

***Utah Victim  
Services Commission***

**2024**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

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# Meet The Team



**Marlesse  
Jones**

**DIRECTOR**

32 years of direct victim services, prosecution, and trauma-informed training for police and prosecutors



**Rachelle  
Hill**

**ASSISTANT**

20 years of direct system based victim services , grants, and training for victim advocates.



**Katie  
Fox**

**COORDINATOR**

16 years of experience in victim services, program development and grant management.

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# Victim Services Commission Leadership



Chair

**ALISSA BLACK**

Crime Victim Advocate,  
Murray City Police  
Department. She brings  
22 years of experience in  
working with victims of  
crime.

Vice-Chair

**TRACEY TABELT**

Director and Program  
Administrator of the 22 CJsCs  
serving 28 counties in Utah. She  
brings 32 years of experience in  
supporting victims of crime....



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# Establishing the Commission

Establishing the Utah Victim Services Commission (VSC) in 2023 marks a significant step forward in addressing the needs of crime victims within the state. The Commission is dedicated to fostering unity and collaboration to mitigate the impact of crime on victims. We strive to implement a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to prevention, supportive services, and trauma-informed justice, ensuring every victim receives the support and resources they need to heal and thrive. By focusing on these key areas, the VSC aims to foster a supportive environment prioritizing victim recovery and empowerment, ultimately generating unity. The VSC is strengthening efforts to reduce and eliminate the impact of crime on victims by striving to reduce the prevalence of crime and its detrimental effects on individuals and communities. Through collaboration with various stakeholders, the Utah Victim Services Commission seeks to create a cohesive network that enhances the well-being and safety of all citizens.

The VSC is a division of the Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice. It is staffed by Director, Marlesse Jones with Assistant, Rachelle Hill and Victim Rights Coordinator, Katie Fox. Collectively this team brings 68 years of experience in providing direct victim services, program development, legislative support, and educational training.



During this first year of establishing the VSC, great effort and thought have gone into forming a solid foundation with stakeholder input and support. We recognize that improving our response to the rights and needs of crime victims is critical to the well-being and safety of communities. With a good foundation in place, great things will be improved and built.

# Commission Duties

The Utah Victim Services Commission's duties are outlined in Utah Code Section 63M, Title 7, Chapter 9. The VSC partners with state agencies and community organizations, including the Children's Justice Center Program, the Utah Office for Victims of Crime, the Utah Council on Victims of Crime, and the Division of Child and Family Services to perform the duties and elevate victim service response across Utah.

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<p>(A) REVIEW &amp; ASSESS CCJJ duties and practices regarding services and criminal justice policies pertaining to victims</p>	<p>(B) ENCOURAGE &amp; FACILITATE the development and coordination of trauma informed services for crime victims statewide</p>	<p>(C) ENCOURAGE &amp; FOSTER public and private partnerships to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASSESS needs of crime victim services statewide</li> <li>• DEVELOP crime victim services and resources statewide</li> <li>• COORDINATE crime victim services and resources statewide</li> </ul>	<p>(D) GENERATE unity for ongoing efforts to reduce and eliminate the impact of crime on victims through a comprehensive and evidence-based prevention, treatment, and justice strategy</p>
<p>(E) RECOMMEND &amp; SUPPORT the creation, dissemination, and implementation of statewide policies and plans to address crimes, including DV, SV, child abuse, and DUI-drugs/alcohol</p>	<p>(F) DEVELOP a systematic process and clearinghouse for the collection and dissemination of data on domestic violence and sexual violence</p>	<p>(G) COLLECT information on statewide funding for crime victim services and prevention efforts, including the sources, disbursement, and outcomes of statewide funding for crime victim services and prevention efforts</p>	<p>(H) CONSIDER recommendations from any subcommittee of the commission</p>
<p><b>UTAH CRIME VICTIMS COUNCIL (Repealed)</b></p> <p>Supervision, training, and support of the 8 Judicial District Victim Rights Committees (eff. May 1, 2024) UCA 63M-7-10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a county or district attorney or designee</li> <li>- a municipal attorney or designee</li> <li>- a sheriff or designee</li> <li>- a chief of police or designee</li> <li>- a representative of AP&amp;P within DOC</li> <li>- a victim advocate; and</li> <li>- any other representative as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>(I) (i) Make RECOMMENDATIONS regarding duties and practices of CCJJ to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crime victims are a vital part of the UT criminal justice system</li> <li>• All crime victims and witnesses are treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, and sensitivity; and</li> <li>• The rights of crime victims and witnesses are honored and protected by law in a manner no less vigorous than protections afforded to criminal defendants, and</li> </ul>	<p>(I) (ii) Make RECOMMENDATIONS regarding statewide funding for crime victim services and prevention efforts</p>	

## Utah Victim Services Commission (VSC)

UCA 63M-7-904

# Mission Statement

The mission of the Utah Victim Services Commission is to generate unity to reduce and eliminate the impact of crime on victims through a comprehensive and evidence-based prevention, treatment, and trauma-informed justice strategy.

## VSC Structure

When created in 2023, the Utah Victim Services Commission consisted of 19 voting members, including tribal and community coalitions, survivors, and system-based leaders. The Governor appoints five members including victim representative, prosecution attorney, defense attorney, system advocate, and law enforcement representative. These seats were filled with Senate consent in February 2024.

The VSC membership will change as of January 1, 2025, under HB532 (2024) legislation which removed three voting members including a victim of crime, a legislative member, and the Executive Director of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The VSC statutory structure includes the main body of voting members, and four subcommittees focused on victims of Child Abuse, Rape and Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Multicultural needs. Each subcommittee consists of a multidisciplinary group of attendees committed to improving and elevating victim service response through improving policy, best practices, legislative efforts, and strengthened partnerships.



# VSC Roles

1

## VSC Commission Body and Director/Team

The VSC is responsible for advising, informing, and supporting the Commission body and legislators. We are committed to the success of the Commission and supporting legislators in improving the response to victims of crime in Utah.

2

## VSC Commission Members

The VSC members' role is to inform, consider, propose, and advocate for solutions and improvements in elevating response to victims of crime.



3

## Subcommittees and Workgroups

The Chairs lead subcommittees and workgroups through exploring, problem-solving, proposing, and making recommendations to the VSC body.

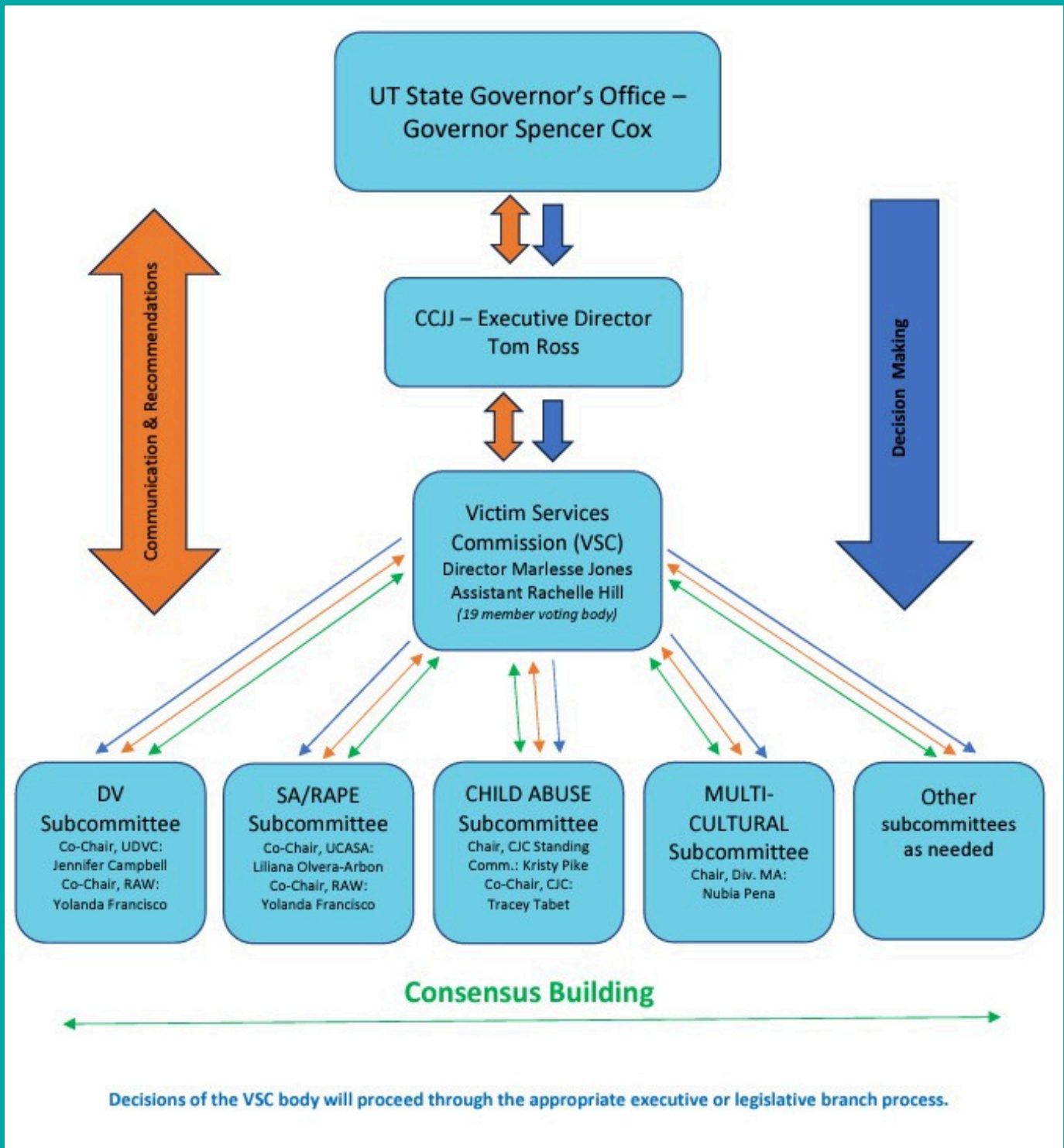
4

## Public and Agency Attendees

Through attendance and public comment other members of allied agencies or the public may have the opportunity to participate in informing, inspiring, proposing, and advocating for positive change when acknowledged by the Chair.



# Organizational Decision Making



The Victim Services Commission is part of the Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice agency. Accordingly, the VSC and its subcommittees focus on improvements in alignment with the goals of the agency and the Governor's office. In this capacity, the delineation of roles and understanding how to best move the goals of the VSC forward have been a significant part of the discussion in building the momentum of the VSC.

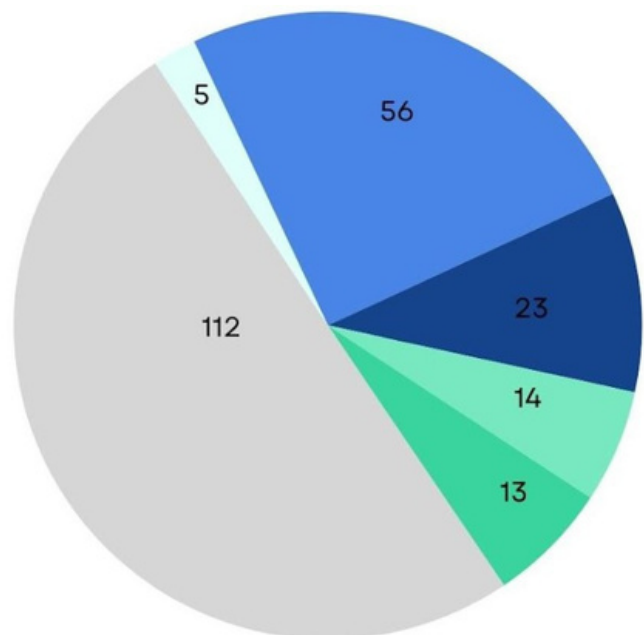
# 2024 COMMISSION HIGHLIGHTS

The Victim Services Commission (VSC) was created effective July 1, 2023. Following the hiring of staff, the first meeting of the Commission body was held on September 27, 2023. Since that initial meeting, the VSC has met ten (10) times for regular Commission meetings, and an additional eight (8) times for weekly legislative review during the legislative session. Each meeting we have successfully established a quorum which is indicative of the commitment and dedication of the members.

**Legislative Involvement:** During the 2024 legislative session, the VSC partnered with the Utah Council on Victims of Crime for the legislative review meetings. Both bodies established a quorum, discussed, and took a position on the reviewed bills. As a result of the passage of HB532 (2024) the Utah Council on Victims of Crime will be repealed as of December 31, 2024, and the responsibility to advocate for the adoption, repeal, or modification of laws or proposed legislation in the interest of victims of crime will continue with the VSC. In the 2024 session, the VSC reviewed 223 bills and took positions of Support (56), Priority (5), Hold (23), Support in Concept (13), and new positions taken (14) from either an original Hold, Support in Concept, or Opposition after members worked with the sponsor on addressing concerns.

**Communication Networking:** A significant effort was made to meet and build relationships with legislators. We hope to become a great resource for information and constructive support of legislation that impacts victims. This focus will continue in the upcoming sessions.

**Victim Services Assessment Study:** The 2023 General Session of the Legislature allocated \$500,000.00 to conduct an assessment study of victim services and response across Utah. The Request For Proposals (RFP) process was begun through State Purchasing and Procurement. A detailed RFP was created and published. We received five eligible submissions, with four of them being from out of state. A selection team was created including the VSC Director and VSC Assistant for subject matter expertise, and the CCJJ Research Director and SOMAC Director with research expertise, to review the submissions for both content and process. The winning submission was identified to be the Criminal Justice Center, University of Utah. Meetings with the research team are already in process and the study is moving forward, which is very exciting!



# Subcommittee Reports

## There are 4 subcommittees

All Subcommittees have built the foundations for their committee based off the statutorily outlined duties of the Victim Services Commission. Additionally, subcommittees also participate in working groups on specific topics within the subcommittees focus.



### CHILD ABUSE SUBCOMMITTEE

The Child Abuse subcommittee has focused on child torture with legislative language being proposed for the 2025 session. It also participates in the Sex Assault Forensic Exam Workgroup to determine best practice for a trauma informed response.

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### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUBCOMMITTEE

The Domestic Violence subcommittee is partnering with the CCJJ Data Team in a Data Collection Workgroup to meet the statutory mandates of data collection within domestic violence prevalence, resources and dynamics.

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### RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SUBCOMMITTEE

The Rape and Sexual Assault subcommittee is engaged in two working groups, including the Sex Assault Forensic Exam Workgroup and the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Success Workgroup. Both are focused on elevating best practices.

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### MULTICULTURAL SUBCOMMITTEE

“JUST EQUALITY” is the driving principle for the Multicultural Subcommittee, which focuses on access for (1) aging and vulnerable adults, (2) non-English speakers, (3) cognitive and physically disabled, and (4) military/veteran families and communities.

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## CHILD ABUSE SUBCOMMITTEE

The Child Abuse Subcommittee's membership follows a multidisciplinary model, including law enforcement, prosecution, child protective services, mental health, victim advocacy, lived experience, community partners, prevention partners, and others with a vested interest. The subcommittee's work is based on the foundation of statutory duties outlined for the VSC and the recommendations from the 2022 Victim Services Overview report.



The subcommittee met four times during the reporting period. Thus far, the subcommittee discussions have included:

- The creation of the VSC, alignment of the subcommittee with the statutory duties of the Commission, and a review of the Victim Services Overview report.
- An emphasis on the need for better collaboration among service providers at both the local level and throughout the state.
- The identification of gaps in services, including a disparity in who conducts forensic medical exams for minors aged 14-17; funding gaps, including those anticipated with VOCA cuts; mental health services, including access to therapists trained in trauma modalities; mental health needs of professionals serving child abuse victims; issues with Medicaid providers; and a lack of services for young children with problematic sexual behaviors.
- A debriefing following the 2024 legislative session, a briefing on relevant legislative items anticipated at upcoming interim sessions, and a discussion of issues for possible consideration in the 2025 session.

Through these meetings, the subcommittee identified emerging issues and opportunities, including exploring the multidisciplinary team (MDT) enhancement initiative, addressing child torture through legislation, promoting best practices for forensic interviewing, developing a best practices protocol for forensic medical exams for minors, engaging faith communities, and responding to mental health needs for victims and those who serve them.

Aug    Sept    Oct    Nov    Dec

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUBCOMMITTEE

The Domestic Violence Subcommittee has met four times during the reporting period and is setting meetings monthly moving forward. The membership is an open and fluid format allowing those from throughout the state to join virtually or in person as available. Additionally, the subcommittee has been working on bringing together voices to support an MDT model of core participants for the best discussion outcomes.



UTAH  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
COALITION

Meetings have a member agency spotlight to share knowledge of what resources are available in the different regions of the state. Each meeting has focused on prior studies relevant to the focus of the subcommittee. Presenters have attended meetings with issues and/or proposed legislative language to improve the criminal justice response in domestic violence cases, to which the subcommittee is appreciative and provides feedback. The subcommittee also provides review and input to the VSC related to legislation passed in 2024 and will be engaged in the legislative efforts in 2025 to help elevate response to victims of domestic violence.

Current subcommittee efforts include promoting and facilitating the development and coordination of trauma-informed services for crime victims statewide. We are also working to enhance public and private partnerships, supporting CCJJ in conducting a statewide needs assessment and developing a state strategic plan. The subcommittee is partnering with CCJJ and DPS in identifying and developing more comprehensive data collection related to domestic violence. This effort is occurring within a separate workgroup that also meets monthly.



## RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SUBCOMMITTEE

The Rape and Sexual Assault Subcommittee holds open meetings with all disciplines and voices welcome to attend and a future strategy to carve out core members to ensure an MDT model. The subcommittee reviewed several pieces of legislation from the 2024 session, including two bills that required their work and input through the VSC. The first is HB114 which identified 13 rape crisis centers in Utah and authorized the creation of standards of care with the input of the subcommittee and VSC. The standards of care have been created with input from other rape crisis center directors and were presented in September to the subcommittee for feedback and comment. The recommendation from the subcommittee is that pending finalization of the wording, the subcommittee will make a recommendation to the VSC for approval and adoption. The second legislative request of the subcommittee is in HB322 (2024) which is to create a model sexual assault investigation policy with input from the subcommittee and VSC. Pending movement and the invitation of the Peace Officer Standards and Training Division (POST) which is leading out on the policy development, the subcommittee will engage.

The subcommittee is engaged in two workgroups with one currently focused on prevention efforts and the training and support of Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) across Utah. The second workgroup is focused on developing statewide best practices in the area of Sexual Assault Forensic Exams of youth.

The subcommittee also noted the disparity in financial support for victims of sexual assault from state funding, noting that the state contributed \$450-\$500 per victim of child abuse or domestic violence survivors. State contribution to survivors of sexual assault is \$20. Additionally, the subcommittee has identified the need for a more effective response to the issue of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) where sexual abuse and trafficking is a driving motivation behind the disappearance of indigenous loved ones. These will be additional areas of focus as the work of the subcommittee moves forward.



## MULTICULTURAL SUBCOMMITTEE

The Multicultural Subcommittee is tasked to focus on multicultural communities with distinct victimization issues. The subcommittee defines 'multicultural' as a term that recognizes, respects, and values the unique differences between people about language, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability, age, race, ethnicity, veteran status, and other aspects of a person's individuality. Understanding the complex factors that contribute to the vulnerability of multicultural victims is essential for developing effective prevention, intervention, and support strategies. This subcommittee will engage and support the other subcommittees as it relates to vulnerable populations.

"Just Equality" is a driving principle in ensuring all individuals are treated fairly and have equal opportunities and access to the justice system. The membership of this subcommittee is not static but will be fluid and directed to reach all victims through focus group outreach and listening sessions. The subcommittee is currently focused on creating impact briefs on four areas including 1) aging, older adults, and medically vulnerable persons, 2) non-English speaking and people who are English language learners, 3) persons with cognitive, developmental, and physical disabilities, and 4) military and veteran families and communities. The subcommittee is invested in addressing needs and existing gaps within these focus areas and understands that when system gaps are addressed for one, the system response improves for all.



# Victim Rights Committees

Legislation in HB532 (2024) and HB308 (2024) required the Victim Services Commission (VSC) to assume responsibility for the oversight of the eight statutorily created Judicial Victim Rights Committees, created in Title 63M, Chapter 7, Part 10, from the Crime Victims Council (Council). The Council under HB532 (2024) is repealed effective December 31, 2024, however, the oversight responsibility was transferred effective May 1, 2024. HB308 (2024) created a Crime Victim Rights Committee Coordinator (Coordinator) position to support the Committees and victims engaged in the complaint process.

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The Judicial Victim Rights Committees (Committees) align with 63M-7-904(1)(i)(i)(B),(C). The Committees are formed from various criminal justice partners that reside and work within the district they are representing. The multidisciplinary makeup of each committee ensures that different perspectives and experiences are brought to the meetings to facilitate a thorough review of each complaint. The Committees assist in ensuring that all crime victims are treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, and sensitivity; and the rights of crime victims are honored and protected by law in a manner no less vigorous than protections afforded to criminal defendants. The Committees review the complaints of victims and assist in addressing any individual or agency that may be violating these rights.

The Judicial Victim Rights Committees will continue to address any victim rights complaints that we receive throughout the upcoming year and ensure that each agency is honoring the rights of victims that are protected by law. The Judicial Victim Rights Committees have held 21 meetings throughout the state from January 1, 2024, through September 30, 2024. The Victim Rights Coordinator has worked to streamline the complaint process and provide support to the committees to ensure that complaints are handled in a timely and equitable manner. The Victim Rights Coordinator attends stakeholder meetings and training to educate those within the criminal justice system and community about the complaint process and how it can ensure that victim rights are elevated throughout the state.

Since 2020 the number of victim rights complaints has increased from a low of 15 to a high of 30 in 2023. To date, in 2024 there have been 61 victim rights complaints received which is a 406 percent increase from 2020. Notably, the victim rights complaint form became available to complete online in November 2023, which provides some explanation for the increase in complaints as it is now more readily accessible.

61

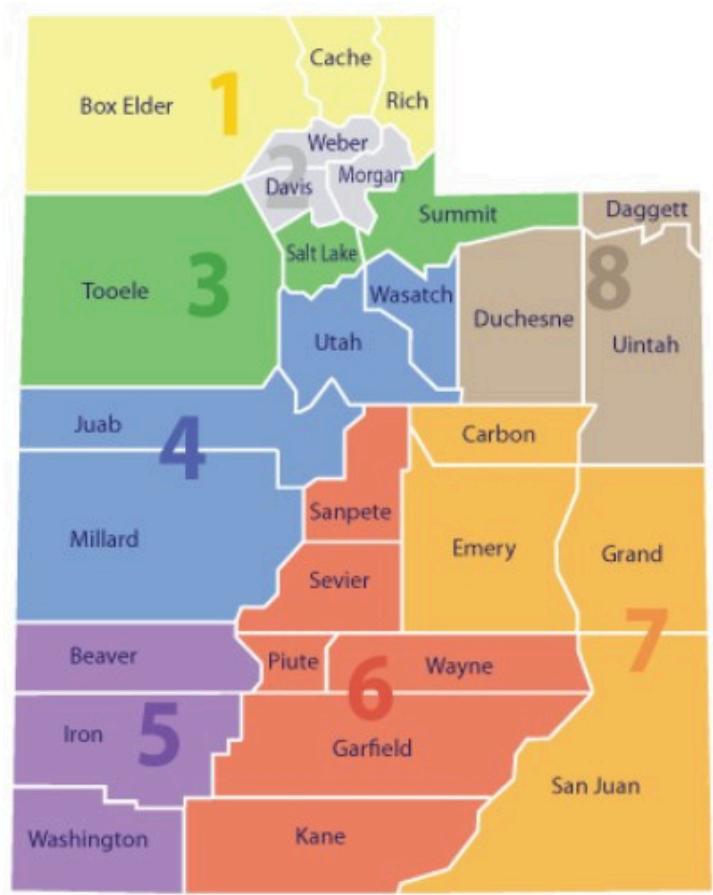
Victim Rights complaints filed in  
2024 through September 30, 2024.

406%

increase in complaints filed in 2024  
from those filed in 2020.

## Judicial District Victim Rights Chairs

1. Chair-Blair Wardle
2. Chair-Reed Richards
3. Chair-Rachel Miller
4. Chair-Sandi Johnson
5. Chair-Susan Hunt
6. Chair-Devin Shakespear
7. Chair-Andrea Noyes
8. Chair-Michael Harrington



With the new statute in place, we have been able to assist several victims in attending or giving a statement at a Victim Rights Committee meeting. These victims were supported by the Victim Rights Coordinator while giving their input to the Committees. We have also had a few subjects of the complaints attend to give input as well. The new legislation has assisted us in being more transparent in our process and elevating victim rights in our state. While 83% of claims were not sustained as a victim rights violation, we can track and see trends of what victims are experiencing in the criminal justice system. A Qualtrics data collection program has been created and enhanced to provide information on barriers to victims exercising their constitutional and statutory rights.

The most common complaint revolves around inadequate notification, and communication between, the victim and the actors in the criminal justice system. Examples include victims being frustrated by the progress of an investigation, lack of communication about a case resolution, etc. The committees are working hard to resolve the complaints they receive. Of the 55 complaints we have received this year 28 have been resolved. This number soon will be significantly higher as we now have actively working for chairs and committees in each district. The Seventh District Chair seat had been vacant for 9 months. We now have a chair in place and an October meeting will be the first scheduled to begin to resolve the complaints that have been waiting for a committee meeting.



## Victim Rights Complaint Form

The Utah Victim Services Commission oversees and supports the eight judicial district Victim Rights Committees. These committees are created to support the exercise of victim rights by all victims of crime. If you are the victim of a crime who believes that your rights have been violated by an agency or individual within the criminal justice system, please complete the following information. In order for the form to be considered, you must answer the required questions (marked with \*). Any other questions you can answer are very helpful. Learn more about how your response data will be managed [here](#).

Once submitted, the complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate Chair with the Victims Rights Committee in your judicial district. If you are thinking about submitting a victim rights complaint, it's important to understand a few key points about the process.

The Judicial Victim Rights Committees respect your privacy and will keep your information private within the Committees. However, the process for making a complaint is not confidential. Your complaint will be reviewed at a [public meeting](#) and shared with the subjects mentioned in your complaint. During the meeting you will be identified using the least amount of information about you to protect your identity. Keep in mind that, since the Committees are part of a government agency, anyone can request to see the information they hold ([GRAMA](#)).

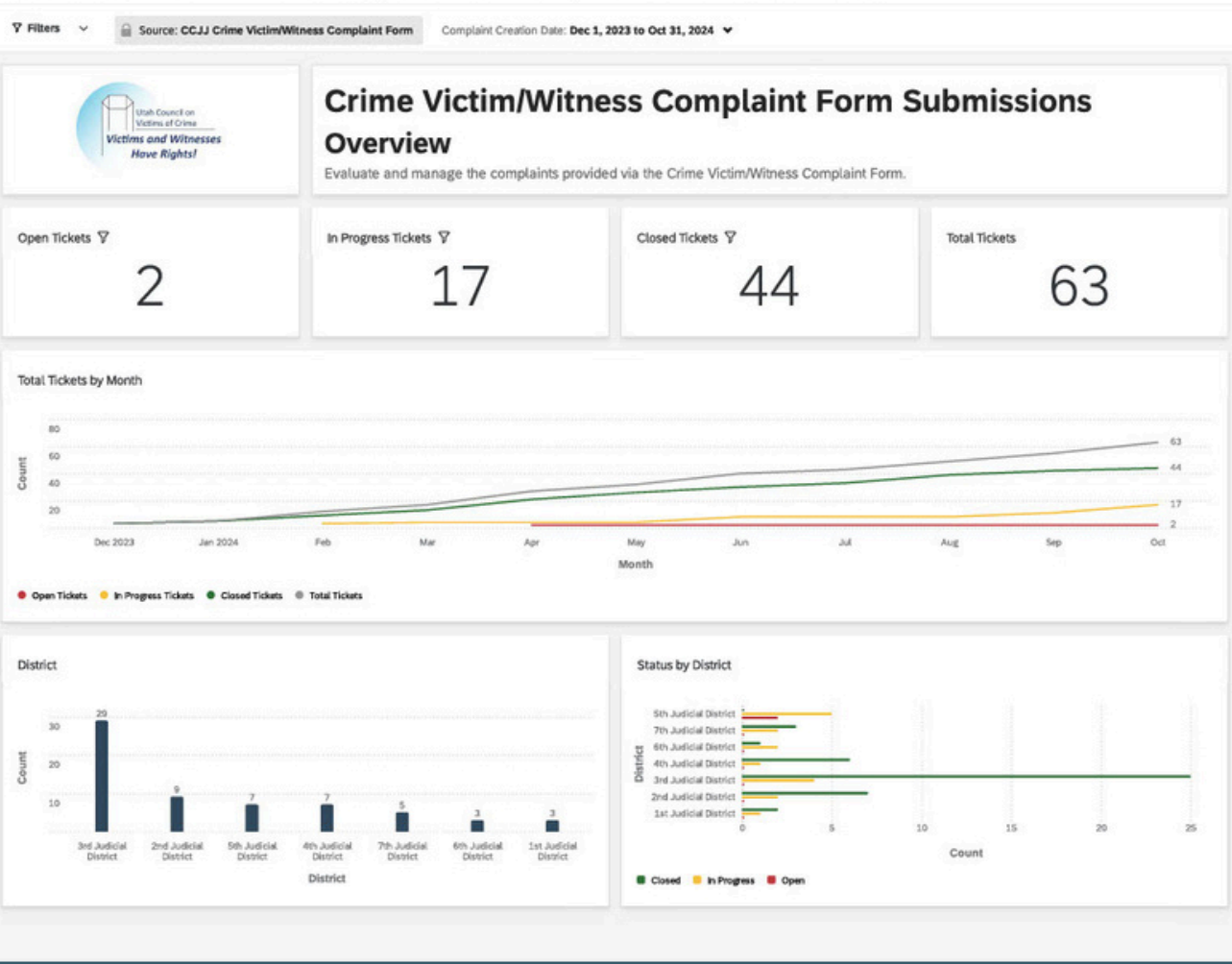
The Judicial Victim Rights Committees may be reaching out to the subject(s) of your complaint. The Committee can request that the subject(s) respond in writing or attend a Judicial Victim Rights Committee meeting. The subject(s) are not required to respond. If a written response is received you can contact the Victim Rights Coordinator for a copy.

You can choose what information to provide on the complaint form. Even if it's incomplete, your complaint will still be reviewed, but missing details may limit the actions that can be taken.

If you have more questions regarding your privacy contact: Katie Fox, Victim Rights Coordinator. Phone: 385-508-5442. Email: [katiefox@utah.gov](mailto:katiefox@utah.gov).

# Victim Rights Complaints

### CCJJ Crime Victim/Witness Complaint Form / Complaint Submissions Overview





# CRIME VICTIMS CONFERENCE

The legacy of the Crime Victims Conference has been established over 37 years. Over the decades, the conference has consistently brought together law enforcement, legal professionals, mental health experts, and advocates, fostering unity and collaboration in addressing the diverse needs of victims. With each event, participants have engaged in meaningful discussions, shared innovative strategies, and learn about best practices that empower victims and amplify their voices. The ongoing success of these conferences reflects a steadfast commitment to driving meaningful change and creating a more supportive environment for all those affected by crime.

## Agenda Focus



Case Studies



Research



Data

## 2024 Registration

in person



320

virtually



85

## 130 Different Organizations Represented

Law Enforcement


Prosecution

Victim Advocates

Treatment

Probation

Legal



Utah Victim  
Services Commission

## Crime Victims Conference

**Rooted In Justice**  
Elevating Victim Services Through Unity

April 24 & 25, 2025



The Utah State Legislature established the Utah Victim Services Commission in 2023. The mission of the Utah Victim Services Commission is to generate unity to reduce and eliminate the impact of crime on victims through a comprehensive and evidence-based prevention, treatment, and trauma-informed justice strategy. The Commission, in partnership with other state agencies and community based partners, has nine statutory responsibilities as outlined below.

# VIEW US ONLINE

In September 2024, the Victim Services Commission website went live on the CCJJ web page. As part of the VSC website, there is information about the Commission, duties, membership and staff, victim rights and the complaint process, and resources.

<https://justice.utah.gov/victim-services-commission>

# JOIN A MEETING

You are welcome to join our meetings and can access dates, times, and links through the Public Meetings Website. To subscribe please go to: [Victim Services Commission](#)

For more information, please contact VSC Assistant: Rachelle Hill at [rachellehill@utah.gov](mailto:rachellehill@utah.gov).