Office of SAFER COMMUNITIES
Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

The Office of Safer Communities

Presentation to:
Public Safety & Claims Subcommittee

January 12, 2026

DCJS
Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

OVERVIEW

About the Office of Safer Communities (OSC)

- Established in accordance with the 2023 Appropriation Act (Special Session I, Item 408 N.4.b.) within the Department of Criminal Justice Services*
- Supports communities by:
  - Administering funding
  - Providing technical assistance, guidance, and planning support
  - Conducting outreach to current and potential recipients of violence intervention and prevention grants
- Serves as a resource for research, evidence, and best practices for community-based violence intervention

*Related work began before formal OSC establishment.

OSC Structure and Support

- Placed within the Division of Programs and Services
- Funding for OSC operations:
  - 3% of Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Fund
  - 3% of Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund
  - Specified amount under OSC authorizing language
  - Specified amount under predecessor language (evidence-based gun violence intervention and prevention services)
- Specified FTEs for OSC operations:
  - 4 previously established positions under predecessor language
  - At least one position focused on coordination and outreach
  - At least one position focused on research and evidence

OSC Staff

Manager of the Office of Safer Communities and Youth Services*
Laurel Marks

Office of Safer Communities Coordinator & Program Analyst
Jennifer Quitiquit

Capacity Building & Sustainability Coordinator (local units of government, hospitals, public housing authorities)
Chad Felts

Capacity Building & Sustainability Coordinator (non-profits)
Jenna Foster

Juvenile Justice Analyst/Specialist*
Natasha Fortune

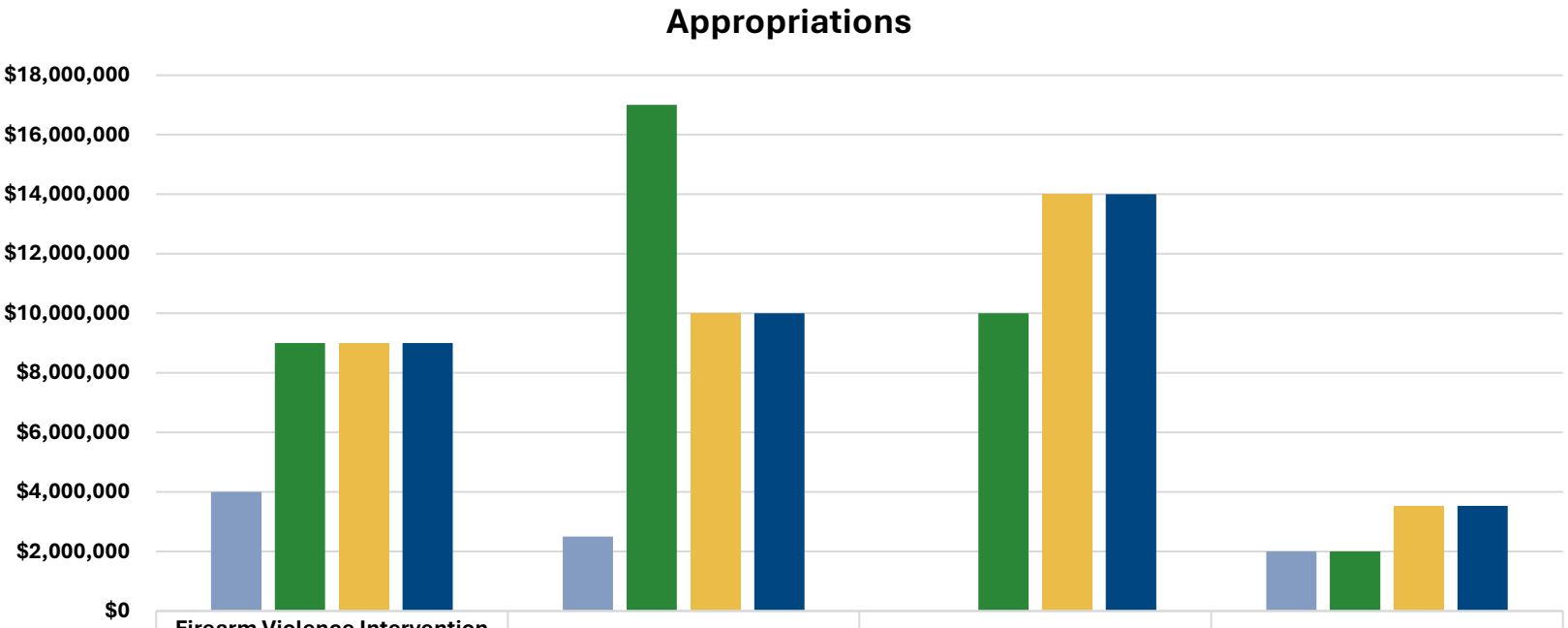
Resource and Communications Specialist
McKenzie Anderson

Grant Coordinator/Monitor
Vacant

* Pre-established positions serving blended functions/funding

OSC Funding

OSC Funding Streams



	Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Fund (Nonreverting)	Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund (Nonreverting)	Safer Communities Program	Miscellaneous Earmarks
FY 2023	$4,000,000	$2,500,000	$0	$2,000,000
FY 2024	$9,000,000	$17,000,000	$10,000,000	$2,000,000
FY 2025	$9,000,000	$10,000,000	$14,000,000	$3,530,000
FY 2026	$9,000,000	$10,000,000	$14,000,000	$3,530,000

OSC Fund Availability

FY 2023 – 2026 Totals			
	Total Appropriation	**Available for Administrative Costs**	**Available for Grant Awards**
Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention (FVIP) (nonreverting)	$31,000,000	$930,000	$30,070,000
Operation Ceasefire Grant (OCG) (nonreverting)	$39,500,000	$1,185,000	$38,315,000
Safer Communities Program (SCP)/Office of Safer Communities (OSC)	$38,000,000	$2,325,000 *	$35,675,000
Miscellaneous Earmarks	$11,060,000	$0	$11,060,000

*Includes $825,000 for directed VCU Contract (FY 2025-2026)

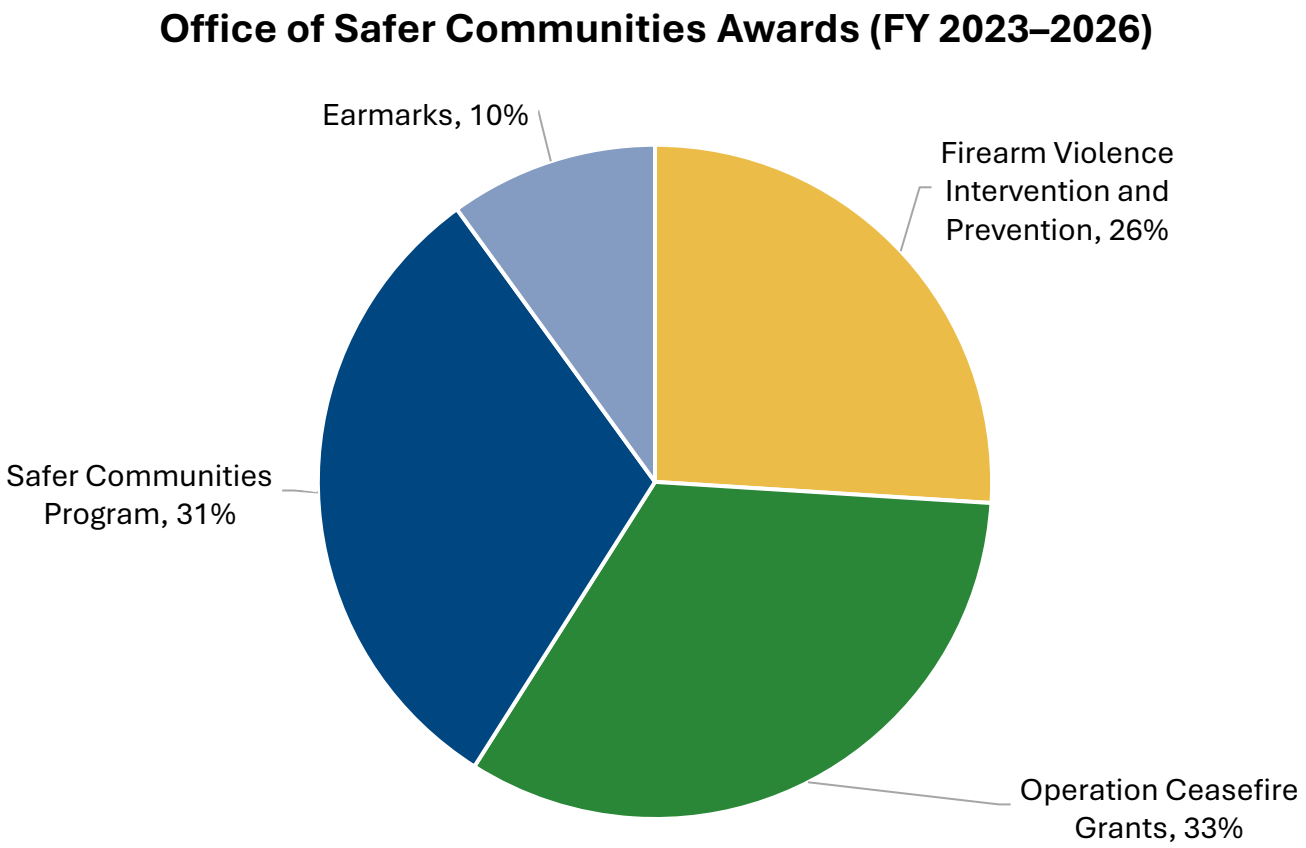
OSC Awards

Beginning with FY 2023, OSC has:

- Awarded **$114,845,404** in grant funding (FVIP, OCG, SCP, and misc. earmarks)
- Issued **242** grants to **140** different entities

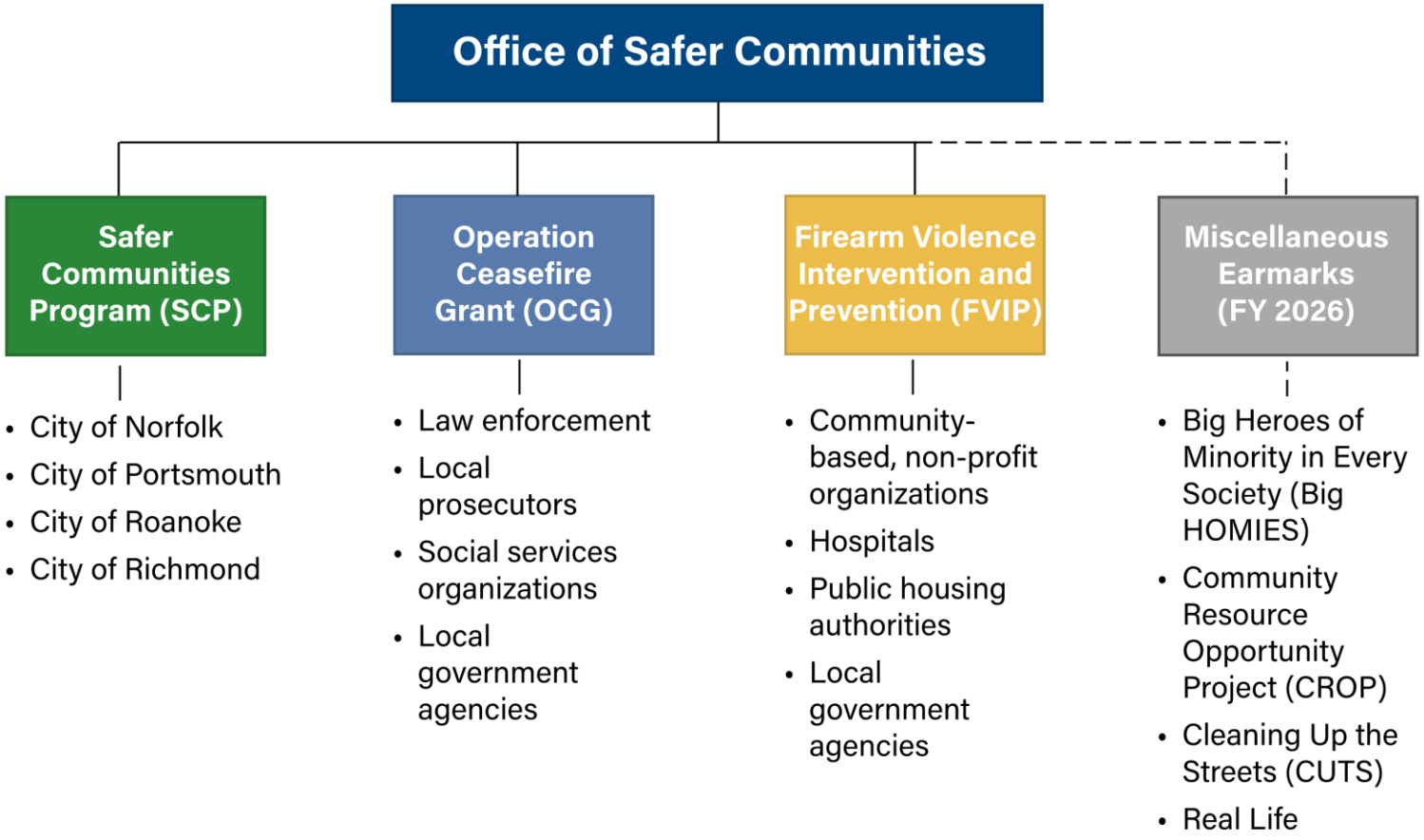
OSC Grantees by Type	
Localities and State Agencies	104
Non-profit Organizations	36

OSC Award Distribution



OSC Grant Programs

OSC Grant Programs and Eligibility/Prioritization



Award Process

	FVIP	OCG	SCP	Misc. Earmarks
Invitation to apply issued			✓	✓
Competitive or continuation application process	✓	✓		
Staff review budget and project plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Staff ensure project is not duplicative of other funding/initiatives (may consult with other agencies)	✓	✓		
Staff make recommendations for funding to Criminal Justice Services Board (CJSB) Grants Committee	✓	✓		
Grants Committee and full CJSB vote on recommendations	✓	✓		
Changes/corrections requested as needed	✓	✓	✓	✓
Statement of Grant Award (SOGA) and special conditions issued	✓	✓	✓	✓

Safer Communities Program (SCP)

Funding Purpose

SCP funding supports holistic, community-based strategies that address the root causes and conditions of community violence. SCP funding is used for evidence-informed and community-based strategies, such as after-school programs, mentorship programs, vocational and employee skills programs, trauma-informed mental health care services, credible messengers and violence interrupters, and initiatives to foster trust between law enforcement and the community.

SCP localities are required to employ a full-time position dedicated to planning, implementing, and coordinating community violence reduction strategies.

Earmarks

- SCP localities are earmarked in appropriation language. Each locality receives a minimum award of $2.5M, plus a population-based proportion of approximately $3.075M.
- Grant funding used for law enforcement equipment may only be used for forensic and analytical purposes (beginning FY 2025).

SCP Grant Awards

- OSC has awarded **$35,575,000** in SCP funding (FY 2023–2026).

Locality	Total Funding Awarded Under SCP
City of Richmond	$10,421,335
City of Norfolk	$10,534,462
City of Roanoke	$5,904,021
City of Portsmouth	$8,715,182

SCP Awarded vs. Expended

	FY 2024		FY 2025		FY 2026	
Locality	Awarded	Expended	Awarded	Expended	Awarded	Expended
City of Richmond	$3,320,000	$0	$3,563,335	$3,428,335	$3,538,000	In progress
City of Norfolk	$3,334,000	$3,146	$3,605,462	$3,429,451	$3,595,000	In progress
City of Roanoke	—	—	$2,960,021	$2,960,021	$2,944,000	In progress
City of Portsmouth	$2,846,000	$0	$2,946,182	$2,542,997	$2,923,000	In progress

SCP Examples

City of Norfolk

- Whole-of-government approach to community safety and well-being
  - Focuses on collaboration with city agencies, the police department, human services organizations, faith-based organizations, and public schools
  - Community1ST: uses violence interrupters to provide mediation and rapid crisis intervention, including school-based altercations, domestic disputes, and mental health situations, in high-crime neighborhoods
  - NeighborCare Norfolk Community Wellness Series: provides recurring monthly events in high-crime areas that include health screenings, benefits enrollment support, and behavioral health consultations; cross-agency training sessions on suicide prevention, domestic violence, youth bullying
  - 5% decrease in violent crimes involving a person injured by a firearm and a 10% decrease in crimes involving a firearm being fired into an occupied space

City of Richmond

- Coordinated and holistic approach to reducing community violence through a multi-partner strategy
  - Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Steering Committee: ensures coordination and accountability across city agencies and community partners

SCP Examples

City of Portsmouth

- Portsmouth United
  - A community-based violence intervention and prevention initiative that brings together stakeholders to sustain a reduction in violent crime
  - Uses SCP funding to provide grants to non-profit, community-based organizations that provide services to high-risk neighborhoods and address the underlying causes of violence
    - Awarded over $1.4M to 33 community-based organizations for FY 2026
  - Services and programs include mentorship, case management, credible messenger programs, violence interrupters, and employability programs

City of Roanoke

- Youth and Gang Violence Prevention Unit:
  - Works directly with those at-risk of becoming involved with violence
  - Renovated a community center that provides a space to work with youth and families on conflict resolution and de-escalation strategies
  - Provides life-skills training, school programming, and after-school transportation
- Champions of Change
  - A collaborative partnership with RESET and Roanoke Police Department that provides youth with boxing instruction and one-on-one mentoring opportunities

Operation Ceasefire Grant (OCG)

Funding Purpose

OCG grants are for implementing violent crime reduction strategies, such as funding positions within Commonwealth's Attorney's offices, providing training for law enforcement officers and prosecutors, and providing equipment for law enforcement agencies. OCG funding is available to local law enforcement agencies, local Commonwealth's Attorneys, local units of government, and non-profit organizations that are engaged in group violence intervention efforts.

Restrictions

- Grant funding used for law enforcement equipment may only be used for forensic and analytical purposes. (Beginning FY2025.)
- DCJS is authorized to spend no more than 3% per year for administration of the program.
- No grants from OCG funding can be awarded to state agencies. (Beginning FY2025.)

OCG Grant Awards

- Since FY 2023, OSC has:
  - Offered **7** OCG funding opportunities available to local units of government, Commonwealth's Attorney's Offices, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organizations
  - Awarded **141** OCG grants
  - Awarded **$37,221,758** in OCG funding
- Current Grantees
  - Law enforcement agencies: 95
  - Commonwealth's Attorney's Offices: 18
  - Local Government: 3
  - Public Housing Authority: 1

OCG Examples

Local Commonwealth's Attorneys' Offices

- Chesterfield County
  - Funds an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney to prosecute cases involving firearms and focus on petitions for the restoration of firearm rights - secured 227 felony convictions in 2025
  - Funds a Victim/Witness Advocate to ensure victims receive critical support and guidance
- Lee County
  - Funds an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney to prosecute cases involving the trafficking of illegal substances and crimes that heighten risk of gun violence; led to 64 felony convictions in 2025. Several prosecutions resulted in significant convictions, with sentences exceeding 10 years or more
- Hampton City
  - Funds a Program Coordinator to lead the Educating Kids About Gun Violence (EKG) programs – engaged 65 students in 2025

Ceasefire Grant Prosecution Data

(1/1/2024 – 9/30/2025)	
Felony filings (violent crime)	2,237
Misdemeanor filings (violent crime)	1,361
Felony convictions	396
Nolle prossed	512
Felony acquittals	115
Pending court cases	2,349
Local task forces attended	48

OCG Examples

Forensic and Analytical Technology

- Louisa Sheriff's Department
  - Forensic Workstations: high-performance digital forensic computers built for the acquisition and analysis of electronic evidence
    - Supports advanced data recovery, processing, and reporting from devices and storage media to streamline investigations in time-sensitive cases
- Roanoke County Police Department
  - Mobile laser crime scene scanner: a device that panoramically scans a location and records the entire scene
    - Helps crime scene investigators create digital representations of crime scenes, allowing them to trace the path of a bullet and the shooter's position

OCG Examples

Programmatic

- City of Richmond's Office of Gun Violence Prevention
  - Safety and Healing Initiative: designed to reduce community violence, improve neighborhood safety, strengthen families through violence interrupters, and prevent crime through environmental design
    - Violence interrupters: engaging adults at high-risk for involvement in violent crime through trained, trusted peers who are respected in the community, many with lived experience, to resolve conflict and provide trauma-informed care
    - Crime prevention through environmental design: improving environmental factors associated with high-violence areas

Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention (FVIP)

Funding Purpose

FVIP funding is available to local government agencies, community-based organizations, and hospitals to support the implementation of evidence-informed gun violence intervention and prevention efforts, including street outreach, hospital-based violence intervention, and other violence intervention programs.

Grant funds also support firearm suicide prevention and safe firearm removal practices from persons prohibited from possessing a firearm, including subjects of domestic violence protective orders, persons convicted of prohibitory crimes, and persons subject to substantial risk orders.

Directives

Each year, at least $1.5M must be awarded to localities with disproportionate firearm-related homicides to support crime intervention and prevention through community engagement, including youth programs.

Restrictions

- Grant funding used for law enforcement equipment may only be used for forensic and analytical purposes (beginning FY 2025).
- DCJS is authorized to spend no more than 3% per year for administration of the program.

FVIP Grant Awards

- Since FY 2023, OSC has:
  - Offered **8** FVIP funding opportunities available to local units of government, public housing authorities, law enforcement agencies, and community-based organizations
  - Awarded **80** FVIP grants
  - Awarded **$31,008,156** in FVIP funding
- Current Grantees
  - Non-profit organizations: 31
  - Local units of government: 8
  - Public Housing Agencies: 6
  - Public School: 1
  - Law Enforcement Agencies: 3
  - Hospital-based Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (HVIPP): 1

FVIP Examples

Hospital-based Violence Intervention and Prevention Programs

- Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA) Foundation
  - Providing 12 programs in 10 hospitals throughout the Commonwealth

Ballad (Abingdon)	Inova (Fairfax)
Bon Secours (2 programs)	Riverside Regional Medical
Carilion Roanoke	Sentara Norfolk General
Chesapeake Regional Medical Center	UVA
CHKD	VCU Health (2 programs)

  - Served 943 community violence survivors in the first quarter of FY2026
  - Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital
    - Violent Injury Recovery and Support Program: provides patients who have experienced a violent injury, including gunshot wounds, stabbings, and assaults, with comprehensive case management services
    - The program combines the efforts of medical staff with trusted community partners to ensure patients receive the support, treatment, and resources they need to heal.

FVIP Examples

Non-profit Organizations

- The Broken Men Foundation
  - Provides holistic mentorship, educational support, and community engagement to young men facing challenges in underserved communities
  - Methods include targeted mentorship and connecting youth with positive role models who guide, inspire, and provide a supportive presence in their lives
- Center for Youth and Family Advocacy
  - Youth Peer Court Ambassador Academy: provides a youth-led restorative forum where peers take accountability for the harm they've caused others
    - No reported recidivism among participating youth
  - Youth Restorative Diversion Initiative: addresses the root causes of violence, such as unmet needs, school disengagement, untreated conflict, instability, and lack of supportive adult relationships in Arlington and Falls Church
    - Works to reduce youth's involvement in the legal system and interrupt pathways that lead to future firearm violence
    - Partners with the local public schools to address truancy and chronic absenteeism
    - Includes runaway matters and peer-to-peer conflict

FVIP Examples

Public Housing Authorities

- Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority
  - Includes youth sports programs
  - Partners with Tidewater Arts program to provide music and art therapy
  - Provides weekend and evening wrap-around services and supervision programs in partnership with the local Boys and Girls Club
  - Hosted Summer Football Clinic with NFL quarterback, reaching 200+ participants and gaining national media coverage
- Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority
  - Offers weekly life skills workshops for teens and young adults focusing on healthy relationships and domestic violence prevention, workforce development, and financial literacy
  - Hosts after-school tutoring programs for middle and high school students (90% attendance rate for current cohort)

Miscellaneous Earmarks

The Virginia General Assembly has earmarked the following organizations to receive funding (FY 2023–2026):

- Big Heroes of Minority in Every Society (Big H.O.M.I.E.S.): $2M each year (FY 2023 – 2026)
- Cleaning Up the Streets (CUTS): $1M each year (FY 2025 and FY 2026)
- Community Resource Opportunity Project (CROP): $30,000 each year (FY 2025 and FY 2026)
- Real Life Initiative: $500,000 each year (FY 2025 and FY 2026)

Since FY 2023, these earmarks total **$11,060,000** in funding.

OSC Oversight and Support

DCJS Grant Oversight

- **Grant Risk Assessment & Monitoring**
  - Quarterly Programmatic and Financial Reporting
    - All grantees submit quarterly financial and progress reports.
    - OSC staff reviews and approves quarterly reporting from grantees, reviewing data and program performance metrics, along with narrative updates about program successes and challenges.
    - Staff ensures reported activities and expenditures are in-line with approved grant activities.
  - Risk Assessments
    - Completed for each grantee, with categories of high, moderate, or low risk, which dictates risk-based monitoring activities.
  - Risk-based Monitoring
    - Virtual and on-site grant monitoring intended to verify compliance with DCJS policies, grant solicitation guidelines, and all relevant conditions and assurances
    - Desk reviews
    - Informal virtual and in-person meetings to discuss risk issues and project progress

DCJS Grantee Support

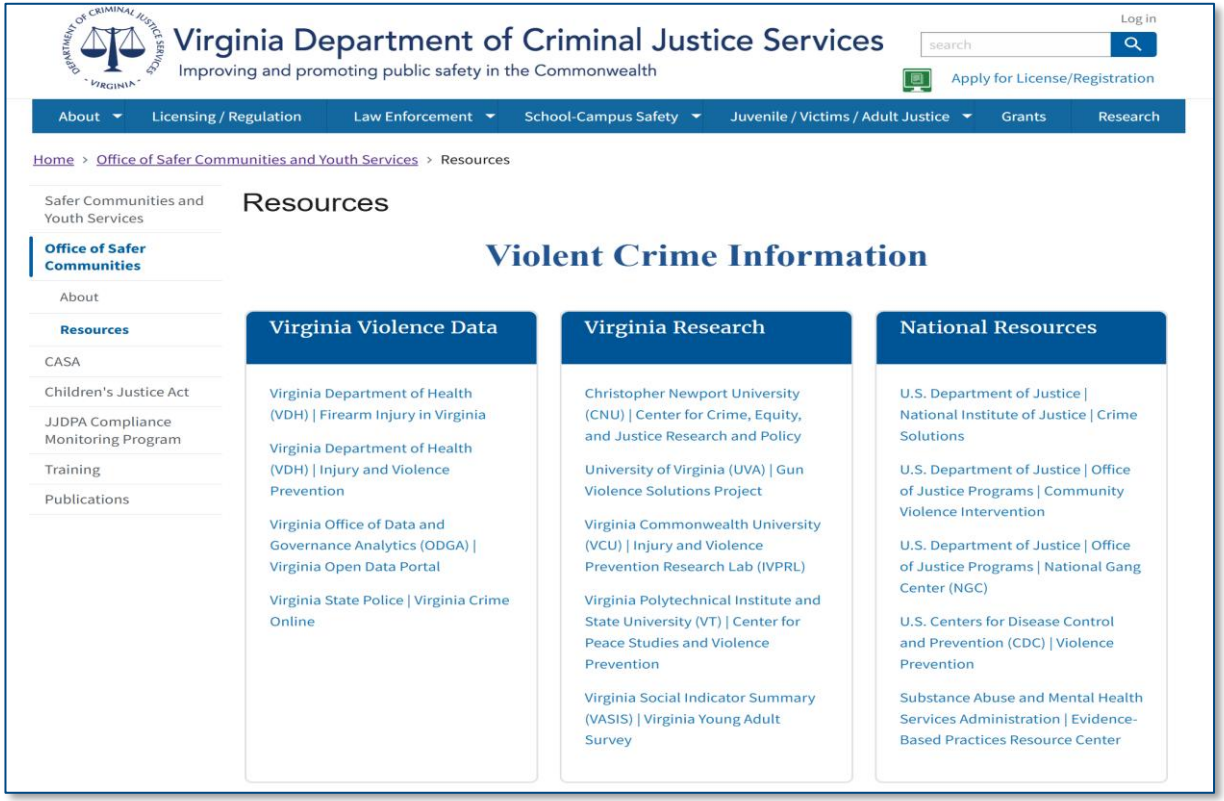
- **Technical Assistance, Training, and Information**
  - Pre-application information sessions
  - Develop and provide tools such as a non-profit readiness assessment
  - Assist grantees with planning for sustainability and building program capacity
  - Provide feedback on budget amendments, program scope changes, and other grant adjustments
  - Provide guidance on model, evidence-based programs and fidelity
  - Hold monthly virtual sessions for grantees to receive technical assistance for grants management and program implementation ("Office Hours")
- **Community Linkages**
  - Facilitate a Statewide Community of Practice
  - Bolster existing local Community Criminal Justice Boards and other criminal justice planning bodies (related project, not directly OSC)
- **Data and Resources**
  - Website

Statewide Community of Practice

- **Statewide Community of Practice**
  - Communities united around the shared goal of reducing violent crime through engaging in collaborative learning, knowledge exchange, and peer support to enhance their local impact
- **DCJS's Role**
  - Coordinates and facilitates opportunities for the Statewide Community of Practice to network, share successes and barriers, and collaborate
- **Quarterly Community of Practice Convenings**
  - Intended to develop ongoing peer networking and learning opportunities
  - Provides an opportunity for technical assistance and education on various topics, such as the DCJS On-line Grants Management System (OGMS), sustainability planning, grant amendments, etc.
  - Alternate between virtual and in-person gatherings; often scheduled to coincide with new grant solicitation releases
- **Statewide Community of Practice Conference**
  - December 8-9, 2025 – Virginia Beach, VA

Data and Resources

OSC serves as a resource for data, research, and best/evidence-based practices on gun violence intervention and prevention.



VCU Collaboration

VCU L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

- In accordance with the 2024 Appropriation Act, DCJS contracted with the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs.
- VCU will:
  - Complete an evaluation of the Safer Communities Program and Operation Ceasefire,
  - Create grantee training tools, and
  - Develop grantee performance measures.

Deliverables include:

- Community Resource Inventory
- Community Needs Assessment
- Local Coordination Evaluation
- Training Modules
- Violent Crime Profile
- Strategic Initiative Development
- Evaluation of SCP and OCG
- Performance Measure Development
- Site Checklist
- Multidisciplinary Stakeholder Focus Groups

VCU Timeline - 2026

Trainings – live webinars on data collection, creating one-pagers, visualizing data, prevention evaluation techniques, using data for growth and sustainability	Mid-February
Trainings – provide clean recordings to DCJS for ongoing utilization (will include edits as may be necessary based on live delivery results)	By June 30
Ceasefire Funding Evaluation – funding summary and comparisons of matching cities	May 1
Safer Communities Funding Evaluation – interviews and surveys	February/March
Safer Communities Locality Strategic Initiatives (with DCJS; meetings to assist in the development of strategic initiatives)	February-June
Safer Communities Funding Evaluation – final	June 30

OSC Plans for CY 2026

- **Funding Opportunities**
- **Trainings/Information Sessions**
  - Quarterly Reporting and Amendments Refresher (March)
  - Site Visit and Desk Review Expectations (May)
  - Others (to be scheduled)
- **Community of Practice Events**
  - Quarterly convenings (virtual and in-person)
  - Others (to be scheduled)
- **Supports and Information**
  - Additional tools and information for non-profit organizations
  - Additional resources
- **Improve performance measure reporting**
- **Convene state agency data partners**
- **Identification of gaps in best practices and model programs; potential development of new guidance**

Contact

For questions or additional information, contact:

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