

VICTIM SERVICES COMMISSION MINUTES – Approved 6/24/2026

Committee	Utah Victim Services Commission
6Date Time Location	Wednesday, May 27th, 2026 12 PM - 2 PM Hybrid Zoom Virtual meeting – Seagull Room, East Senate Building
Members Present	<u>Virtual Attendance:</u> Tyler Kotter, Rep. Ken Ivory, Dominique Kiahtipes, <u>In-Person Attendance:</u> Chief Sol Oberg (Chair), Liliana Olvera-Arbon (Vice-Chair), Amanda Miller, Erin Jemison, Igor Limansky, Alissa Black, Kaye Lynn Wootton, Tracey Tabet, Chyleen Richey, Tom Ross
Staff & Visitors	<u>In-Person Staff:</u> Danica Bodley, Rachelle Hill, Katie Fox, Marlesse Jones, Beatriz Herrera, Dan Strong <u>Virtual Staff:</u> Vickie Bushman <u>In-Person Visitors:</u> Catherine Ruetschlin, Christian Sarver, Eddy Thompson, Kristy Pike, Gary Scheller, Deena Faucett <u>Virtual Visitors:</u>
Agenda Item	Welcome & Introductions/Establish Quorum – <i>Chief Sol Oberg, Chair</i>
Notes	Chief Sol Oberg welcomes everyone to the May 2026 Victims Services Commission Meeting. Motion: Chyleen Richey motions for the commission to approve the meeting minutes from April 22nd, 2026. Tracy Tabet seconds the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
Agenda Item	Victim Rights – <i>Katie Fox, Victim Rights Coordinator</i>
Notes	Katie Fox, Victim Rights Coordinator, had no new items to address to the commission.
Agenda Item	VSC Sub-Committee Reports – <i>Subcommittee Chairs</i>
Notes	During the VSC Sub-Committee Reports portion of the meeting, several key updates and initiatives were discussed: <u>Legislative Session Tracking</u> The subcommittees—have been reviewing a shared list of legislative bills. A color-coded document was presented to help members visualize which specific bills each subcommittee is tracking. The goal of this shared list is to improve transparency, foster collaboration between groups with shared interests, and identify any relevant bills that might currently lack oversight. The list is considered a "fluid" and living document that will be continually updated in the commission's shared Google Drive. <u>Child Abuse</u> • <u>Prevention Event</u> Tracey Tabet highlighted an upcoming virtual learning opportunity called "Prevention in Action," scheduled for June 1st. Hosted by the Utah Coalition for Protecting Childhood, the event features several guest speakers and focuses on collaborative efforts to improve outcomes for children, highlighting the subcommittee's focus on both intervention and prevention. • <u>Torture Law Training</u> A committee reported that they recently conducted a training on the state's "torture law" at the 38th Annual Crime Victims Conference and for SWAVO. The presenters noted that they have slides prepared and are willing to provide this training to any other groups that want to learn how to appropriately use the law. • <u>Faith Leaders Conference</u> There are active plans to organize a faith leaders conference in the fall. The committee intends to engage the faith community more deeply in victim service issues, an initiative that was recently underscored by a local news article regarding the tracking of abusers within religious settings.

	<u>Lived Experience Survivor Script</u> • The Lived Experience subcommittee presented a draft of a script created "from survivors for survivors" to help individuals navigate the highly confusing criminal justice system. The subcommittee explicitly brought this to the VSC to gather feedback before finalizing the project. • VSC members cautioned against inadvertently setting false expectations for victims. They recommended adding disclaimers and specific timelines, noting for example that the average timeframe from arrest to conviction in a sexual assault case is 18 months but it could be shorter or significantly longer. • Members suggested finding a middle ground by blending neutral, state-sponsored language outlining statutory definitions with the personal advice and "lessons learned" from the survivors' lived experiences
Agenda Item	Policy Report – <i>Sub-Committee Chairs, VSC</i>
Notes	During the Policy Report portion of the meeting, the commission discussed several upcoming legislative and policy issues to keep on their radar: <u>Domestic Offender Treatment Board Sunset</u> The board is currently scheduled to sunset in one year. It was reported that the board recently presented to an interim judiciary committee to ask that they not be sunsetted. Although the committee did not open a specific bill file due to limits on the number of files, they expressed general support and encouraged other legislators to run the bill. The commission hopes legislation will pass next session to continue the board's work, which importantly includes victim advocate representation and increased response and accountability to offenders. <u>Domestic Violence Offender Registry</u> The commission noted recent legislative interest, highlighted by a news story, regarding the potential creation of a domestic violence offender registry. Because these conversations are still in the early stages, the commission plans to work with the Domestic Violence subcommittee to talk through different perspectives and prepare for the next legislative session. <u>Commission Legislation and Appropriations</u> Representative Ivory gave an update that he has a bill file open and ready to address any necessary statutory changes to the commission that might arise from its final report. He noted that this open bill file could also be used to handle appropriations for the commission, though they are still deciding whether to roll the funding into the bill or handle it separately as a Request for Appropriation (RFA). <u>Previous Session Review</u> Members also briefly mentioned that they had recently walked through bills from the prior legislative session to identify ongoing issues they need to continue monitoring.
Agenda Item	Crime Victims Conference Recap – <i>Rachelle Hill, VSC Assistant</i>
Notes	The annual conference remains a cornerstone of the commission's outreach and training strategy. <u>Attendance and Engagement</u> • Overall Participation: Over 350 individuals attended the annual conference. • Demographic Breakdown: Attendees include system-based and community-based advocates, law enforcement, attorneys, students (roughly 20), and sexual assault nurse examiners (SANE). • Scholarships: The Prosecutor's Council sponsored 10 scholarships to increase attorney participation which was successfully taken advantage of.

	<u>Financial and Operational Status</u> • Budget Philosophy - Aim to break even; not a profit-generating event. • Current Overage - Approximately \$8,000 (considered a manageable number). • Primary Costs - Meeting space (Zermatt Resort), AV services, and meals at GSA per diem rates. • Location Strategy - The Zermatt Resort is favored for its "peaceful" environment and proximity, though it faces capacity limits (approximately 300 in-person attendees in current configuration). The commission reached a consensus to continue the conference, citing its unique role in multi-disciplinary training. Staff recommended moving toward multi-year contracts with venues to lock in government rates and mitigate the risk of being priced out by increasing demand or venue renovations.
Agenda Item	VSC Study Update – <i>Christian Sarver, Ph.D., Associate Director, Catherine Mariah Cowell, Utah Criminal Justice Center, UofU</i>
Notes	Researchers from the University of Utah (UCJC) presented data from FY2023–FY2025 focusing on the distribution, stability, and accessibility of funding. <u>The Shift in Funding Sources</u> The total funding base grew by 32% over the study period, representing a significant structural change: • Federal Decline: VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) funding has decreased. • State Increase: The state more than doubled its allocations, moving from a minority funder to providing more than half of all victim service funds in Utah. <u>Geographic and Funding Disparities</u> The study utilized a "Priority Score" based on three pillars: the Benchmark Gap, Core Service Coverage, and Funding Fragility. <u>Benchmark Gap (Urban vs. Rural):</u> • Rural counties receive approximately \$40 per capita, while urban counties receive \$9. • Despite this, Salt Lake County exhibits a \$30 million underfunding gap when measured against its share of state crime and population. <u>Core Service Coverage:</u> • The study identified eight core services (e.g., CJC, DV shelter, SA, SANE/SART, Human Trafficking). • Salt Lake County is the only county with all core services represented. • Rural areas face "service deserts," particularly for Human Trafficking and SANE services. <u>Funding Fragility:</u> • High-Risk Counties: Rich and Piute counties are the most fragile. Rich County's funding plummeted from \$32,000 to \$779 over the study period. <u>Service Volatility:</u> • Funding for survivors of human trafficking and criminal justice system-based advocacy showed the highest volatility and federal dependence. <u>Priority Issues in the Victim Response System</u> • System Fragmentation: There is a notable disconnect between law enforcement, prosecutors, and social service systems. • Crisis vs. Stability: Most current services focus on crisis response rather than long-term well-being and stability.

	• Administrative Burden: Small agencies struggle with the overhead required to apply for and maintain complex federal grants. • Competitive Silos: Existing funding models often force different crime-type advocates (e.g., DV vs. SA) into competition, hindering collaborative care.
Agenda Item	Public Comment
Notes	Gary Scheller expressed strong concern regarding the study's combination of Domestic Violence (DV) and Sexual Assault (SA) data into a single category. He argued that they are distinctly different crime types with different funding categories and must be evaluated separately. To highlight this funding disparity, he pointed out that during a 2023 process, it was found the state spent almost \$500 per DV victim compared to only about \$20 per SA victim. Gary warned that continuing to group SA under the umbrella of DV harms sexual assault programs by obscuring important information, perpetuating a funding deficit for SA services, and falsely messaging that sexual violence only happens within the context of intimate partner violence.
Agenda Item	Adjourn
Notes	Motion: Chyleen Richey motions for the commission to adjourn. Tracey Tabet seconds the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The commission adjourns. Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 24th, 2026 from 12 PM - 2 PM. Location: <u>Anchor Location:</u> SEAGULL ROOM Zoom link: meet.google.com/oqt-dzck-cvc
DISCLAIMER	Please note that these meeting minutes have been primarily generated or assisted by an artificial intelligence (AI) tool. These notes have been edited by staff to ensure accuracy and completeness.