



**Californians for
Safety and Justice**

California Victim Compensation Program Failing to Meet the Needs of Survivors of Crime

**Millions More Should be
Spent on Victim Compensation**

May 2026

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Overall, California's victim services infrastructure is facing cuts – making the state's Victim Compensation Program an even more critical safety net.
- But the number of applications the California Victim Compensation Board (CalVCB) approved for compensation in FY 2025 fell nearly in half (47%) from its FY 2019 peak, and CalVCB gave out 27% less in compensation dollars in FY 2025 compared to FY 2019.
- The decline in compensation assistance is driven by fewer applications and an increase in denials – in FY 2025, nearly 1 in 3 applications was denied compared to 1 in 12 in FY2019.
- Thanks to state support, the Restitution Fund that supports the compensation program is now stable and well positioned to expand help to meet more of the real need.
- But CalVCB budget projections fail to reflect these shifts, creating an increasingly inaccurate picture and halting legislation that would improve program access.
- CalVCB does need to retain a healthy balance in the Restitution Fund to account for year-over-year instability, and to prevent delays in compensation to victims in years where there are shortfalls. But the Restitution Fund balance appears robust and growing, and victims should benefit from that.
- CalVCB has also been spending more on state-level operating costs, without a parallel increase in access to compensation assistance.
- California is lagging behind other states in removing barriers to compensation, and Black survivors are denied victim compensation at the highest rates.
- California has the opportunity now to improve equity and remove barriers to help for survivors.

SUPPORT FOR CALIFORNIA'S VICTIM SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE IS WAVERING

California has taken important steps to improve services for crime survivors, and to advance a new public safety agenda rooted in healing. But over the last few years, state support for crime survivors has wavered.

- In 2025, the state cut funding for the Flexible Assistance for Survivors grant program (FAS) that survivors were waiting for to meet urgent needs, just before the money was set to go out the door.¹
- Trauma Recovery Centers (TRC), which provide frontline services to marginalized survivors around the state, are facing closure due to waning state funding and shortfalls tied to incarceration increases under Proposition 36 (2024).²

- Declining federal Victims of Crime Act funding has also created a dangerous gap in victim services funding that the state has helped fill in each of the last three years, but has not yet committed to filling in FY 2027.³

In the face of this crisis in support for survivors, the California Victim Compensation Program is even more vital. But despite robust funding, the program is putting less money into the hands of survivors and reaching fewer and fewer victims, due to ongoing barriers in law and practice. The state's commitment to funding the program has remained strong, and opens the door for the program to address these barriers and improve support for survivors.

CALIFORNIA SURVIVORS NEED URGENT HELP, AND THE VICTIM COMPENSATION PROGRAM IS CRITICAL

California's Victim Compensation program is intended to meet the needs of violent crime survivors. Every state has a compensation program, which covers urgent expenses – including counseling, relocation, and in cases of deadly violence, funeral costs and support for children left behind. Survivors are only eligible for compensation from the California Victim Compensation Board (CalVCB) if they have no other source to cover an expense (e.g. insurance, civil settlement). The program is the payor of last resort. Coverage can be a lifeline that allows survivors and their loved ones to focus on healing.

- Nationally, fewer than 1 in 11 violent crime survivors get help from a victim services agency.⁴
- A survey of California crime survivors found that younger survivors, and Black and Latinx survivors, were more likely to report being interested in but unaware of services including help applying for compensation, mental healthcare, and support groups.⁵
- Another survey of California survivors found that only 1 in 7 survivors (14%) felt “very supported” by the criminal justice system after they experienced crime.⁶
- Survivors also strongly prefer investments in education, mental health treatment, and rehabilitation over incarceration.⁷

Financial Support is Crucial to Safety and Healing

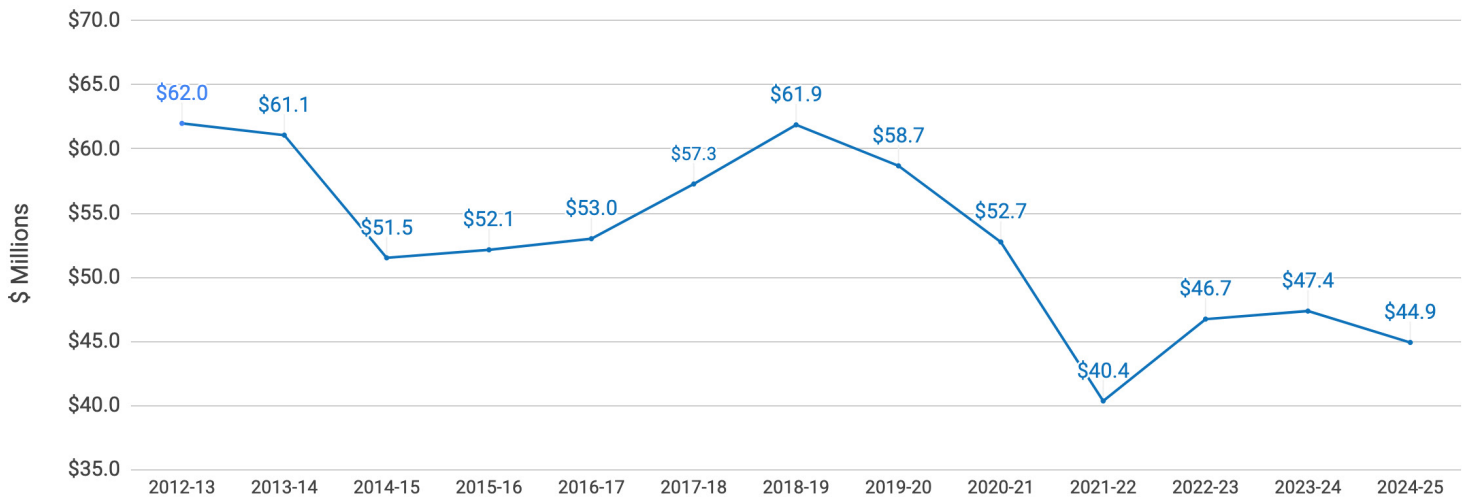
- A growing body of research indicates support meeting basic needs following a crime is critical to survivor recovery.
- Financial support in the wake of violence supports stability and safety, improves health and wellbeing, and can significantly reduce the long-term risk of experiencing PTSD.⁸

VICTIMS ARE GETTING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS LESS IN HELP FROM THE COMPENSATION PROGRAM

The amount CalVCB has been spending to compensate victims has dropped significantly over the last five years.

CalVCB's compensation awards plummeted almost 30% between FY 2019 and FY 2025

CalVCB Total Amount Awarded in Victim Compensation (in millions) FY13-FY25

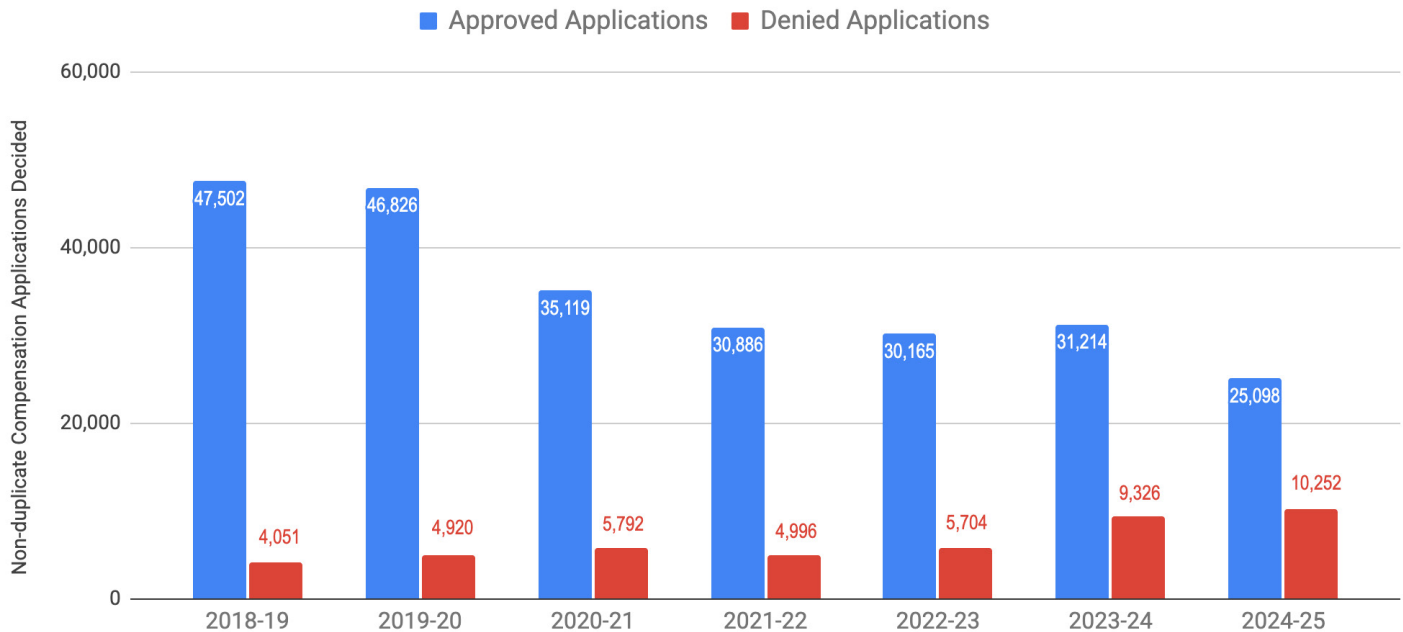


Source: CalVCB Annual Reports and Annual Report Supplementary Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://victims.ca.gov/publications/>

- In the four years from FY 2017-18 thru FY 2020-21, the average amount paid annually in compensation to victims was **\$57.6 million**.
- From FY 2021-22 to FY 2024-25, the average amount paid annually in compensation to victims was **\$44.9 million** – an over \$10 million drop.⁹
- **These trends buck national trends.** Nationally spending on victim compensation was back up in FY 2024 compared to FY 2019, rebounding from a pandemic-related dip.¹⁰

MAJOR REDUCTIONS IN APPROVED APPLICATIONS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE DECLINE IN AWARDS

CalVCB applications are falling as denials grow



Source: CalVCB Annual Reports and Annual Report Supplementary Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://victims.ca.gov/publications/>

- CalVCB is denying more applications – nearly 1 in 3 applications in FY 2024-25, up from fewer than 1 in 12 in FY 2018-19.
- Overall, CalVCB received fewer applications as denials increased. CalVCB reported deciding on more than 50,000 applications in FY 2019 but just 35,000 in FY 2025.¹¹

Program Funding is Robust Thanks to State Support, but Survivors are not Benefitting

- The state’s ongoing commitment to supplementing program funding is necessary to ensure more survivors in the state can access real help, but must be paired with policy and practice changes that remove outdated barriers for survivors.
- In the most recent years for which we have complete data, CalVCB’s budget projected spending \$45.1 million in state funds (restitution fund and general revenue backfill) and \$79.3 million overall (including federal matching funds) directly in compensation to survivors, but the agency spent \$20-\$30 million less than that each year on claims.
 - The Restitution Fund which supports the program had a significant deficit between FY 2018-19 and FY 2020-21, but with the help of an ongoing annual general fund supplement and an increase in the federal match rate for the program,¹² the fund has stabilized.

- Yet CalVCB’s FY 2026 enacted budget and FY 2027 proposed budget continue to project the same \$45.1/\$79.3 million to compensate survivors that has grown increasingly inaccurate.

Table: CalVCB Budgeted and Actual Spending on Compensation Awards to Victims, FY 2019 - 2027

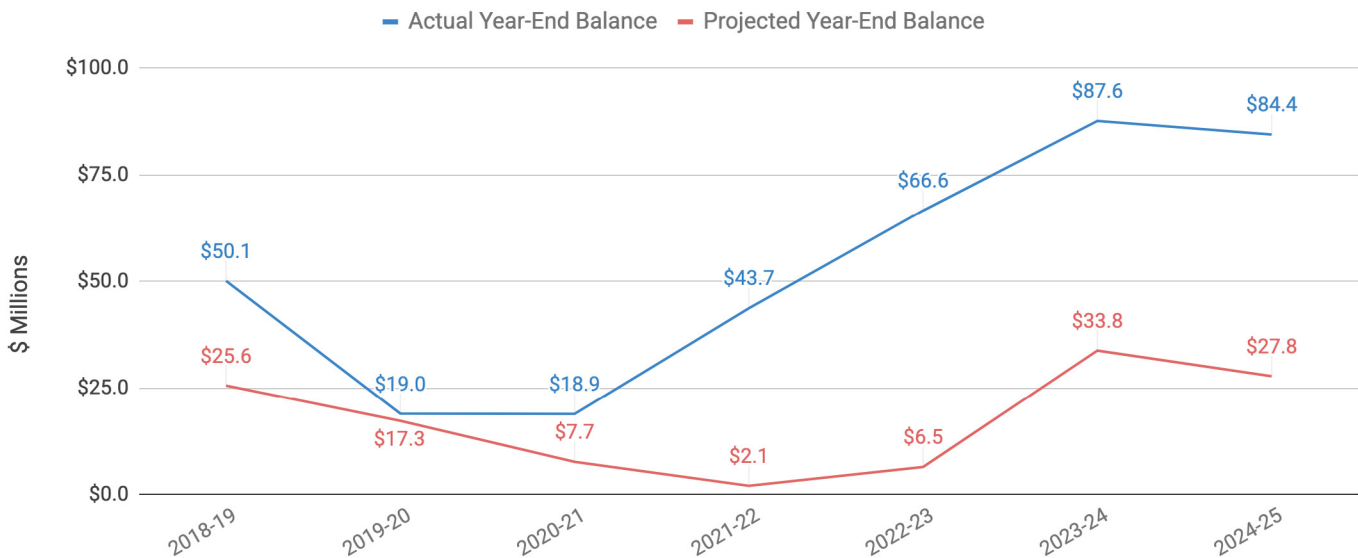
	Budgeted State Funds (Rest Fund + General Revenue) for Comp Claims	Actual State Spending in Compensation to Victims	Difference Between Budgeted and Actual	Total Funds Budgeted for Comp Claims (including Federal)	Actual Total Spending in Compensation to Victims	Difference Between Budgeted and Actual
2018-19	\$33.6	\$46.9	-\$13.3	\$56.6	\$64.0	-\$7.4
2019-20	\$33.6	\$48.8	-\$15.2	\$56.6	\$65.3	-\$8.7
2020-21	\$43.1	\$42.6	\$0.5	\$66.1	\$59.7	\$6.4
2021-22	\$45.1	\$30.8	\$14.3	\$68.1	\$46.2	\$21.9
2022-23	\$45.1	\$33.2	\$11.9	\$79.3	\$52.4	\$26.9
2023-24	\$45.1	\$20.8	\$24.3	\$79.3	\$53.2	\$26.1
2024-25	\$45.1	\$19.9	\$25.2	\$79.3	\$49.9	\$29.5
2025-26	\$45.1	TBD	TBD	\$79.3	TBD	TBD
2026-27* (Jan proposed)	\$45.1*			\$79.3*		

*Sources: California Victim Compensation Board Enacted Budgets FY 2019-FY 2026, and FY 2027 Governor’s Proposed Budget – retrieved from ebudget.ca.gov. For state spending to pay compensation claims, see 7870 California Victim Compensation Board –> “Detail of Appropriations and Adjustments” –> Restitution Fund –> Local Assistance –> Government Code 13964. For total amounts, federal funds are added, pulled from 7870 California Victim Compensation Board –> “Detailed Expenditures by Program” –> Victim Compensation –> Local Assistance –> Federal Trust Fund. Total numbers appear to include a small amount of administrative costs given a \$5-\$6 million difference between these figures and those reported in CalVCB’s annual report and included in the graph above (up to 5% of the federal award may be used for administrative expenses). Budgeted numbers are from the specified year’s enacted budget (except for 2026-27), actuals are from the enacted budget two years following (where adjusted actuals are included retrospectively). **Note:** Federal budgeted amounts increased in 2022 as a result of a change in federal law which increased the rate at which state spending is matched with federal dollars. This also impacted total state dollars spent, as the federal share increased.*

As a result, CalVCB budgets continue to paint a picture of instability (despite accounting for the general fund backfill), but the fund has actually had significant surpluses in 3 of the last 4 years for which we have adjusted actual balance data.

State investment has stabilized funding, but CalVCB's budget is dramatically underestimating year-end balances

CalVCB Restitution Fund: Projected/Budgeted Vs. Actual Year-End Balance



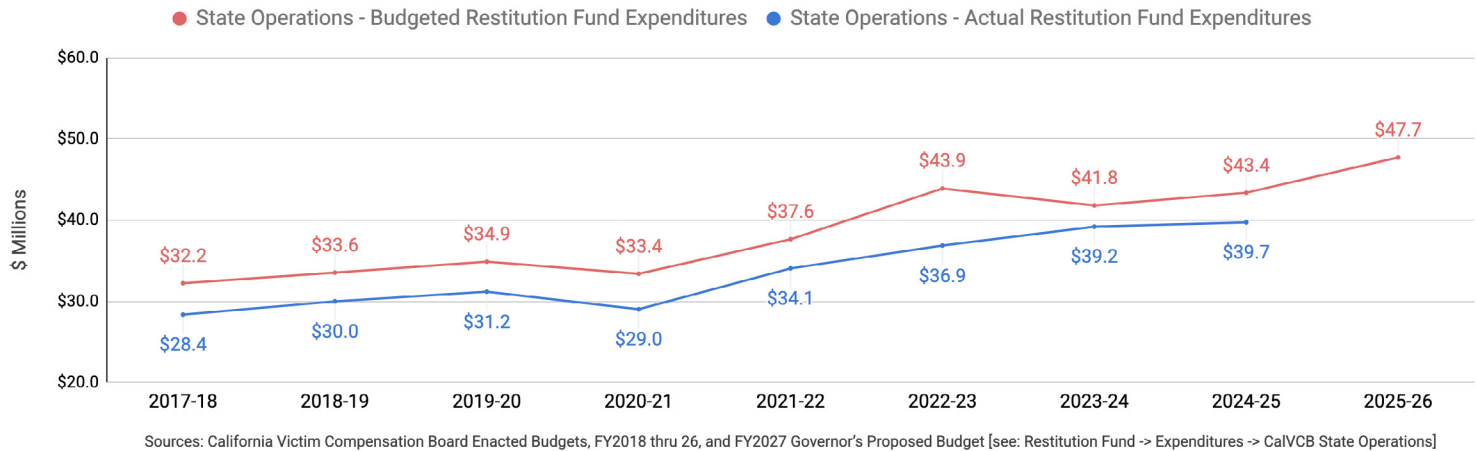
Source: Restitution Fund Condition Statements included in California Victim Compensation Board Enacted Budgets FY21-FY26, and for FY25 actuals, the FY27 Governor's Proposed Budget – retrieved from ebudget.ca.gov. FY 2025 is the only year in the last four during which the fund balance did not grow – due to a one-time reduction in the ongoing general fund commitment. California's FY 2025 budget allocated \$14.5 million in general funds, \$25 million less than the promised ongoing annual \$39.5 million. The FY 2026 budget allocated \$29.5 million, and the Governor's FY 2027 budget proposes restoring the \$39.5 million.

- These deficit concerns have stood in the way of desperately needed legislative changes proposed over the last two sessions that would improve access to and equity in the compensation program.
- With the ongoing General Fund commitment, the program is in a position to expand help to better meet actual survivor needs without risking budget shortfalls.¹³
- It is critical that the Restitution Fund retain a healthy year-over-year balance, but the Restitution Fund is currently healthy and tens of millions of surplus dollars earmarked for victims are going unspent.
- The Restitution Fund also currently relies on fines and fees levied largely on low-income people in the justice system, a situation which is not tenable in the long term. Fines and fees undermine community stability, contribute to cycles of harm, and are not a stable funding source.¹⁴
 - California spends \$14 billion on its bloated prison system.¹⁵ Fully funding the compensation program at the level of actual need with general revenue represents just a fraction of a percent of this cost.

MORE ADMINISTRATIVE SPENDING HAS NOT STEMMED THE DECLINE IN SURVIVOR SUPPORT

CalVCB operations spending increases while help for victims falls

Budgeted and Actual Restitution Fund (+ GR Backfill) Spending on CalVCB State Operations (FY18-26)



- During the same period that the number of applications processed and funds going out to victims dropped by nearly 30%, the amount of funds CalVCB used to pay for state operating costs from the Restitution Fund rose by nearly 30%, or nearly \$9 million.¹⁶
- CalVCB's FY 2025-26 budget increased state operations spending from the Fund by more than \$5 million above the prior year.¹⁷
 - The agency requested \$4.4 million for FY 2025-26 to increase legal staffing to address an appeals backlog, created by mounting application denials.
 - In its budget change proposal, CalVCB reported a 199 percent increase in appeals driven by skyrocketing denial rates. The agency reported that survivors who appeal are waiting nearly a year (325 days) on average for a decision.
 - The agency feared the backlog would worsen due to a court order requiring CalVCB to actually offer hearings when claimants appeal, and pinned the staffing need primarily on the court decision even while citing its own increasing denial numbers and preexisting backlog.¹⁸
- Importantly, CalVCB has spent \$3 million budgeted in 2022 on a media and outreach campaign that launched in 2024,¹⁹ which may be helping to stem even steeper application declines. And, CalVCB has invested in technology improvements, document translation, and other critical changes intended to improve applicants' experiences with the program.²⁰
- Program administrative spending can be essential to improving outreach, speeding up application approval timelines, and ensuring more funds get out to survivors with less red tape – but CalVCB's increased spending to administer the program has so far not resulted in more help for survivors.

BARRIERS IN LAW AND PRACTICE ARE DRIVING DECLINING ACCESS TO HELP

Red tape in the application process, and unfair eligibility restrictions, keep survivors from getting needed help, and hurt Black victims the most.

- In a recent State Auditor report, CalVCB revealed that denials are up in part because the agency changed practices and is now denying victims compensation when law enforcement fails to respond to requests to release police reports within 10-days.²¹
 - This implies that even victims who properly reported the crime may be penalized due to a lack of alternative documentation options, when local law enforcement agencies' fail to provide requested information to CalVCB quickly.
 - The 10-day requirement on law enforcement response is designed to ensure law enforcement responds promptly and to speed up assistance.²² But instead, victims may be punished for law enforcement inaction.
 - California offers alternative options to a police report to document the victimization for survivors of human trafficking, sexual assault, and domestic violence.
 - But, California has failed to join the wave of states adopting policies that allow all survivors to use reliable alternative options, and continues to deny survivors based on alleged lack of cooperation. Seven states now offer alternative options to police reporting and cooperation to all applicants – LA, NV, NY, IL, OR, MD, NM²³ – but similar legislation in California has failed to pass session after session due to fiscal concerns based on fears of a deficit that have proven inaccurate.²⁴
 - Data show Black applicants in California are denied more often than white applicants based on perceived non-cooperativeness with law enforcement.²⁵
- California is **one of only seven states** that restricts eligibility to compensation based on some survivors' status on probation or parole.²⁶ Survivors are also ineligible while incarcerated.²⁷ Pervasive racial disparities in the criminal justice system mean that these policies disproportionately harm Black and Brown survivors and families.²⁸
- California law and practice denies compensation based on vague and subjective victim-blaming restrictions.
 - Survivors may be denied for alleged “involvement” in their own victimization.²⁹
 - An Alameda County Grand Jury report found that Black applicants were nearly twice as likely as white applicants to be denied based on these subjective determinations, due to racial biases.³⁰
 - In a 2024 letter commenting on Federal rulemaking, CalVCB noted that it denies \$2.8 million in compensation assistance to survivors based on these types of vague allegations every year.³¹ Many more survivors likely never apply, fearing they will be blamed.

- Survivors who apply must often submit overwhelming and duplicative paperwork, and wait months or longer for urgent help.
- Limits on coverage often do not reflect the lived experiences of survivors. For example, dependents of deceased victims are ineligible for loss of support if the victim lost a job before their victimization and was not employed at the time - even if they were actively looking for new work when they were killed.³²
- Burdensome red tape means that even survivors who are eligible or approved may not get the help that they need. CalVCB has shared that only around 4 out of 10 survivors who have an application approved actually successfully submit a bill for reimbursement.³³ This means data CalVCB provides on approved applications actually significantly *overestimates* the number of survivors getting help.
- Survivors of police violence are virtually ineligible, due to the way these cases are treated and related eligibility restrictions in state law.
- Too many survivors report not even knowing about the program in the first place.
 - Crime Survivors Speak surveyed 651 individuals in 2025 connected to its survivor network in California, and only 1 in 5 (21%) reported being knowledgeable about the victim compensation program, while more than 1 in 3 (34%) were completely unaware of the program.³⁴
 - These were results from a sample of survivors and community members who are connected to organizations that work with victims – meaning overall in the state it’s likely far fewer survivors even know about the compensation program.
 - CalVCB has made efforts to publicize the program, but too many survivors in communities most harmed by violence are still unaware.
- When survivors do get help from the program, it can be life-changing. Of the survivors surveyed who had received compensation, most found the program somewhat or very helpful. One survivor shared *“Victim’s Compensation profoundly changed my life.”*³⁵
- But, for too many survivors, the onerous process itself is traumatic. One survivor shared: *“...the victim compensation program felt more like a fight than a form of support. As a survivor [details of victimization experiences removed to preserve anonymity]... I’ve had to navigate deep grief while also trying to figure out complicated systems that were supposed to help me but instead made me feel overlooked and unimportant.”*³⁶

Survivors of Color are Denied Help at Disproportionate Rates

- Data obtained by the Associated Press revealed that Black survivors account for 14% of all applications for compensation in California, but 22% of denials.³⁷
- A 2021 Alameda County Grand Jury report analyzed victim compensation denial data for survivors from Alameda County and found:
 - Black applicants were more than twice as likely as white applicants to have their applications denied for lack of cooperation with law enforcement.
 - Black applicants were nearly twice as likely as white applicants to be denied based on alleged “involvement” – Black applicants accounted for half of all applicants denied for this reason while white applicants accounted for just 8%.
 - The Grand Jury concluded that denials based on “lack of cooperation” and “involvement” are the primary cause of racial disparities in victim compensation denials for survivors from Alameda County, and that these restrictions are systemically racially biased.³⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS: NOW IS THE TIME TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO HELP AND STRENGTHEN VICTIM COMPENSATION

- **Pass legislative changes that remove discriminatory barriers to the victim compensation program, reduce red tape, and increase access to the program, including the following:**
 - Remove eligibility restrictions for victims on probation, parole, or with a past conviction, bringing California in line with the 43 other states that have no such restrictions.
 - Ensure all violent crime survivors can use alternative documents in lieu of a police report, and end denials based on assessments of victim cooperativeness. California has long allowed alternatives to police reports for domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking survivors, but other victims do not have access to these options.
 - Reduce red tape. Revisit expense documentation requirements to reduce the paperwork burden, shorten application processing times, improve communication and follow-up with applicants, expedite emergency awards, and allow emergency awards on an upfront rather than reimbursement basis.
 - Create a streamlined application process for youth victims with presumptive approval to access mental health and healing resources.
 - Allow individuals to apply for loss of income or support if the victim was unemployed at the time of victimization but had worked previously in the year. This would fulfill a commitment the legislature passed in budget trailer bill language – AB 160 (2022).
 - Address the drivers of racial disparities in access to services by ending denials based on perceived victim behavior.
 - Ensure survivors can get help, no matter who caused the harm – including when law enforcement committed the violence.
 - Improve program outreach to ensure survivors in communities most harmed by violence know about the program and have help to apply.
 - Require annual reporting to include application and denial rates and reasons, broken down by demographics.

- **Ensure permanent funding for the victim compensation program at the level of actual need, without relying on fines and fees.**
 - While the Restitution Fund is currently stable with a healthy balance, that has depended on the ongoing General Fund backfill that the Restitution Fund has been receiving.
 - The Fund’s stability also reflects the fact that barriers to access have kept compensation payments artificially low and reduced victims’ access to help – a problem which needs to be addressed and reversed.
 - The program also continues to rely on onerous fines and fees which keep low-income people in the justice system from moving past a conviction.

- Increasing the annual General Fund appropriation for the compensation program by \$60.5 million (to a total of \$100 million) would allow the state to fund the compensation program at the level of need, and permanently eliminate the restitution fine, a commitment included in the 2022-23 budget but never fulfilled.
 - Fines and fees can trap people in the justice system in cycles of impossible debt, frustrating rehabilitation and safety goals.
- **Restore Funding for the Flexible Assistance for Survivors (FAS) Grant Program**
 - This desperately needed help was set to go out the door in 2025 and reach survivors who have been unable to access help from the compensation program.
 - The state must restore funding for this program.
- **Address the Trauma Recovery Center funding crisis**
 - Supplement Trauma Recovery Center funding with general funds to ensure that there is a minimum of \$35 million annually ongoing to retain 24 Trauma Recovery Centers.
- **Pass the THRIVE Act (AB 2247, Elhawary) to provide youth survivors of gun violence fast and flexible access to mental healthcare**
 - This legislation would create a grant program to ensure that youth 25 and under who experience or witness gun violence have immediate access to free mental health care, and can choose a provider they trust to provide that care.
- **Protect victim service organizations from funding cuts** – Include \$100 million in one-time funding in the FY 2026-27 budget to fill the gap left by cuts in federal Victims of Crime Act assistance dollars.

Suggested Citation

MLA	<i>California Victim Compensation Program Failing to Meet the Needs of Survivors of Crime: Millions More Should be Spent on Victim Compensation.</i> Californians for Safety and Justice, May 2026, https://safeandjust.org/victim-compensation-ca/
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APA	Californians for Safety and Justice. (2026). <i>California Victim Compensation Program Failing to Meet the Needs of Survivors of Crime: Millions More Should be Spent on Victim Compensation</i> , https://safeandjust.org/victim-compensation-ca/
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Chicago	<i>Californians for Safety and Justice. California Victim Compensation Program Failing to Meet the Needs of Survivors of Crime: Millions More Should be Spent on Victim Compensation.</i> (May 2026), https://safeandjust.org/victim-compensation-ca/
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Endnotes

- ¹ California Department of Finance. *California State Budget - 2025-26, Enacted Budget Summary, Criminal Justice and Judicial Branch*. (p. 64). <https://ebudget.ca.gov/2025-26/pdf/Enacted/BudgetSummary/CriminalJusticeandJudicialBranch.pdf>.
- ² Hollins, T. (2025, December 23). (2025). *California Built Survivor Care, Then Walked Away*. Capitol Weekly. <https://capitolweekly.net/california-built-survivor-care-then-walked-away/>.
- ³ Orbach-Mandel, H. (2026, January). *Supporting Survivors: The Need for Stable Funding for Victim Services*. California Budget & Policy Center. <https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/supporting-survivors-the-need-for-stable-funding-for-victim-services/>; California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (2026, January 9). *January Budget fails to include funding for victims' services that nearly 1 million Californians depend on each year*. <https://www.cpedv.org/news/january-budget-fails-to-include-funding-for-victims-services-that-nearly-1-million-californians-depend-on-each-year/>.
- ⁴ Tapp, S.N. and Coen, E.J. (2025, September). *Criminal Victimization, 2024*. US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv24.pdf>.
- ⁵ Californians for Safety and Justice (2013). *California Crime Survivors Speak: A Statewide Survey of California Victims' Views on Safety and Justice*.
- ⁶ Californians for Safety and Justice (2019). *California Crime Survivors Speak: A Statewide Survey of California Victims' Views on Safety and Justice*.
- ⁷ Californians for Safety and Justice (2019). *California Crime Survivors Speak: A Statewide Survey of California Victims' Views on Safety and Justice*.
- ⁸ Kelly, V.G. et al. (2010). Outreach, Engagement, and Practical Assistance: Essential Aspects of PTSD Care for Urban Victims of Violent Crime. *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 11(3), 144-156. See also Zatzick, D. et al. (2007). Strengthening The Patient-Provider Relationship In The Aftermath Of Physical Trauma Through An Understanding Of The Nature And Severity Of Posttraumatic Concerns. *Psychiatry*, 79, 260-273; Machado, D.B. et al. (2024). The Relationship Between Cash-Based Interventions And Violence: A Systematic Review And Evidence Map. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 75; Stacy, C.P. et al. (2024). Investing in Youth: A Randomized Controlled Trial of Cash Transfers for Violence Exposure Prevention. *Urban Institute*; Chen, J. and Sullivan, C.M. (2022). Domestic Violence Housing First Demonstration Evaluation Project: Final Report of Findings through 24 Months. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ⁹ California Victim Compensation Board. (2018-2025). *Annual Reports and Supplemental Statistics, FY 2017-18 thru FY 2024-25*. https://victims.ca.gov/publications/?vcb_service=&vcb_publication_type=annual-report.
- ¹⁰ Analysis of data retrieved from: Office for Victims of Crime. (n.d). VOCA Victim Compensation Data Dashboard, U.S. Department of Justice. <https://ovc.ojp.gov/funding/performance-measures/data-analyses/voca-victim-compensation>; Office for Victims of Crime (n.d). Nationwide Data Analysis Reports, 2019-2021, U.S. Department of Justice. <https://ovc.ojp.gov/funding/performance-measures/data-analyses>; Additional 2019-2022 data provided to Alliance for Safety and Justice in 2023 from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime.
- ¹¹ Californians for Safety and Justice analysis of data from: California Victim Compensation Board. (2018-2025). *Annual Reports and Supplemental Statistics, FY 2018-19 thru FY 2024-25*. https://victims.ca.gov/publications/?vcb_service=&vcb_publication_type=annual-report. The noted number of applications decided includes all applications approved or denied in the year, and excludes duplicate applications. The agency reported approving or denying a total of 51,553 unduplicated applications in FY 2018-19, and 35,350 unduplicated applications in FY 2024-25. The number of applications received in a given year is distinct from the number of applications decided in that year, given the time it takes to process applications – but the figures are similar. CalVCB's annual reports indicate that the agency received 52,973 applications in FY 2018-19, and 34,892 applications in FY 2024-25.
- ¹² *VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021*, Pub. Law No. 117-27, 135 Stat. 265 (2021). Under the updated law, states receive a 75% federal VOCA match for every state dollar they spend on compensation, increased in statute from the prior 60% match rate.
- ¹³ Budget documents based on outdated spending and revenue estimates project modest year-end balance declines in 2025-26 and 2026-27 similar to budget documents in previous years, but when accounting for actual spending and revenue trends over the last four years, and the \$39.5m General Fund commitment in the Governor's proposed FY2026-27 budget, the Restitution Fund is likely to continue to grow in FY 2026 and FY 2027, or remain healthy and stable if the state makes needed changes to expand access to support for survivors.
- ¹⁴ Fines and Fees Justice Center & Wilson Center for Science and Justice at Duke Law (2023, May). *Debt Sentence: How Fines and Fees Hurt Working Families*. https://finesandfeesjusticecenter.org/content/uploads/2023/05/Debt_Sentence_FFJC-Wilson-Center-May-2023.pdf.
- ¹⁵ California Department of Finance. (2026). 2026–27 Governor's Budget: Corrections And Rehabilitation – Department Of Corrections And Rehabilitation (5225). <https://ebudget.ca.gov/2026-27/pdf/GovernorsBudget/5210.pdf>.
- ¹⁶ Actual California Victim Compensation Board State Operations Expenditures from the Restitution Fund (0214) for FY 2019 and FY 2025. Data retrieved from California Victim Compensation Board. (2021). *Enacted Budget* and California Department of Finance. (2026). *Governor's proposed budget, FY 2027*.

- ¹⁷ California Victim Compensation Board. (2025). Enacted Budget, FY 2025-26. See State Operations Expenditures from the Restitution Fund. <https://ebudget.ca.gov/2025-26/pdf/GovernorsBudget/7500/7870.pdf>
- ¹⁸ California Victim Compensation Board. (2025, January 10). *Budget Change Proposal*. California Department of Finance. https://bcp.dof.ca.gov/2526/FY2526_ORG7870_BCP7968.pdf
- ¹⁹ California Victim Compensation Board. (n.d.). Update on Marketing Campaign with Civilian, Inc. https://victims.ca.gov/civilian-board-item-klg-draft-05-06-2025_kc-final/.
- ²⁰ California Victim Compensation Board (2024) *Annual Report 2024-2025*. https://victims.ca.gov/uploads/Annual-Report_2024-25_FINAL.pdf.
- ²¹ California State Auditor. (2026). *Victim Restitution: Improved Coordination and Consistency Would Ensure State and Local Collection Entities Collect and Disburse More Restitution*. Report No. 2025-117. <https://www.auditor.ca.gov/reports/2025-117/>.
- ²² See Cal. Gov't Code § 13954(a).
- ²³ See N.M. Stat. Ann. § 31-22-7; La. R.S. § 46:1806; Or. Rev. Stat. § 147.015; Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 217.100; Md. Code Ann.,Crim. Proc. § 11-801; N.Y. Exec Law § 6311
- ²⁴ See Assemb. B. 1100, 2025-2026 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2025) (held in Assemb. Comm. on Appropriations); S.B. 655, 2023-2024 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2023) (held in S. Comm. on Appropriations).
- ²⁵ Alameda County Grand Jury (2021). *Racial Inequities in Police Responses to Victims' Needs*. (Final Report).<https://grandjury.acgov.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/RacialDisparities.pdf>; Levine, J.R. (2024). *Inequality in Crime Victim Compensation*. University of Michigan, Poverty Solutions. <https://poverty.umich.edu/publications/inequality-in-crime-victim-compensation/>.
- ²⁶ Cal. Gov't Code § 13956(c). Survivors on probation or parole for certain felonies classified as violent cannot receive compensation until they finish their supervision terms. See also Alliance for Safety and Justice (2023). *Healing from Harm: Expanding Access to Victim Compensation An inventory of state legislative changes to victim compensation programs, 2020-2022*. <https://sharesafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/ASJ-VICTCOMPADDEND23F2.pdf>. AR, FL, MS, NC, RI, GA, and CA are the only states that restrict eligibility for compensation based on conviction history or status on supervision alone. Three additional states (AZ, NJ, WA) have restrictions on eligibility for survivors with outstanding criminal justice fines and fees.
- ²⁷ Cal. Gov't Code § 13956(c).
- ²⁸ Levine, J.R. (2024). *Inequality in Crime Victim Compensation*. University of Michigan, Poverty Solutions. <https://poverty.umich.edu/publications/inequality-in-crime-victim-compensation/>.
- ²⁹ Cal. Gov't Code § 13956(a).
- ³⁰ Alameda County Grand Jury (2021). *Racial Inequities in Police Responses to Victims' Needs*. (Final Report). <https://grandjury.acgov.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/RacialDisparities.pdf>.
- ³¹ California Victim Compensation Board. (2024, April 5). *Comment Letter on Victims of Crime Act Victim Compensation Proposed Regulation Change* [OJP-2024-0001-2455]. Office of Justice Programs. <https://www.regulations.gov/comment/OJP-2024-0001-2455>.
- ³² Cal. Gov't Code § 13957; 2 CCR 649.32.
- ³³ In response to a 2021 data request, CalVCB shared that the agency only receives bills from approximately 40% of approved applicants. This could be for a number of reasons, including survivors not being aware that they have been approved, burdensome documentation requirements for expense reimbursement, or learning too late that their application has been approved.
- ³⁴ Unpublished data from Crime Survivors Speak 2025 victim compensation access survey. Crime Survivors Speak (CSS) conducted a survey which included 651 California respondents between March and September 2025, employing a multi-state approach to gather a wide range of perspectives. Respondents included both CSS members and non-members involved in events, campaigns, and training. The survey was distributed mainly at CSS events and expanded through member and partner sharing, as well as broader outreach efforts. Responses were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods to identify major trends and insights across diverse groups and regions.
- ³⁵ *Id.*
- ³⁶ *Id.*
- ³⁷ Lauer, C. & Catalani, M. (2023, May 17). *Every state offers victim compensation. For the Longs and other Black families, it often isn't fair*. Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/crime-victims-compensation-racial-bias-58908169e0ee05d4389c57f975eae49b>.
- ³⁸ Alameda County Grand Jury (2021). *Racial Inequities in Police Responses to Victims' Needs*. (Final Report). <https://grandjury.acgov.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/RacialDisparities.pdf>.



Californians for
Safety and Justice

About Californians for Safety and Justice

Founded in 2012, Californians for Safety and Justice has helped drive many of the policies that have made the state the nation's leader in ending the overuse of incarceration. We work to replace prison and justice system waste with common sense solutions that create safe neighborhoods through policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, public education, community-based partnerships and support for local best practices. We promote strategies to stop the cycle of crime, reduce reliance on incarceration, and build healthy communities. Californians for Safety and Justice is a program of [Just Safe](#).