



common justice

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hope After Harm

An Evaluation of States' Victim Compensation Statutes

By Chandler Hall and Alice Hamblett August 6, 2025

A state-by-state analysis of victim compensation statutes reveals tremendous potential for states to better meet the needs of survivors of violence and to ultimately break cycles of harm.

Everyone has a right to feel safe and be free from violence as they go about their daily lives. When someone experiences violence, the impact can be devastating, leading to injury, trauma, and unexpected expenses. In 2023, [nearly 4 million people aged 12 and older experienced violent victimization in the United States](#), resulting in an [estimated \\$98.3 billion](#) in total costs related to their victimization.

State crime victim compensation (CVC) programs can provide a lifeline of support when there is nowhere else to turn to for financial relief. However, these programs are too often underutilized due to restrictive state laws that [create unnecessary barriers to access](#). Black and brown communities, which are [disproportionately affected by violence](#) and [are systemically underresourced](#), acutely bear the [burden of these restrictions and barriers](#). Without a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of state CVC statutes and a way for changemakers to demand more equitable access to this vital resource, injustices will persist.

This project, a collaboration between the Center for American Progress and Common Justice, is designed to fill in critical knowledge gaps, as well as to catalyze state-level policy changes that have the potential to improve access, equity, and transparency in the administration of victim compensation awards. It is our hope that survivors, advocates, legislators, administrators, and the public will use the materials produced by this project as tools to reform victim compensation programs to better serve survivors of violence.

The authors analyzed the victim compensation statutes of all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, and held focus groups with survivors of violence, victim service providers, and advocates to create the “State Victim Compensation Statute Rubric.” The rubric assesses existing state statutes, focusing on the following four themes:



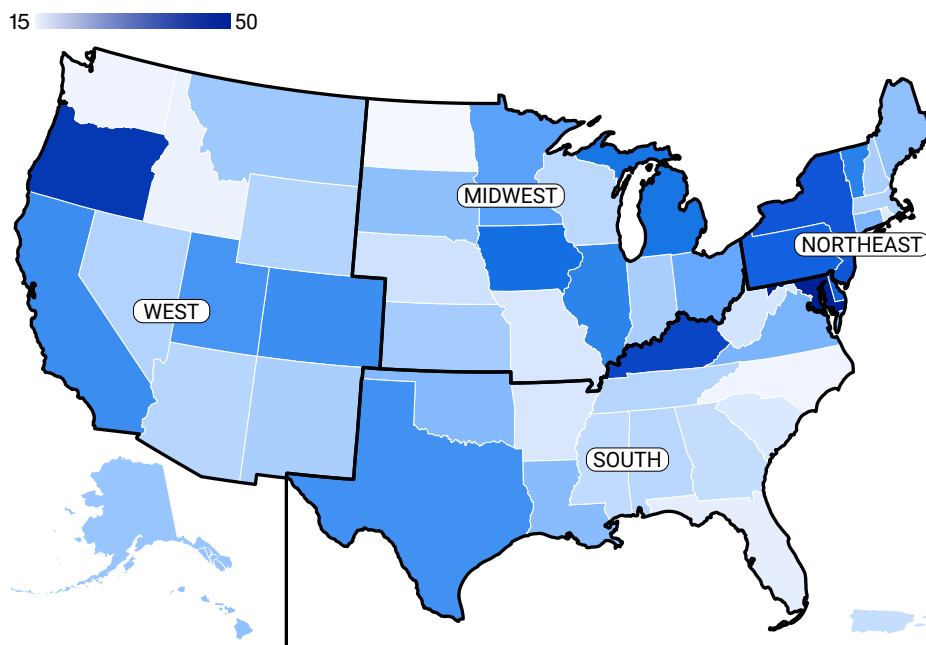
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[Hope After Harm: An Evaluation of State Victim Compensation Statutes](#)

1. **Awareness and accessibility:** Survivors often have no idea that they may be eligible to receive victim compensation awards or the extent to which an award could provide financial relief. This analysis evaluates states based on their requirements to inform victims of compensation, application filing and reporting limits, and language accessibility.
2. **Adequate compensation:** In the aftermath of violence, survivors face a variety of expenses that, if gone unpaid, can compromise their housing, personal safety, healing, and more. This analysis evaluates states based on the explicit inclusion of expense categories survivors encounter and having adequate compensation caps to meet survivors' need.
3. **Eligibility barriers:** A number of eligibility-related issues prevent survivors from receiving victim compensation, including requiring law enforcement reporting, conviction history restrictions, and alleged contribution to one's own harm. This analysis evaluates states based on the removal of harmful and restrictive policies which reinforce existing inequities and penalize those at the margins.
4. **Experience with the process:** The process of applying for victim compensation can be exhausting, retraumatizing, and exacerbate financial hardship for survivors. This analysis evaluates states based on the availability and amount of emergency awards, and whether individuals directly affected by violence are consulted or if their perspectives are included in the administration of victim compensation awards.

All four regions of the United States contain a top 10 state in scoring, according to the State Victim Compensation Statute Rubric

Weighted cumulative state and territory scores



Notes: Each category score was weighted based on focus group input. The category of "eligibility barriers" was multiplied by a weight of 1.75, "experience with the process" was multiplied by a weight of 1.5, "awareness and accessibility" was multiplied by a weight of 1.25, and "adequate compensation" was multiplied by a weight of 1. (See Methodology) The four U.S. regions—Northeast, Midwest, South, and West—are based on categorization by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Source: Original analysis and evaluation of state statutes conducted by CAP and Common Justice. Alice Hamblett and Chandler Hall, "Hope After Harm: An Evaluation of State Victim Compensation Statutes" (Washington: Common Justice and Center for American Progress, 2025).

Above is a map representing the results of the State Victim Compensation Statute Rubric evaluation. (see Figure 1) In addition to the scores presented here, each state, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico has an accompanying scoring breakdown that can be found below.

To improve the victim compensation process, states should consider the following five key recommendations for statutory and programmatic reform, based upon existing research and the expertise of focus group participants:

1. Raise awareness and increase outreach about victim compensation programs and what they entail, particularly in Black and brown communities that disproportionately experience victimization. Track awareness and outreach efforts.
2. Make the application process less arduous and more trauma informed by reducing required paperwork, expanding application windows, and offering substantive support to survivors.
3. Reduce law enforcement's role in determining victim compensation eligibility and award amounts.
4. Move away from reimbursement-based models and increase the amount of compensation available for burial expenses.
5. Listen to survivors.

Across the country, many states—regardless of their political alignment, region, economy, or social construction—have deepened their commitment to the universal value that victims and survivors deserve support by reforming their victim compensation statute and programs. Despite the fact that aspects of an inclusive, equitable, and accessible victim compensation system can be found across the United States, the results of this analysis reveal that there is still significant work to do to ensure survivors receive the support they deserve. We hope that survivors, legislators, and advocates look to this report, their state's evaluation, and our recommendations and model policies as guidance for how to build more expansive, inclusive, and equitable victim compensation programs.

State-by-state score breakdowns

- [Alabama](#)
- [Alaska](#)
- [Arizona](#)
- [Arkansas](#)
- [California](#)
- [Colorado](#)
- [Connecticut](#)
- [Delaware](#)
- [Washington, D.C.](#)
- [Georgia](#)
- [Florida](#)
- [Hawaii](#)
- [Idaho](#)
- [Illinois](#)
- [Indiana](#)
- [Iowa](#)
- [Kansas](#)
- [Kentucky](#)
- [Louisiana](#)
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- [Ohio](#)
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