

VICTIM SERVICES COMMISSION MINUTES - Approved	
Committee	Utah Victim Services Commission
Date	Wednesday, October 22nd, 2025
Time	12 PM - 2 PM
Location	Hybrid Zoom Virtual meeting – Seagull Room, East Senate Building
Members Present	<u>Virtual Attendance:</u> Igor Limansky, Kim Benally (RAW), Tyler Kotter <u>In-Person Attendance:</u> Doug Fawson, Kristy Pike, Liliana Olvera-Arbon, Alissa Black, Chyleen Richey, Jen Campbell, Kaye Lynn Wootton, Dominique Kiahtipes, Chief Sol Olberg,
Staff & Visitors	<u>In-Person Staff:</u> Marlesse Jones, Rachelle Hill, Katie Fox, <u>In-Person Visitors:</u> Christian Marie Sarver, Brett Robinson, Rep. Mauga, Erin Jemison, Dale Oyler, Max Pierce, Amanda Miller, <u>Virtual Visitors:</u> Moriah Pease, Amanda Martin, Matt Anderson
Agenda Item	Welcome & Introductions/Establish Quorum – <i>Alissa Black, Chair</i>
Notes	Alissa Black welcomes everyone to the Victims Services Commission Meeting. Motion: Doug Fawson motions for the approval of the minutes with the modification of adding a member for attendance from the last meeting. The motion passes unanimously.
Agenda Item	Victim Rights Appointments – <i>Katie Fox, Victim Rights Coordinator</i>
Notes	Katie Fox, the Victim Rights Coordinator, presented the 2025 annual report, revealing a substantial increase in victim engagement with the complaint process and identifying key areas for improvement. Complaint Data Highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 326% increase in complaints was observed between 2020 and 2024. • In the last year, 79 complaints were completed, with 55 still in progress. • The Third District generates the most complaints, consistent with its larger population. Nature and Outcome of Complaints: The most frequent complaint centers on a lack of communication from criminal justice agencies regarding case status, hearings, and plea offers. Most complaints are associated with domestic violence, followed by sexual assault. Committees found a violation of victim rights in 18% of cases, while 81% of complaints did not meet the statutory threshold for a violation. Many non-violation complaints involved issues outside the committees' jurisdiction, such as housing, but staff were able to connect victims with appropriate resources. The complaint form has been updated and is now available in English and Spanish. The commission is working with Representative Mauga on legislation to streamline the committee statute. The proposed change would allow the coordinator and committee chair to screen complaints that, on their face, do not allege a rights violation, enabling them to connect victims with resources more efficiently without a full committee review. A recurring challenge across "almost every" committee is the ambiguous statutory definition of a "victim," particularly in cases involving secondary victims like the family of a homicide victim.
Agenda Item	Committee and Commission Reports – <i>Jennifer Campbell</i>
Notes	The Domestic Violence Subcommittee outlined three primary policy priorities for the 2026 legislative session, focused on funding, court reform, and statutory enhancements. A critical priority is addressing the impending fiscal cliff for service providers. A three-year "one-time" funding allocation for domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault services is set to expire on June 30, 2026. This coincides with the end of ARPA funds and decreasing VOCA grants. The subcommittee advocates asking the legislature to extend the funding for at least another year.

	<p>The subcommittee supports a request from the Administrative Office of the Courts to fund a pilot program for a negotiated Domestic Violence Court. This initiative is based on a "one family, one judge" model, where a single, specialized judge would handle a family's related criminal and civil (divorce, custody) cases. The model aims to improve outcomes through judicial expertise in DV dynamics, enhance victim safety, and create a more coherent legal process.</p> <p>The VSC will discuss for potential support a comprehensive bill, led by SWAP and Rep. MacPherson, that addresses multiple areas of domestic violence law. Key provisions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a presumption of pre-trial detention in certain cases. • Making adjustments related to child victims impacted by Jail Release Agreements. • Expanding the list of crimes that qualify for domestic violence enhancements. • Clarifying the statutory definition of "cohabitant."
Agenda Item	SA While Incarcerated DUI/Hit and Run Benefits – <i>Chyleen Richey, UOVC Dir., Dale Oyler, UOVC</i>
Notes	<p>The commission discussed two gaps in the Utah Office for Victims of Crime (UOVC) reparations program and considered policy changes to expand eligibility.</p> <p>Current state statute explicitly prohibits reparations for any individual who was an inmate at the time a crime was committed against them. This creates a gap where individuals who are sexually assaulted in custody but do not report it until after their release are ineligible for benefits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UOVC denies approximately a dozen such claims annually for various crime types. • A statutory change is required to create an exception. The commission showed support for pursuing a narrow amendment, potentially limited to sexual assault cases and/or specific benefits like mental health therapy, to address this gap without opening the program to all crimes committed in custody. <p>UOVC rules currently do not allow for benefits to be paid to victims of hit-and-run incidents. This is out of step with the majority of other states, which provide some level of coverage. The lack of recourse is especially acute for pedestrians without access to auto insurance. This policy can be changed via an administrative rule, without legislative action. The commission supported a proposal to begin by offering benefits in a narrow scope of cases, such as those involving death or serious bodily injury, and to assess the fiscal impact before considering further expansion. UOVC will draft a proposed rule change.</p>
Agenda Item	Stalking Amendments Victim Rights – <i>Rep. Mauga, Brett A. Robinson</i>
Notes	<p>Representative Mauga and Brett Robinson presented a bill designed to close a loophole in Utah's stalking statute.</p> <p>When stalking behavior escalates to the offender unlawfully entering the victim's home, the available charge is often only criminal trespass, a Class A misdemeanor. This fails to reflect the severe violation and heightened risk of violence. The proposed bill would create an enhancement that elevates stalking to a second-degree felony if the course of conduct includes unlawfully entering the victim's residence. This would align the penalty with the existing penalty for burglary of a dwelling.</p> <p>The bill has been narrowly drafted to target this specific behavior and has achieved "95%" agreement with defense attorneys. The commission members expressed strong support.</p>
Agenda Item	Sentencing Penalties – <i>Brett A. Robinson</i>
Notes	<p>The commission was briefed on discrepancies within the Utah Sentencing Guidelines that diminish the perceived seriousness of violent offenses.</p>

	<p>Current guidelines recommend presumptive probation for a first-offense second-degree felony that results in serious bodily injury (e.g., a broken jaw or femur). This recommendation is described as "very, very, very difficult to explain" to victims and "does violence to our victims" by creating a perception that the justice system devalues the severe harm they have suffered.</p> <p>While a minor discrepancy between misdemeanor and felony guidelines was corrected, the broader issue of presumptive probation for serious person felonies was not changed in the current draft. The draft guidelines are open for public comment until November 13, 2025.</p>
Agenda Item	Predominant Aggressor Misidentification – Marlesse Jones, VSC Director
Notes	Discussion on this topic will be postponed until after the 2026 legislative session.
Agenda Item	Victim Services Commission Annual Report – Marlesse Jones, VSC Director
Notes	A draft of the 2025 annual report was presented. It will be circulated to commission members for feedback before its final submission to the legislature in November.
Agenda Item	Other Business
Notes	No other business was addressed.
Agenda Item	Public Comment
Notes	Public comment invited. None given.
Agenda Item	Adjourn
Notes	<p>Motion: Doug Fawson motions for the commission to adjourn. Erin Jemison seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously.</p> <p>The commission adjourns.</p> <p>Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 9th, 2025 from 12 PM - 2 PM. Location: <u>Anchor Location:</u> Seagull Room, East Senate Building, Capitol Complex Zoom link: https://utah-gov.zoom.us/j/85899899381?pwd=8azA8JJUtFsaGeYNNCpjWuEpvuFKoi.1</p>
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