNCIL  
PREPARED BY LAURA SHERLEY – APRIL 2026

## INTRODUCTION

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The Criminal Justice Oversight Council (CJOC) has several topics under its jurisdiction that it may consider for study. As outlined in the council's 2025-2026 work plan<sup>1</sup>, an area identified for this cycle is the availability of services in Montana to victims and child victims of crime. This summary serves as a resource for the council to review the information received to date.

## SUMMARY OF STUDY BY MEETING DATE AS OF APRIL 2026

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The following is a summary of the 2025-2026 CJOC's study on victim and child victim services as of April 2026. The summary includes speaker names, overviews of remarks, and links to documents shared with the council. Documents below are hyperlinked; however, all meeting materials, minute logs, and recordings are also available on the council's website.<sup>2</sup>

### JULY 23, 2025

The council received a presentation from the Montana Board of Crime Control (MBCC) on its victim service mapping tool.<sup>3</sup> This interactive, searchable map enables users to locate victim service providers by county, city, or service type. MBCC also provided an overview of the categories of victim service providers and the services they deliver.

### Speakers

- Natalia Bowser, Executive Director (*former*), Montana Board of Crime Control
- Tawny Rogers, Victim Services Liaison (*former*), Montana Board of Crime Control

### Meeting Materials and Handouts

- [Victim Services Needs Assessment Report](#), MBCC
- [Victim Services Programs Breakdown](#)
- [Victim Services Map Presentation](#), MBCC

### High-level Summary of Speaker Remarks

The victim service mapping tool was developed as a key component of the State Victim Liaison Project<sup>4</sup>, which aims to establish a comprehensive statewide victim services network. By visually identifying service gaps across Montana, the mapping tool aims to equip decision-makers with critical information to support effective victim service planning. Furthermore, the MBCC Victim Services Needs Assessment Report identifies the challenges faced by victim service providers across Montana's diverse landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://archive.legmt.gov/content/Committees/Interim/2025-2026/CJOC/Admin/CJOC-2025-2026-WorkPlan.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://committees.legmt.gov/#/nonStandingCommittees/1>

<sup>3</sup> <https://mbcc.mt.gov/Programs/Victim-Services/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://mbcc.mt.gov/Programs/Victim-Liaison-Project>

## SEPTEMBER 11, 2025

The September meeting agenda included two stakeholder panel discussions with adult and child victim service providers regarding the services they offer and to gather feedback on areas where services could be improved.

### Panelists

Victim Service Providers:

- Holley Johnson, Program Specialist II, Office of Victim Services, Dept. of Justice
- Jamie Rogers, Victim Services, Dept. of Corrections
- Kelsen Young, Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Stacy Wesen, Victim Services Program Director, Gallatin
- Sue Parker, Red Bird Woman Center, Fort Peck

Child Victim Service Providers:

- Brenda George, Children's Alliance of Montana
- Dana Toole, Montana Child Sexual Abuse Response Team, Dept. of Justice
- Sean Sullivan, Victim Advocate, Flathead County Sheriff's Office CAC
- Megan Littlefield, MD, Chief Medical Officer, RiverStone Health, Yellowstone CAC
- Drew MacLeod, Exe. Dir. & Shayla Fox Brown, Program Dir., Yellowstone CASA

### Meeting Materials And Handouts

- [HJ29 \(2021\) – Study of Victim Services and Funding in Montana](#), Legislative Fiscal Division
- [Victim Service Needs Assessment Report \(2025\)](#), MBCC
- [Victim Services Flowchart](#), MBCC
- [Community-Based Victim Services](#), MBCC
- [Child Advocacy Center and Court Appointed Special Advocate Community-Based Systems](#), MBCC

### High-level Summary of Stakeholder Feedback

Panelists were asked what gaps they see in services and how the state can improve or support victim services statewide. Their insights and recommendations focused on the following areas:

#### Gaps in Victim Services and Funding

Panelists noted a lack of access to support services, particularly behavioral health and legal services, especially in rural areas. Additionally, since community-based victim services heavily rely on grant funding, panelists advocated for increased state investment and recognition that these services are an integral part of the victim support system.

#### Support for Prevention and Education

Panelists emphasized the importance of supporting prevention-oriented responses, such as early education focused on preventing victimization (e.g. healthy relationship models and addressing generational trauma).

Potential statutory changes based on panelists' feedback:

- Repeal the sunset date on the Crime Victims Compensation Account (53-9-113, MCA)
- Reconsider existing financial caps and time limits in the crime victim compensation program for accessing benefits
- Define Child Advocacy Centers and multidisciplinary teams in law, providing an avenue for statutorily designated groups to respond to certain child abuse cases

### Crime Victims Compensation (CVC) Program

A suggested area of improvement that arose from these discussions is to extend or repeal the sunset date of the state's crime victims' compensation program account<sup>5</sup>, as well as reevaluate the program's financial caps and time limits for victims and their families accessing benefits.

### Sustainability for Child Victim Services

The child victim service providers panel emphasized the need for additional funding, staff, medical providers, and trauma-trained behavioral health providers to support child advocacy work. Child Advocacy Centers, and, to some extent, court appointed special advocates rely on Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. As VOCA funds decrease, concerns about program sustainability grow. Additionally, high burnout rates and cost-barriers limit access to medical and behavioral-health providers specifically trained to treat child trauma.

Panelists highlighted the importance of uplifting victims' voices and increasing system accountability, stating that improvements should ensure victims are heard throughout the criminal justice process, and that investments are directed toward making the state more responsive to victims' needs.

## **MARCH 11, 2026**

In response to one of the recommendations from the September panelists, the council considered a provisional bill draft to repeal the sunset date, or the expiration date, of the Crime Victim Compensation Account established in [53-9-113, Montana Code Annotated](#).

### **Meeting Materials And Handouts**

- [CJOC-PD1](#) – Repeal sunset date on the Crime Victims Compensation account

## **MAY 8, 2026 – UPCOMING**

The May agenda includes a panel of Child Advocacy Center representatives invited to speak with the council about how the state can better support their work. Additionally, the council will again consider a provisional bill draft to repeal the sunset date, or the expiration date, of the Crime Victim Compensation Account established in [53-9-113, Montana Code Annotated](#).

### **Panelists**

Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Representatives:

- Brenda George, Director, Children's Alliance of Montana
- Tricia Loving, CAC Coordinator, Yellowstone Valley CAC/Riverstone Health Program
- Sue Parker, Program/Finance Director, Fort Peck Tribes CAC/Red Bird Woman Center
- Kent Sipe, Fergus County Attorney, Central Montana CAC

### **Meeting Materials And Handouts**

- Research Summary: [State Support for Children's Advocacy Centers](#), NCSL
- [CJOC-PD1](#) – Repeal sunset date on the Crime Victims Compensation account

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<sup>5</sup> Crime Victim Compensation - [dojmt.gov/victim-services/crime-victim-compensation/](https://dojmt.gov/victim-services/crime-victim-compensation/)