

Executive Officer's Statement

June 19, 2007

Positive Trend: Payments to Crime Victims Up Significantly

Recent statistics show an impressive upward trend in payments by the Victim Compensation Program to victims and providers and in the number of claims received. Last month's statistical report to the board for the first three quarters of Fiscal Year 2006-07 shows payments by the Victim Compensation Program to victims of violent crime are up significantly compared to the same period last fiscal year.

Victim Compensation Program payments increased by 20 percent, totaling more than \$55 million for the first three quarters of the 2006-07 fiscal year. If that pace holds for the remainder of the fiscal year, we anticipate payouts to surpass last year's total of \$66 million. Applications received by the program also increased by more than 9 percent during the first three quarters of the fiscal year.

The upward trend in payments and applications is believed to be due in part to steps taken by the three-member Board in 2006 to enhance benefits to victims and increase access to care. The Board took action to increase the availability of mental health services to victims. It increased session limits, reduced paperwork and increased reimbursement rates, so more licensed mental health professionals will offer their services to victims. The Board established a preauthorization/pre-approval process for the treatment of a victim's crime-related dental injuries. It also raised the compensation cap for funeral and burial expenses to \$7,500 to ensure reimbursement to crime victims reflects changes in costs for these services.

We believe the increase in applications shows the VCGCB's ongoing outreach efforts are contributing to awareness about the Victim Compensation Program among victims of violent crime. The VCGCB undertakes a comprehensive array of outreach activities to publicize California's Victim Compensation Program to crime victims, victims' service providers, first-responders, stakeholders and the public. These outreach activities include our Web site, an array of publications, and participation in a variety of events and conferences throughout the year.

Statistics for the first three quarters of the fiscal year also show the Victim Compensation Program has reduced the average processing time for victim compensation applications. The average processing time of 60 days was six days lower than the average during the same period a year earlier. Average processing time is calculated from the date an application is accepted as complete to the date the eligibility decision is made.

We anticipate these positive trends to continue as the fiscal year comes to an end.

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Victims and Providers Benefit from Upgrades to Customer Service Section

Consistent with the 2006 Strategic Plan goal of "Excellence in Customer Service," the VCGCB is developing its Customer Call Center into a full service Customer Service Section. A key enhancement is new call-routing technology that allows customers to pre-select their preferences. Another important improvement is the assignment of trained claims-processing staff with access to computerized Victim Compensation Program information. We've posted a new bill status request form for providers on the VCGCB Web site. The form allows providers to conveniently fax in a request for the status of pending bills. We've also designated an ombudsman to work directly with any provider who may need additional assistance. The changes will help us better meet the needs of our customers, including victims of violent crime, service providers and victim advocates.

CaRES Pilot Phase Extended to Focus on Upgrades and Enhancements

CaRES, the Victim Compensation Program's new automated claims processing system, continues its steady progress and development. In October 2006, the system proved it could handle a claim from initial application intake all the way to final bill payment. In April, the system was deployed into three Joint Powers (JP) county offices in a pilot rollout to test and develop the system further before it is expanded to all JP counties. Based on feedback from the three county pioneers – Sacramento, San Joaquin and San Bernardino Counties – the CaRES county pilot phase is being extended so developers can add important features and upgrades to the system. Some of the enhancements are: summary screens that provide essential customer service information quickly; expanded capabilities for creating and managing letters to applicants and providers; enhanced document capture and document management systems, including high-capacity "super-fax" machines for the JP counties; and new server hardware and software to improve system performance.

VCGCB Briefs California Crime Victim Assistance Association on Progress

VCGCB briefed the California Crime Victim Assistance Association (CCVAA) at its June 5 meeting in Sacramento on the latest developments in the Victim Compensation Program. CCVAA membership includes county Victim Witness Assistance Program coordinators, staff from county Victim Witness Assistance Centers, and Victim Compensation Program staff from county Joint Power Verification Units. We provided attendees with highlights of ongoing outreach efforts, a recap of recent victims' service organization conferences and introduced new VCGCB staff members. We presented updates on CaRES system development, Customer Service Section upgrades and resources, legislation and restitution, among other topics.

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VOCA Report

We continue to monitor the federal budget process. Congress will soon be acting to set the spending cap for next year's Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. It is expected Congress will protect the fund by not approving the president's Fiscal Year 2008 budget proposal. The proposed \$1.3 billion rescission would remove amounts collected into the Federal Crime Victims Fund through Fiscal Year 2007, leaving the VOCA fund with a zero balance. Congress would then appropriate VOCA funds. The proposal would eliminate a secure funding source for the Crime Victims Fund, which provides essential support for the VCGCB's Victim Compensation Program and similar programs throughout the country

VCGCB Updates

- **New Victim Compensation Brochure.** The VCGCB recently published its updated and enhanced Victim Compensation Program Brochure. The new brochure includes up-to-date information on benefits available to victims of violent crime and also incorporates expanded information on restitution and appeals. It is designed to be a one-stop resource for a quick overview of the program.

Events and Meetings

- **June 20** – The Victim Compensation Program Advisory Committee meets at the Office of Emergency Services in Sacramento.
- **June 25** – VCGCB Executive Staff will attend a meeting of the California District Attorneys Association Conference in Napa.