

2017

Annual Report



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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

I am pleased to present the annual report of the Minnesota Crime Victims Reparations Board for fiscal year 2017. This report covers the Board's activities from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017.

The Board was created in 1974 to provide financial help to victims of violent crime. Victims receive assistance very quickly to restore their losses. As Board chair, I have heard from many victims who expressed appreciation for the services they received to help in their recovery. This year, the Board provided financial assistance to 1,294 victims and their family members.



During fiscal year 2017, the Board received 1,539 new applications. A majority of the new applications resulted from assaults, homicides, robberies, child abuse, sexual assaults or impaired driving. At least 31 percent of the applications submitted were related to domestic violence. Tragically, 8 percent of the new claims received resulted from homicides. In 29 percent of our applications, the victim was less than 18 years old.

The total amount paid to victims or their providers during fiscal year 2017 was more than \$3.8 million. The types of expenses paid with these funds included medical and dental care, counseling, funeral and burial services, lost wages and survivor benefits. Fifty-two percent of all applications came from residents of Hennepin or Ramsey county.

As Board chair, I have worked hard to ensure that all victims are treated fairly and compassionately. It has also been my vision to work in collaboration with a variety of other victim services programs and community organizations to raise awareness about our services. For example, this year the Board met with staff from the Next Step Program, a hospital-based violence intervention program, located in Minneapolis.

I am honored to work as a team with reparations director Marie Bibus, reparations staff and Board members. As a result of this team effort, I am confident that claims have been processed in a fair and objective manner in accordance with the law. Speaking on behalf of all the members of the Board, I can say it has been a pleasure to administer a program that provides such a wonderful service and eases the pain for crime victims throughout Minnesota.

Lisa Eder, Chair
Minnesota Crime Victims Reparations Board

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

History

The first victim compensation programs were created in the 1960s to help victims of crime cope with their financial losses. Today, every state and many other countries have programs that provide reimbursement to crime victims.

The Crime Victims Reparations Act was passed by the Minnesota Legislature in 1974. The Legislature recognized that many victims incur expenses they cannot afford to pay, and most are unable to collect full restitution from criminal offenders. As a result of the reparations program, victims are able to receive financial help to assist in their recovery.

Staff

There are currently 11 full-time reparations staff who work in the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs (DPS-OJP).

Staff members set up incoming claims, gather documentation, approve and deny claims, and process payments.

Staff members also collect restitution and recover funds from civil lawsuits. This involves preparing and submitting legal paperwork, attending hearings, and negotiating settlements.

Board Members

The Reparations Board is composed of five members appointed by the commissioner of the Department of Public Safety. Under Minnesota law, one member of the Board must be a physician, and at least one member must have been a victim of crime. The Board members' terms are four years in length, and they may serve more than one term.



Current Board membership includes (left to right): Lynette Renner, professor; Amy Christiansen, crime victim; Lisa Eder, Hennepin County Attorney's Office; Dr. Steven Kiester, physician; Lt. Kimberly Lund, Minneapolis Police Department.

Board Responsibilities

The Board ensures that funds are distributed in accordance with the Minnesota Crime Victims Reparations Act, Minnesota Statutes Section 611A.51 to 611A.67, and Minnesota Rules 3050.0100 to 3050.4100. In addition, the Board develops policies and rules regarding eligibility and coverage and determines payment rates.

Appeals

In fiscal year 2017, the Board heard 32 appeals. Of those, 18 were affirmed, 10 were reversed or modified, and four were held over for more information. There were three new requests for administrative hearings. Two orders were granted in favor of the Board. One case is pending.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Claim Trends

The most notable trend during fiscal year 2017 was a significant increase in applications. The Board received 1539 new applications, a 20 percent increase over the previous fiscal year. The increase stemmed mostly from crimes that occurred in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. There were increases in applications for many types of violent crime, including homicide, assault, child abuse, sexual assault, robbery and vehicular crimes. This fiscal year, the Board also responded to an incident of mass violence that occurred at a shopping mall in St. Cloud. The Board received several applications related to this incident from victims who were stabbed by the perpetrator or who witnessed the horrific crime.

Claimant Comment

“It is great that the state of Minnesota has this wonderful program for people who suffer from circumstances such as my sister's death due to murder. It doesn't bring her back but it certainly helps ease the pain.”

Expenditures

Due to the increase in applications and changes in coverage rates, the Board's total expenditures increased by 19 percent. Expenditures for lost wages and loss of support increased by 42 percent. Expenditures for medical and mental health care increased by 16 percent. Due to the large increases in expenditures, the Board voted to maintain the same rates of coverage for fiscal year 2018, rather than increasing any of its rates.

Customer Service

The Board always strives to provide excellent customer service and efficient claims processing. During fiscal year 2017, the average claims processing time was 110 days. In addition, of those recipients who responded to a customer survey:

- Ninety-four percent of recipients gave the program a service rating of "very good" or "good."
- Ninety-five percent of recipients said they were satisfied with the amount of benefits received.
- Ninety-one percent of respondents indicated that benefits were paid in a timely manner.

Claimant Comment

“Everyone and everything was wonderful, kind, efficient and accommodating. I'm very grateful and humbled.”

Outreach

The Board has an effective outreach strategy to ensure that victims learn about the financial benefits available. The Board staff conducts reparations trainings for victim advocates in regional locations, as well as at program sites. This training provides helpful information for advocates on how to assist victims with the reparations application process. During fiscal year 2017, a total of 293 advocates and other professionals attended the reparations trainings.

This year, more crime victims applying for reparations reported receiving assistance from advocates located in county attorneys' offices, domestic violence programs, and hospitals. This change resulted from an expansion of local victim services programs due to increased federal grant funding through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Intake

The application process begins when the Board receives an application form from the victim or a family member. A request is then sent to the investigating law enforcement agency for information verifying the crime. Claims specialists review the application and law enforcement reports to determine eligibility.

Payment Process

If the applicant clearly meets eligibility requirements, billing information and other documentation are gathered from service providers to determine the amount of the victim's losses. If the victim missed work because he or she was disabled, the employer and a physician are asked to provide information about the victim's lost wages and disability status. Staff members work to ensure all applications are processed in a timely manner and applicants receive all of the benefits due them.

After the amount of the payment is determined, a payment notice and explanation of benefits is sent to the victim. A check is then sent to the victim or their service providers within two weeks. In many cases, funds are paid via electronic transfer.

Board Review

If there is a question about the applicant's eligibility under the Board's statutes and rules, the application is forwarded to the Board for review. The Board meets monthly to review and vote on the eligibility and benefit levels of questionable applications. If an application is denied or reduced by the Board, the applicant is notified in writing with an explanation of the Board's decision.

Appeals Process

An applicant who is dissatisfied with the Board's actions has the right to submit an appeal letter. If an applicant is still dissatisfied with the Board's appeal decision, they may proceed to an administrative hearing. Hearings are conducted by an impartial administrative law judge at the Office of Administrative Hearings.

Eligibility Requirements

- The applicant must be a victim of a crime involving injury or death in Minnesota or a Minnesota resident victimized while traveling in another country.
- Claims must be submitted to the Board within three years of the crime (except for child abuse).
- The crime must have been reported to the police within 30 days (except for sexual assault and child sexual abuse).
- The victim must have cooperated fully with law enforcement officials and prosecution.
- Victims who contributed to the crime through serious misconduct or criminal activity are disqualified or may receive a substantially reduced award.

Claimant Comment

“ I was assaulted just as I was walking down a St. Paul street. A huge hospital bill would have been enormously difficult. So your help is considered a small miracle.”

PROGRAM COVERAGE

The Reparations Board provides benefits for expenses incurred by the victim as a result of the crime. The Board pays only expenses that are not covered by another source of funding, such as health or auto insurance. Property losses are not covered.

There are rate limits or caps on most expenses. Medical, dental and mental health costs are usually covered at a reduced rate when paid directly to the provider. Total benefits paid may not exceed \$50,000.

Benefits are available for the following expenses:

- Medical and dental costs, including hospital and clinic fees, ambulance service, prescriptions, chiropractic care, physical therapy, chemical dependency treatment and accessibility remodeling.

- Mental health counseling for the victim up to \$7,500. Counseling benefits are also available for immediate family members of the victim and witnesses to a violent crime.
- Crime scene cleanup up to \$10,000.
- Funeral and burial costs up to \$7,500, including transportation and lodging for family members to attend the funeral. An additional \$1,000 is available for a headstone.
- Lost wages for the victim due to a disabling injury from the crime, up to 52 weeks. Limited lost wage benefits are available for immediate family members.

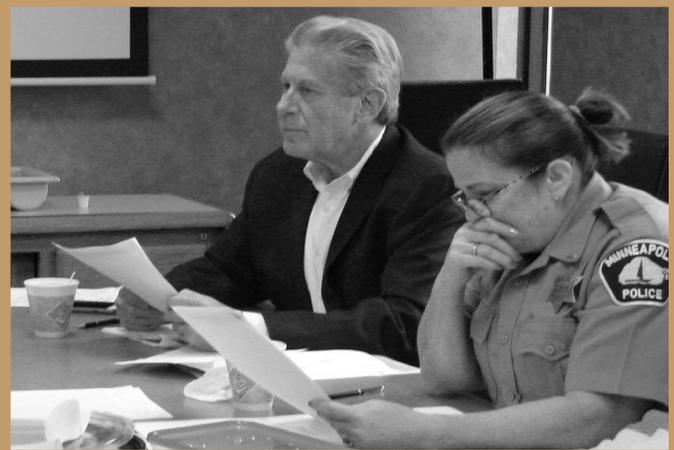
Claimant Comment

“ This program gave one of the darkest moments in my life a light at the end of the tunnel. Every FBI, police, and crime victim's representative was above and beyond my expectations.”

- Survivor benefits for dependents of a deceased victim.
- Payment for childcare or professional home healthcare to replace services previously provided by the victim.
- Reimbursement for transportation costs.



Board members Renner and Eder



Board members Kiester and Lund

TRAINING AND OUTREACH

The Reparations Board has a training and outreach program to ensure all victims of violent crime receive information about reparations and have an opportunity to apply for benefits. The Board uses various ways to raise program awareness, including training sessions, a website and distribution of informational materials at community resource fairs.

Most crime victims are referred to the Reparations Board by victim-witness assistance programs, hospitals, county attorneys or law enforcement. Board staff members provide training and information to those professionals who assist crime victims with their claims.

During fiscal year 2017, the reparations staff conducted eight training sessions in locations

throughout the state, including Chaska, Eagan, Milaca, Minneapolis, Red Wing and St. Paul. This included reparations training sessions at the Minnesota Victim Assistance Academy and at a legal services seminar and webinar.

The reparations program has a variety of brochures, handbooks and posters available. Law enforcement agencies, county attorneys and victim service professionals may request materials by submitting an order form. The order form and copies of most program materials, including the application form, may be downloaded from the DPS-OJP website at ojp.dps.mn.gov.

Participant Comments

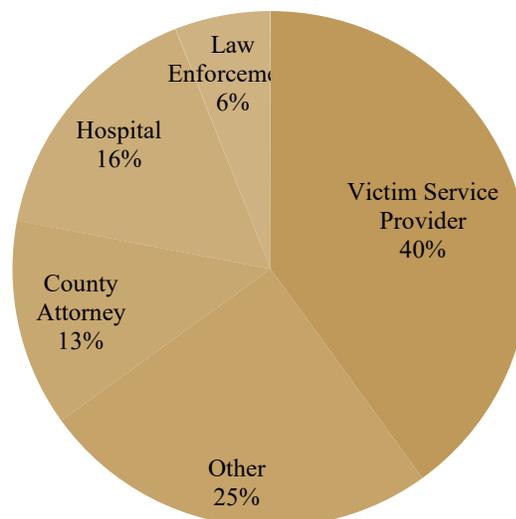
“ I learned a lot in this training-it was practical and helpful. I will use the information in my day-to-day work.”

“ The reparations training I received yesterday is already paying off. I was able to give prompt information to a crime victim about what reparations could assist with.”

“ The trainer was very clear and provided practical information and useful materials to refer back to.”

Applications by Referral Source

Referral Source	Number of Applications
County attorney	200
Domestic abuse program	88
Funeral home	43
Hospital	251
Internet website	17
Law enforcement	92
Probation agent	4
Sexual assault program	97
Unknown	316
Victim/Witness program	431
TOTAL	1,539



CLAIMS RECEIVED

The total number of applications received by the Reparations Board increased significantly. In fiscal year 2017, the Board received 1,539 applications compared with 1,280 in fiscal year 2016.

The majority of applications came from victims in:

- Hennepin County (34 percent)
- Ramsey County (19 percent)
- Dakota County (7 percent)
- Anoka County (5 percent)
- Stearns County (5 percent)
- Washington County (3 percent)
- Olmsted County (3 percent)

Fifty-eight percent of victims were female and 42 percent were male. Applications for victims 17 years old or younger made up 29 percent of all new applications.

The most prevalent crime categories were assaults (39 percent), child abuse (27 percent), homicides (8 percent), sexual assaults (8 percent), robberies (8 percent) and vehicular crimes (6 percent). Applications for assault, child abuse, robberies, homicides, sexual assaults, kidnapping and vehicular crimes increased during this reporting period.

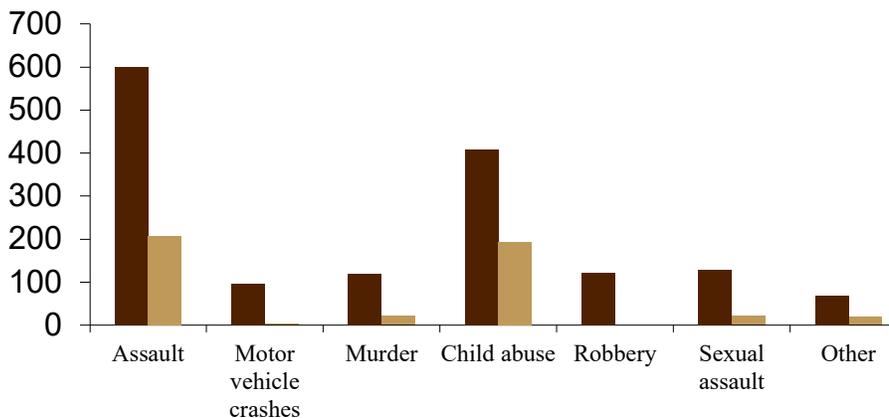
Claimant Comment

“ This was our first, and hopefully only, experience with this kind of issue. Everyone was very kind, helpful, patient, and understanding. This took a share of the stress away.”

Applications by Type of Crime

Crime Type	Number of Applications
Assault	599
Child abuse	409
Homicide	119
Human trafficking	7
Kidnapping	11
Other	50
Robbery	121
Sexual assault	128
Vehicular crimes	95
TOTAL	1,539

Applications and Number Related to Domestic Violence



Number of Applications

Number Related to Domestic Violence

PROGRAM FUNDING AND EXPENDITURES

Funding Sources

The Reparations Board receives its funding from a number of sources. The primary source of funding is an appropriation from the state's general fund.

Another significant funding source is an annual U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime grant.

The Board also collects special revenue. As required by law, this revenue includes:

- Restitution payments from offenders who were court-ordered to make payments as part of their criminal sentence.
- Unclaimed restitution funds held by counties for three years that still remain unclaimed.
- Funds recovered from civil awards.
- Inmate wage deductions that are made by the Minnesota Department of Corrections.

Expenditures

In fiscal year 2017, more than \$3.8 million was paid to reimburse victims and/or their service providers.

The largest category of expenses was medical care for victims, which accounted for 35 percent of all reparations payments.

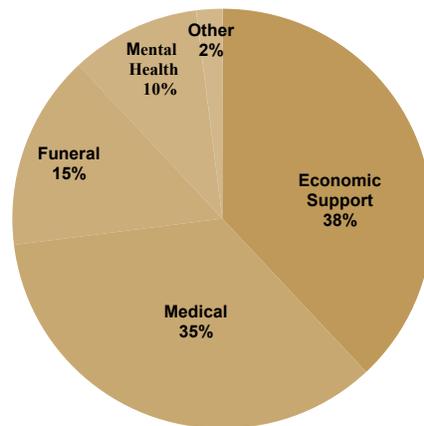
The second largest category of expenses was economic support, which included lost wages and survivor benefits to dependents of a deceased victim. Thirty-eight percent of the Board's expenses were for economic support.

Funeral and burial expenses were the third largest category of expenditures at 15 percent.

Mental health care was the fourth largest category, making up only 10 percent of expenditures.

Other payments, such as crime scene cleanup and transportation, accounted for 2 percent of expenditures.

Payments by Category



Restitution and Inmate Wage Collections

The Board is committed to holding offenders accountable for restoring victims' losses and has a fund recovery program as directed by state laws.

In fiscal year 2017, the program recovered \$514,431 in restitution. The program also received \$233,855 in unclaimed restitution monies from counties. In addition, the program recovered \$45,665 from civil awards.

The amount of inmate wages transferred from the Minnesota Department of Corrections in fiscal year 2017 was \$484,186.

Vision for the Future

The Board's goal for 2018 is to conduct more outreach to underserved populations to ensure that information about reparations is provided effectively to all victims.

The Board staff will also continue to collaborate with other DPS-OJP staff to plan and conduct outreach and training initiatives.

Claimant Comment

“Everyone was resourceful and very kind! Thank you all for a great experience during my family's roughest times.”



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

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