



**CRIME VICTIMS
LEGAL NETWORK**

**2019-2022
Grant Report**



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The NY Crime Victims Legal Network (CVLN) is a partnership of OVS-funded civil legal organizations and victim assistance programs. We work together to connect victims of crime with civil legal information, resources, and assistance through the use of our online resource, *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*.

All OVS-funded organizations are members of the CVLN, and all organizations that are funded to provide attorney services, either through a grant with OVS or a subcontract with a Victim Assistance Program, are the CVLN Referral Partners.

For many crime victims, the problems they face after a crime can be challenging, especially when they have several legal needs and are unsure where they can go for help. In addition to working with law enforcement and the criminal justice system, a victim may also have non-criminal -- civil legal -- needs that impact the basic necessities in their life, such as housing, employment, and safety.

Empire Justice Center, Pro Bono Net, the Center for Human Services Research at the University at Albany, and the NYS Office of Victim Services (OVS), guided by an Advisory Committee, developed the CVLN and the online resource, *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*, to make it easier for victims of crime to get information and services to help with these civil legal needs.

In October 2018, the CVLN launched *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* as a pilot in Erie, Niagara, and Genesee counties. In 2019, the website was expanded to all counties in New York State outside of New York City, which was added in early 2020.

In the past three years, both the CVLN and *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* have seen tremendous growth. **This report highlights some of the accomplishments of the CVLN lead partners, and the usage of *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* during the OVS grant period of 10/1/19-9/30/22.**

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES - YEAR ONE

Despite the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic and the resulting need to re-adjust original plans, during the first year of the OVS grant, the CVLN lead partners were able to lay the groundwork to create a community of practice for crime victims legal providers, and enhance the content and features of *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* to help both crime victims and those who assist them.

01

Empire Justice Center

- Hired two Regional Attorney Coordinators and a Program and Marketing Manager who joined the Project Leader to form the CVLN Team at Empire Justice Center
- Presented four technical assistance Continuing Legal Education webinars for OVS-funded attorneys, paralegals and advocates
- Established a social media presence through Facebook and Twitter
- Added COVID-19 resources to *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*
- Held the first Attorney & Paralegal Forum
- Convened a new CVLN Advisory Committee
- Established a system of communications of e-newsletters and broadcast emails to inform and communicate with providers

02

Center for Human Services Research

- Reviewed data from Google Analytics quarterly and conducted detailed analyses
- Developed several data collection instruments, including surveys and interview questions to systematically gather information about the needs of LGBTQ+ victims of crime, deaf/hard of hearing victims of crime, and secondary victims of crime
- Conducted interviews and a series of three focus groups with service providers to understand how a toolkit can assist in the successful completion of claims for Victim Compensation
- Developed a survey to assist the Regional Attorney Coordinators determine the needs of the OVS-funded attorneys across NYS

03

Pro Bono Net

- Refined the functionality of the website by updating the design and components of the Advocate Gateway
- Implemented language translation options on the website
- Added a blogging tool to the site to publish articles written by the CVLN Team
- Created prototypes for the Victim Compensation Toolkit (an App and a Guide), and the Family Offense Petition Program

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES - YEAR TWO

During the second year of the grant, the lead partners' focus was the creation of a toolkit to assist in the successful completion of an online claim for victim compensation. Using CHSR's focus group and interview data from the previous year, Empire Justice Center created the content of the Victim Compensation Guide and Navigator, and Pro Bono Net integrated these tools into *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*.

01

Empire Justice Center

- Created content for the Victim Compensation Guide and Victim Compensation Claim Navigator
- Developed a major content area on the website: LGBTQ+ victims of crime
- Held the Attorney & Paralegal Forums every month for OVS-funded attorneys and paralegals
- Delivered six technical assistance webinars and two Open Houses about *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* and Advocate Gateway
- Published bimonthly e-newsletters as well as broadcast emails focusing on social justice, diversity, technology, and the CVLN updates.

02

Center for Human Services Research

- Analyzed data from Google Analytics to track traffic to the *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* website
- Analyzed findings from focus groups and interview, and shared them with the lead partners to inform the content of the website
- Developed survey and interview questions for providers who are engaged with secondary victims to inform content development on the website

03

Pro Bono Net

- Added an API and data-mapping functionality that connects organizational listings in the LawHelpNY Directory to the Legal Help Directory on *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*
- Added a language translation tool to the website
- Designed and implemented the Victim Compensation Claim Navigator
- Conducted a few experiments with the LiveHelp chat feature resulting in increased engagement

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES - YEAR THREE

During the third year of the grant, the CVLN Team at Empire Justice Center focused on raising awareness of the CVLN and *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*, and providing technical assistance to attorneys across New York State. CHSR conducted interviews and focus groups with members of the college campus community, while Pro Bono Net continued to maintain all technology aspects of the website.

01

Empire Justice Center

- Hosted seven informational presentations to organizations to raise awareness about *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*
- Responded to 67 technical assistance requests and made referrals for 58 crime victims
- Delivered seven well-attended technical assistance webinars
- Added approximately 18 documents to the library section of the Advocate Gateway, including legal memos and case law updates
- Updated information on the website and in the Victim Compensation Guide

02

Center for Human Services Research

- Conducted interviews and focus groups to inform the content and presentation of material to be added to the website for victims of campus sexual assault
- Wrote a research brief illustrating the application of research to practice, highlighting how feedback from service providers directly informed key elements of the Victim Compensation Guide and Claim Navigator
- Continued to analyze data from Google Analytics to track traffic to the website

03

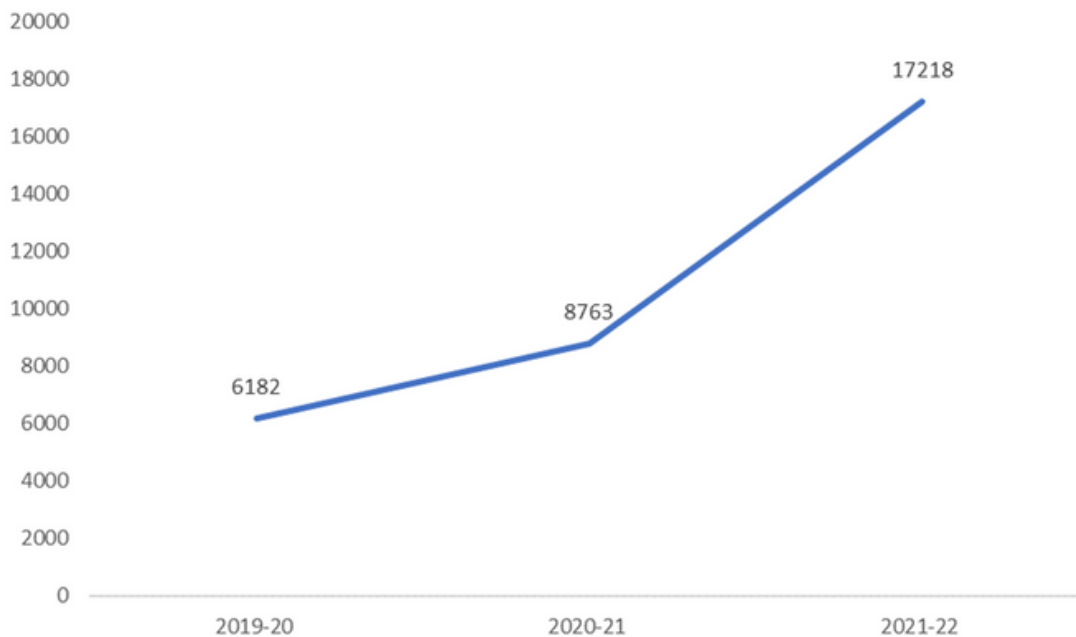
Pro Bono Net

- Updated the taxonomy, mapping, and data transfer technology to ensure that Legal Help Directory search options and results reflect corresponding legal aid organizations
- Built pages for Spanish, Bengali, Burmese, Chinese, Arabic translations of the Victim Compensation Guide
- Trained LiveHelp operators to handle inquiries about where to find information on *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*

Traffic to *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* has more than doubled over the past three-year grant period.

Usage of *NY Crime Victims Legal Help* increased nearly 200% over the past three-year grant period. The Victim Compensation Guide, added in Year 3, accounts for much of the increase from Year 2. Users who visit the website are new users approximately 97% of the time.

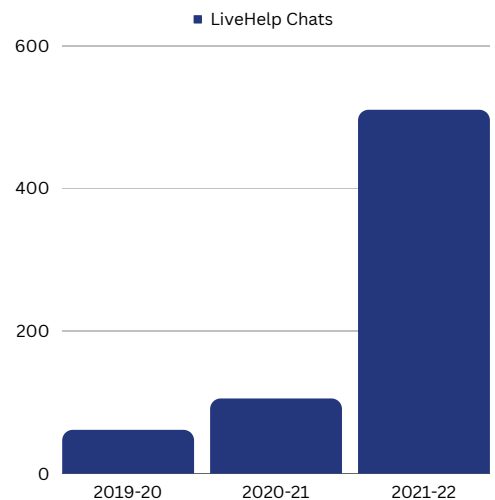
Total Number of Users Over 3 Year Grant Period



LiveHelp Chats over 3 Year Grant Period

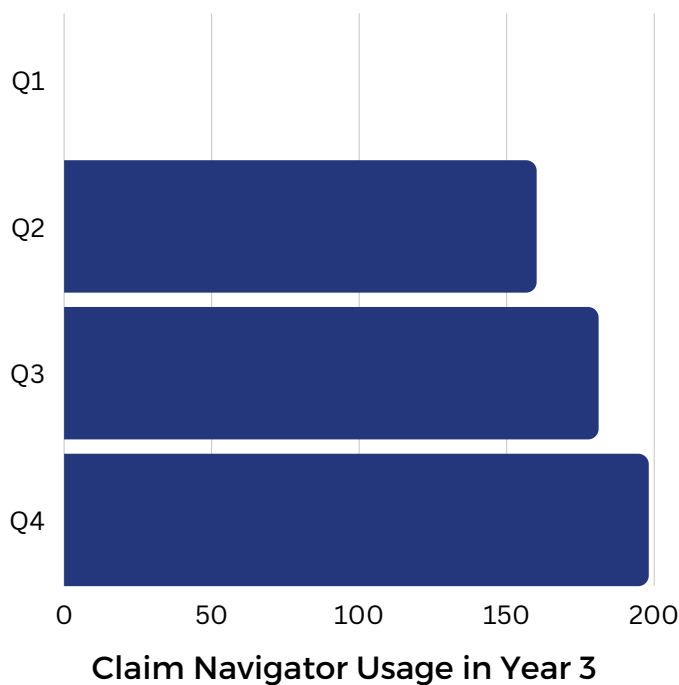
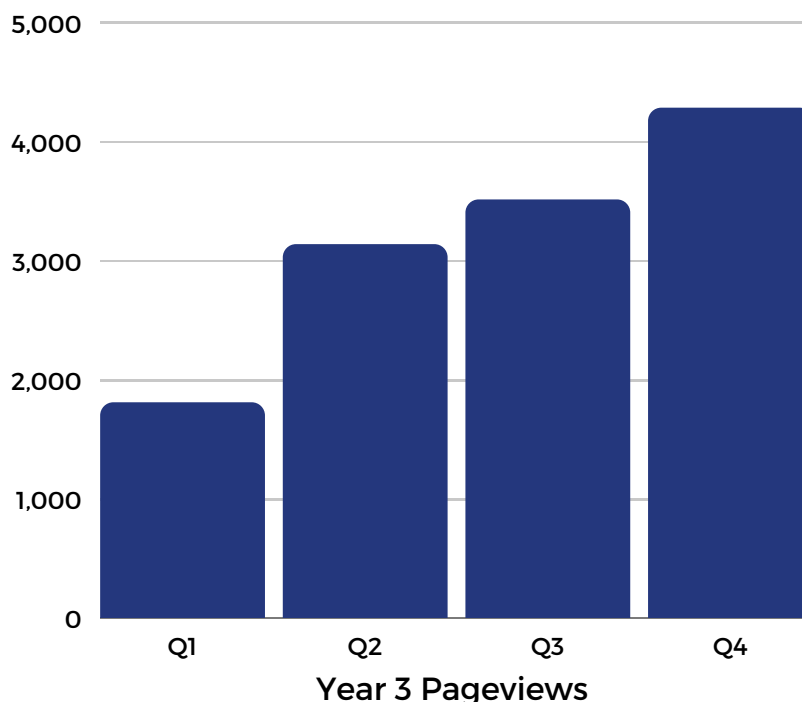
If a visitor to the website is having trouble finding what they are looking for, they can use LiveHelp to chat with a LiveHelp Agent. LiveHelp Agents are volunteers or staff members of LawHelpNY and its partner organizations who have been trained to help find information on *NY Crime Victims Legal Help*.

User and engagement testing occurred at the end of Year 2 and the beginning of Year 3, resulting in increased engagement.



VICTIM COMPENSATION GUIDE

The [Victim Compensation Online Claim Application Guide](#) was developed during Year 2 with feedback from OVS and Network Partners (please see [CHSR's research brief](#)). It is available in 5 human-translated languages. Ever since it launched in October 2021, the Guide has been the most visited section of the website. It was accessed 12,733 times in its first year with pageviews more than doubling over the course of Year 3.



Victim Compensation Claim Navigator

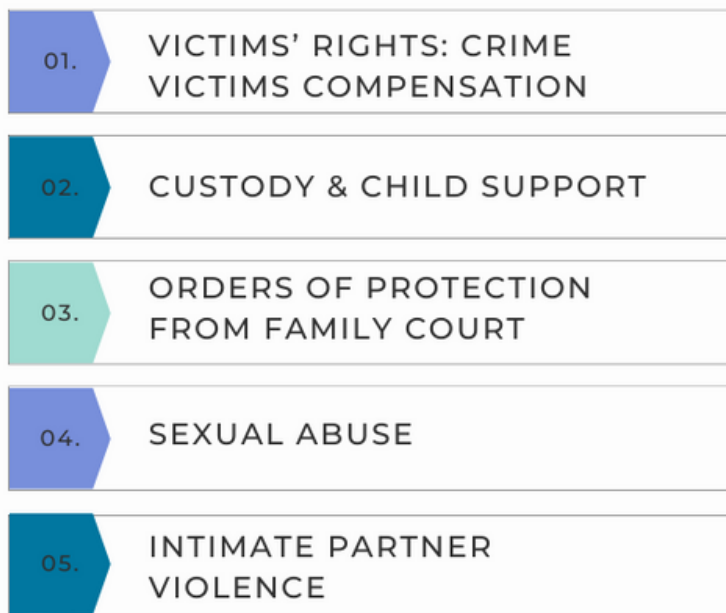
The [Claim Navigator](#) was developed to help crime victims determine if they are eligible for victim compensation and the type of claim they can apply for.

Although the Claim Navigator launched on the website with the Guide in October 2021, usage of this tool was not tracked until Quarter 2 of Year 3. The Guide was used over 500 times in just 9 months.

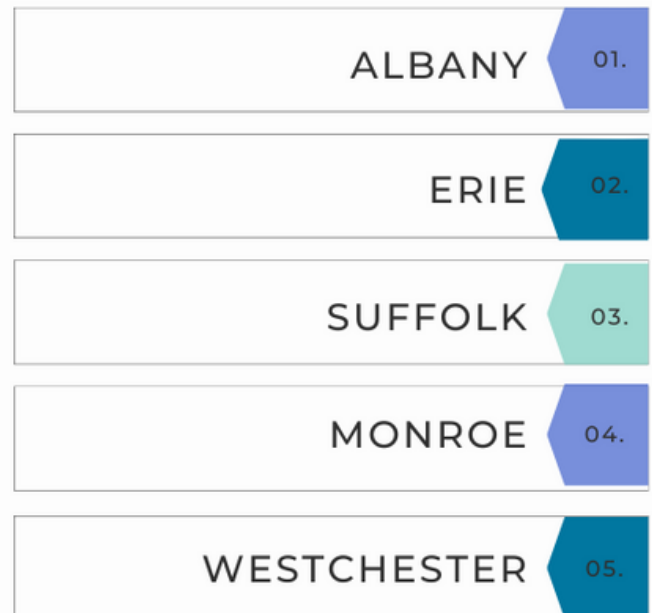
Legal Help Directory

The [Legal Help Directory](#) was created to make it easier for crime victims to be connected with a legal provider. After choosing a county and the legal issue they require assistance with, the crime victim obtains a list of organizations in that geographic area that may be able to help them. 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 five counties searched. In Year 3, there were 2,542 Legal Help Directory searches and organizational profiles were accessed 843 times.

Top Topics Searched



Top Counties Searched*



*outside NYC

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 most visited topic areas are below.

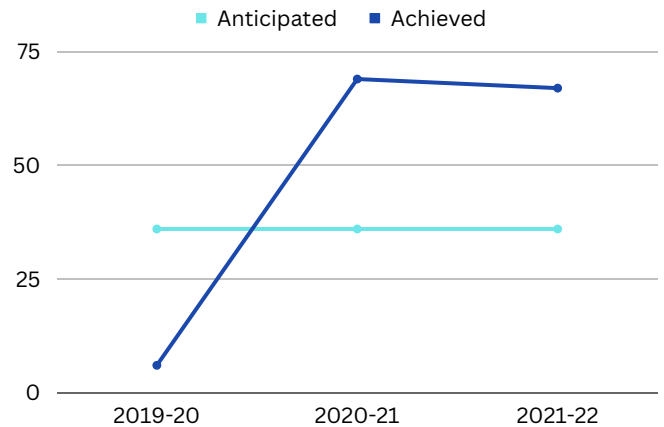


Technical Assistance

The Regional Attorney Coordinators play a key role in the development and nurturing of a community of practice for civil legal professionals assisting crime victims. In addition to hosting monthly forums for attorneys and paralegals, they provide technical assistance (legal advice, case consultation, and support) to OVS-funded attorneys across the state. In Year 1, they responded to six requests for technical assistance and referrals.

In Year 2 of the grant, the CVLN Team at Empire Justice completed 69 requests for technical assistance. In Year 3 of the grant, the CVLN Team provided technical assistance to providers 67 times, exceeding our anticipated goals in Years 2 & 3, as shown in the graph.

Anticipated vs. Achieved Technical Assistance



Webinars

In Year 1, during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CVLN Team at Empire Justice Center provided information to network partners in the form of webinars. Three of the four webinars were on topics concerning the pandemic.

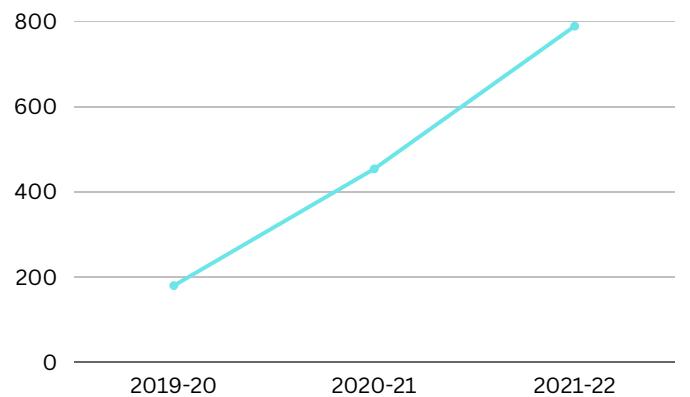
In Year 2, the CVLN Team at Empire Justice Center delivered eight technical assistance webinars. All of the webinars were hosted on GoToWebinar; this platform had a capacity of 125 attendees, which we often reached.

In Year 3, we hosted seven technical assistance webinars on Zoom, which had a capacity of 500 attendees. The webinars consistently had over 100 people registered and at least 60% of registrants in attendance. In September, a Public Benefits webinar presented by Susan Antos of Empire Justice Center broke our registration and attendance records with over 330 attendees.

A majority of our webinars were for Continuing Legal Education credit and are available on the [Advocate Gateway](#).

"Thank you so much! The substantive presentation was very concise and informative and the practical experience part was very interesting."

Webinar Attendance



"Very excellent program with real, concrete information to use as practitioners to support clients and better develop cases for court. One of the more informative programs I have attended."

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In Your Own Voices

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