



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: Friday, April 3, 2026.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. Contact [Gage Harter](#) with any questions.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Loudoun County, Virginia

Program Title: Victim Advocate Unit (VAU)

Program Category: Criminal Justice and Public Safety

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Tim Hemstreet

Title: County Administrator

Signature:  Tim Hemstreet
FE1FA8996D514E1...



Sheriff Michael L. Chapman

LOUDOUN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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803 Sycolin Rd SE | Leesburg, VA 20175
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VACo 2026 Achievement Award Nomination

Criminal Justice and Public Safety

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office

Victim Advocate Unit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office created a model for excellence when they launched their Victim Advocate Unit (VAU) in October of 2023. They introduced an innovative practice that addresses systemic barriers for crime victims and reduces the burden on victims who are overwhelmed by trauma. Historically, law enforcement agencies focused on criminal investigation, often leaving victims without support until a case reached the prosecution stage. The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office recognized this deficit and worked seamlessly to close the visible gaps in service for survivors. The advocates are embedded directly within the Criminal Investigations Division, ensuring support is available at the most critical "crisis scene" moments.

The VAU coordinates seamlessly with multidisciplinary partners to ensure the best long-term resources are being provided. The advocates created a grief pamphlet for victims that provides clear, step-by-step guidance on what to expect in the hours and days following a loss. They also spearheaded their inaugural candlelight vigil and reception, complete with guest speakers, resources, and food, for victims which they plan on expanding in 2027 to reach more victims. This innovative model of empowering victims and providing advocacy is what happens when a Sheriff's Office truly prioritizes victim-centered practices.

VACo 2026 Achievement Award Nomination

Criminal Justice and Public Safety

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office

Victim Advocate Unit

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office solidified their lifelong commitment to victim advocacy with the recent establishment of their Victim Advocate Unit (VAU). Historically, law enforcement agencies focused on criminal investigation, often leaving victims without support until a case reached the prosecution stage. The Sheriff's Office recognized this deficit and wanted to close the visible gaps in service for survivors. Launched in October of 2023, the VAU has taken on a transformative shift in law enforcement by implementing a unit that moves from a purely investigative role to a holistic, victim-centered service model. The unit's victim advocates and supervisor are innovative and unique in that they are embedded directly within the Criminal Investigations Division, ensuring advocates are available at the most critical "crisis scene" moments.

The Victim Advocate Unit's innovative approach prevents victims from feeling lost in the system, which can lead to better cooperation during the investigation. The Victim Advocate Unit provides support regardless of whether criminal charges are filed, which is public service at its best. No victim is left behind when ensuring the identifiable gaps in service are bridged, especially since victims often lose access to government-funded advocacy.

The Victim Advocate Unit began as a 12-month pilot program using a sergeant and two detectives, demonstrating how law enforcement can reallocate existing budgeted resources for maximum community impact. The unit developed robust operational

frameworks and a comprehensive web portal that provides 24/7 access to guides, protective orders, and case status- a “one stop destination” easily adoptable by other jurisdictions. The VAU follows digital accessibility standards ensuring their online platforms are usable for everyone. The program is planning to transition to civilian personnel which allows for long-term sustainability and professional specialization outside of traditional deputy roles.

Within its first 18 months, the VAU served over 700 cases annually, following up on nearly 500 cases in its initial months alone. The detectives who pioneered this model for excellence utilized their unique skill sets to create a grief pamphlet for victims that provides clear, step-by-step guidance on what to expect in the hours and days following a loss. This was critical to their mission since in the immediate aftermath of tragedy, families are often overwhelmed by both emotional trauma and administrative requirements. The detectives called each Loudoun County funeral home to understand what specific services they may offer to victims of crime prior to designing the brochure.

The VAU advocates respond with a trauma informed approach and streamline victims to the Loudoun Abused Women’s Shelter (LAWS) domestic violence and sexual assault services. This ensures victims receive immediate safe shelter, legal aid, and 24-hour hotline access. The VAU also coordinates seamlessly with the Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Victim Witness Program to transition cases as they move toward prosecution. The advocates help victims mitigate the economic impact of a crime by assisting with Virginia Victims Fund applications and housing services too. The victim advocates are critical navigators, providing long-term resources needed for recovery.

On April 6, 2025 to kick off National Crime Victims’ Rights Week VAU spearheaded and hosted an inaugural candlelight vigil and reception, complete with guest speakers,

resources, and food, for victims. The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office VAU is looking to expand on the ceremony, resource room, and fellowship for National Crime Victims' Rights Week in 2027 to show they stand in solidarity with victims of crime. Due to the program's success, Loudoun County has authorized two permanent, full-time civilian positions beginning in 2026 to ensure these invaluable services are available to victims around the clock.

Because they intervene at the earliest possible moment-the crisis scene or shortly thereafter-to reduce psychological trauma and speed recovery, The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office VAU is truly a model for excellence. Their proactive nature ensures immediate on-scene support for vulnerable survivors. The VAU is dedicated to multidisciplinary efforts that protect and empower victims and provide advocacy. Their innovative approach that bridges the prosecution gap ensures victims do not have a gap in service during the most critical early stages of trauma. The VAU truly prioritizes victim-centered practices and will continue to expand on their efforts in the future, all while continuing to bridge the gap between initial police response and long-term services.

About the Victim Advocate Unit

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) Victim Advocate Unit (VAU) can help victims of violent crimes, including, but not limited to: domestic violence, sexual offenses, felony assault and batteries, robberies, homicides, traffic/pedestrian fatalities.

Advocates can assist victims with information regarding victims' rights, the Virginia Victims' Fund, case status, navigation of the criminal justice system, and referrals to the appropriate community resources or organizations according to your specific needs.

There is limited confidentiality between advocates and those they serve. Advocates are considered mandated reporters and must report information related to criminal violations to law enforcement officers.

The VAU is part of the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) and is located at the LCSO administrative building on Sycolin Road in Leesburg.

If you are experiencing an emergency, please call 9-1-1 for immediate assistance.

Station Information

The LCSO has five stations conveniently located around the county. You can walk into any of the offices for fingerprinting services or to report a crime:

Administrative Offices

803 Sycolin Rd., Leesburg, VA 20175
703-777-0407

Ashburn Station

20272 Savin Hill Dr., Ashburn, VA 20147
571-258-3000

Dulles South Station

25216 Loudoun County Pkwy., Chantilly, VA 20152
571-258-3200

Eastern Loudoun Station

46620 E. Frederick Dr., Sterling, VA 20164
571-258-3356

Western Loudoun Station

47 W. Loudoun St., Round Hill, VA 20141
571-258-3750



Victim Advocate Unit



sheriff.loudoun.gov

sheriff.loudoun.gov

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office | Victims Advocate Unit

Victim Rights and Services

Crime victims and witnesses have certain rights under the Virginia Crime Victim and Witness Rights Act (19.2-11.0 Code of Virginia). These rights direct services and/or information relating to:

- Courtroom Assistance
- Financial Assistance
- Notification
- Victim Input
- Victim Witness Protection

These rights are intended to ensure that victims and witnesses of crime are informed of their rights, treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity, and are present and heard at critical stages of the criminal justice process.

Some victim services:

- Criminal case and court advocacy
- Crisis intervention and support
- Information and referrals
- Offender release notification
- Phone outreach
- Safety planning
- Virginia Victims Fund application assistance

VINE Link

VINE is a free, automated system that allows you 24-hour access to register for notification of changes to an inmate's custody status.

Call 1-800-467-4943 or register online at www.vinelink.com.

Important Legal Terms

- **Charge:** a formal legal accusation of criminal activity. A charge is determined when the conduct documented in a police report is believed to be a crime according to state law.
- **Conviction:** occurs when a defendant is found guilty of charges brought against them in a criminal court.
- **Defendant:** a person formally accused of committing a crime. A suspect becomes a defendant in a court case after a charge is brought against them.
- **Prosecutor:** a lawyer who, on behalf of the state, conducts the court case against a defendant.
- **Suspect:** a person who is thought to have committed a crime(s).
- **Witness:** a person who has personal knowledge of information or actions that are related to the incident being investigated.
- **Victim:** a person who experiences actual or threatened physical, emotional, or financial harm as a result of a crime.
- **Co-victim:** a person who has lost a loved one to homicide, including family members, other relatives, and friends of the decedent.

Protective Orders

A protective order is a legal document issued by a judge to protect the health and safety of a person who is a victim of any act involving violence, force or threat that results in bodily injury or places that person in fear of death, bodily injury or sexual assault. Although a protective order does not ultimately stop someone who intends harm, it does put certain legal protections in place, and a violation of the terms of the protective order is a crime.

Important Phone Numbers

Emergency	9-1-1
LCSO Non-Emergency	703-777-1021
Adult Detention Center	703-777-0405
Commonwealth Attorney	703-777-0242
Crisis Intervention Team	703-777-0320
Department of Family Services	703-777-0353
Department of Mental Health	703-771-5155
Domestic Violence Hotline	703-777-6552
General District Court	703-777-0312
Juvenile and Domestic Court	703-777-0300
Legal Referral Service	1-800-552-7977
Magistrate	703-777-0383
Regional Crisis Call Center	703-527-4077
Victim Witness Program	703-777-0417

Virginia Victims Fund

The Virginia Victims' Fund awards benefits to innocent persons who suffer personal physical injury or death due to a criminal act, who suffers emotional injury as a direct result of being the subject of a violent felony, stalking, Driving Under the Influence (DUI), or hit and run. Eligibility is based on guidelines in the Virginia Code section 19.2-368.4 related to the crime and is not based on income or ability to pay. Benefits are available for, counseling, crime scene clean-up, dental, funeral, mileage, moving, out-of-pocket medical expenses, wage loss, and other allowable expenses.



SCAN HERE
for additional
information and
resources.

https://www.loudounnow.com/news/you-are-not-alone-sheriff-s-office-highlights-support-for-crime-victims/article_b2b24da4-2a42-4343-8f31-d95c7e106d60.html

'You are not Alone': Sheriff's Office Highlights Support for Crime Victims

Norman K. Styer

Apr 7, 2025



Program speakers Nicole Bialko and Jonathan Dickey join in the National Crime Victims' Week candlelight vigil at the Douglas Community Center on April 6, 2025.

Norman K. Styer/Loudoun Now

The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office put the spotlight on resources available to help crime victims during a candlelight vigil Sunday night at the Douglass Community Center in Leesburg.

Sheriff's Office Sgt. Lorraine Goldberg, who supervises the agency's Victim Advocate and Domestic Violence units, led the program, which kicked off National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

She said the focus this year is promoting the collaborative community "kinship" that is important to protecting victims and securing justice.

“[It] is a call to action to recognize that shared humanity should be at the center of supporting all survivors and victims of crime. Kinship is a state of being with survivors that drives vital connections and increases access to services, rights and healing. Kinship is where victim advocacy begins. Kinship is also what brings us together today,” she said. “We are one community, one Loudoun, and we are here today to stand in solidarity with local victims of crime and show them that they are not alone in their fight for justice and healing.”

The program featured remarks by Jonathan Dickey, a county prosecutor whose law career was inspired by his experiences growing up with an abusive father, and Nicole Bialko, who promotes women’s safety based on her experiences as a survivor of stalking.



Supervisors Michael R. Turner and Laura A. TeKrony join in the National Crime Victims' Week candlelight vigil at the Douglas Community Center on April 6, 2025.
Norman K. Styer/Loudoun Now

Sheriff Mike Chapman highlighted the work of his staff to aid crime victims, including the establishment in 2023 of the Victim Advocate Unit to bridge the gap from the time a crime is committed through the court process.

“Part of that making you whole is not only directing you to the resources you may need to try to help you get through a particular situation, but it is preparing you for if we can take a criminal to trial,” Chapman said. “We want to make sure that we're doing everything in our power to hold people accountable.”

A key challenge, he said, is helping protect victims during the often-traumatic requirement to testify in court.

"I know one of the things that is always difficult is for people that are victims of crimes to want to testify. There's a lot of pressures. There's a whole lot of things that go on behind the scenes that makes them maybe tentative, maybe reluctant to actually get up there in a courtroom and explain what happened to them," Chapman said. "In a way, we have victimized them again, because they already went through the tragedy. Now they got to go through a tragedy all over a second time. So, we work very hard with our Commonwealth Attorney's Office. We have a great Commonwealth Attorney's Office right now."

Loudoun County Sheriff Mike Chapman highlights efforts to support crime victims during an April 6, 2025, vigil at the Douglass Community Center.

Dickey, a member of that office, said his interest in the law stemmed from his time in Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court hearings as his mother sought protection from his abusive father.

"I've known that I want to be a prosecutor since I was about nine years old. My father was an abusive alcoholic, and my mom faced most of the physical abuse," he said. "The worst thing about my father was that he was a master manipulator, and just like what you see in many, many domestic violence cases, he was a pretty decent guy in the morning. Then throughout the day, he would be apologetic and buy my mom gifts and apologize and say he would never do it again. But around 7 p.m. he was a completely different person. When the night came throughout my childhood, I saw my mother beaten, stabbed, and emotionally put down for years."

With the help of scholarships, Dickey overcame his family's domestic and economic struggles to earn his law degree.

"Years later, here I am working with Commonwealth's Attorney's Office prosecuting many victim-based crimes in the same courthouse where I was long ago," he said. "Prosecuting victim-based crimes is no easy task. However, when I walk through that courthouse, I bring many things with me. I bring that 10-year-old's desire to help somebody in need. While everybody has a different story, I bring with me the experiences that I went through being in a similar position. Lastly, I bring the pride of my heart with this. I walk through that courthouse every day with my head held high, try and make a difference and hold people accountable, no matter how small, to do the best I can."

Nicole Bialko, an advocate for stalking awareness, shared her personal experience of being stalked by a former partner she met through an online dating app. She noted that one in three women and one in six men will be stalked in their lifetime. Highlighting warning signs of abusive relationships that include excessive attention, love bombing, and gaslighting, she said the best defense for victims was trusting their instincts, documenting evidence, and seeking legal protections.

Goldberg said it was important for victims of crimes to feel supported.

"We have come together to honor victims of crime and to show them that their community, our community, stands with them. We acknowledge that we have some survivors and their families with us tonight, we express our heartfelt gratitude for your attendance tonight, and would like to remind you that you are not alone," she said.

Learn more about services available to crime victims [here](#). Resources available to help domestic violence victims can be found [here](#).

Norman K. Styer