



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

Governor Abbott Announces Emergency Waiver Of Federal Match Requirement For Victims Services Grant Recipients

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott today announced that his [Public Safety Office](#) (PSO) will provide a one-time emergency waiver of the federally required cash or in-kind match contribution required for the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and STOP Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant funds. This waiver follows an unprecedented match waiver process recently initiated for states by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime and Office on Violence Against Women.

This waiver will provide financial relief to 600 grant recipient organizations in Texas who are federally required to contribute up to 25% of their own funds or donated services towards a project in order to remain eligible for continued grant funding.

The waiver will remove financial burdens posed by COVID-19 by allowing grant recipients to use the cash match they had budgeted towards their grant project for other pressing needs and alleviating concerns about maintaining volunteer services while complying with stay at home orders and proper social distancing practices. Grant recipients use these funds to provide direct services to victims of crime to speed their recovery and use multi-disciplinary approaches to improve the justice system's response to violent crimes. Agencies benefiting from this waiver include domestic violence shelters; rape crisis centers; children's advocacy centers; court appointed special advocate programs; child sex trafficking shelters, drop-in centers, and advocacy programs; legal aid providers; and local units of governments employing crime victim liaisons and advocates.

"Our VOCA and VAWA grant recipients provide critical services to victims of crime in Texas, and we are committed to removing potential financial burdens caused by COVID-19 that might otherwise hinder their important work," said Governor Abbott. "I thank the Department of Justice for initiating this waiver process at the federal level to provide much-needed support to these victim services organizations. With this waiver, these recipients can continue to serve their fellow Texans without delay."

"The Texas Council on Family Violence applauds the leadership of Governor Abbott in removing a key barrier for agencies serving domestic violence victims in these

extraordinary times. COVID 19 has disrupted every sector of our society further exacerbating the complex dynamics and escalation of family violence. Domestic violence agencies can now move forward with confidence that their live-saving services do not hinge on this administrative requirement. Hurricane Harvey research confirmed the increase in frequency and severity of domestic violence; we recognize a much larger impact from COVID 19 will occur. This support from the Governor is indeed saving lives," said Gloria Aguilera Terry, Chief Executive Officer of the Texas Council on Family Violence.

"For many children, home is not a safe place, making the safety net provided by Texas children's advocacy centers (CACs) and our partner agencies more critical than ever before. This swift action will help sustain Texas CACs and demonstrates a firm commitment to the promise of safety, justice, and healing for the nearly 60,000 child victims of crime we serve annually," said Joy Rauls, CEO of Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas.

"Texas CASA celebrates Governor Abbot's decision to support programs that serve children in foster care in this time of unprecedented public health crisis. By removing the 20% match requirement for Victims of Crime Act funds, the Governor's office helps ensure that CASA organizations providing critical care to the state's most vulnerable children can function without barriers and will stay strong in a time of uncertainty. This action allows CASA programs throughout Texas to focus more thoroughly on their missions and serving their communities. We know that the current isolation and stressors for families during COVID-19 can cause an increase in incidences of child abuse and neglect, and we are grateful for this support from the Governor for programs that work to strengthen families and protect children," said Vicki Spriggs, CEO of Texas CASA.

"TAASA applauds the swift action by Public Safety Office at the Governor's office in implementing match waivers for grantees. This exemplifies the historic coordination of local, state, and federal agencies acting in the best interest of crime victims in Texas," said Rose Luna, CEO of the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault.

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