

Executive Officer's Statement

June 26, 2008

In the late 1990's I served as the chair of the Board for almost four years. At that time, the Board held meetings throughout the state and heard victim appeals. Now with our hearing officers handling appeal hearings, the process is more streamlined and less intimidating for victims. But for me the people who appeared before us at that time are forever etched in my memory. Victims like the young college woman whose fear of the stalker who threatened to kill her was so palpable, the man who was so badly beaten that he would never look or move the same again, the mother who collapsed before the Board as she requested payment for her murdered son's funeral, and the children, the little ones, who had been abused or assaulted are just some of the faces I will always remember.

Four years ago I was given the opportunity to become the Executive Officer for the Board. You can imagine my excitement to have the opportunity to be a part of the Board and once again work with victims. It's been an amazing four years and I want to thank the three member Board for the opportunity and for your support. Your commitment to better serve victims and others who have business before the Board has been the cornerstone for our success over the last four years. It's been a busy four years and the following are some of the highlights of what we have accomplished:

Our Government Claims Program moved from a General Fund agency to a self-funded agency through the Budget Act. This required a new application form, new processes, and new information on filing, fees and surcharges in order for the Government Claims Program to be implemented in a very short time. In August of 2007 a pilot program to streamline reoccurring government claims for the California Highway Patrol was established.

In order to provide outstanding services to victims, we reviewed our policies and made legislative, regulatory or policy change as appropriate; we leveraged technology and implemented best practices to deliver our services to victims; we transitioned our phone unit to a customer service section to better respond to phone inquiries; we initiated an awareness program to increase public awareness of our program; and worked to ensure our employees are valued.

The Victim Compensation Program (VCP) transformed its business processes and improved its claims processing by replacing an outdated mainframe system with a new state-of-the-art web based system. Additional enhancements to our VCP during this time included:

- A new business process was implemented
- A scan facility replaced the mailroom process
- Two new applications were developed: an optical character recognition application and a live scan application
- The new web based processing system (CaRES) was rolled out to the Joint Powers counties
- Victim Advocates were given access to CaRES

The legislative, regulation and reimbursement rate changes and process improvements we made included:

- An increase for medical, dental, mental health and funeral/burial in reimbursement rates
- An increase of mental health sessions for derivative victims
- A new child care benefit
- An expansion of crime scene cleanup and security eligibility
- The elimination of the appeals backlog

- The addition of four new Criminal Restitution Compact counties
- The establishment of a victim advocate position
- The implementation of two ombudsmen positions; one for victim inquiries and one for provider inquiries.

We developed a variety of strategies to raise awareness of the VCP and to improve service to victims. A statewide public awareness campaign was implemented to educate the public about the VCP. In conjunction with that we strengthened our relationships with first responders, victim witness, and others that know of our program and work with victims. Our efforts to inform the public of the VCP included a public awareness campaign and collaboration with other entities to educate victims about the program. We also:

- Reestablished the Victim Compensation Advisory Committee
- Produced the award winning DVD about the Victim Compensation Program "Helping Victims Everyday"
- Instituted statewide provider forums
- Revamped our website to be more user friendly
- Participated in the Governor's Commemoration of the 5th Anniversary of 9/11 with victims and family members of victims
- Produced and distributed new VCP posters, information brochures and applications
- Implemented billboard and bus shelter campaigns
- Co-sponsored and participated in various forums including the *Missing Persons: Information Resources and Hope*; *Victims Rights Symposium at McGeorge School of Law*; *DNA/Cold Case Summit*, *California Cyber Safety Summit*, and *Identity Theft Summit*.

Our relocation to our newer building was done with great thoughtfulness and minimal disruption thanks to a great deal of planning and hard work. We're now located in a more professional neighborhood, better facility and at less cost. The new hearing room is an incredible asset to us for Board meetings, staff meetings, and various committee meetings.

Along with an improved physical environment, we have taken steps to make the VCGCB a great place to work. We've held two staff picnics at Southside Park since we've relocated. In order to provide a career ladder for our Victim Compensation Specialists, we completed a classification study and successfully reallocated them to a generalist classification. The Superior Accomplishment Award for employees has been reinstated and we bring in experts on a variety of topics such as interview techniques, retirement planning, etc., to speak to employees.

In the midst of all this we had a party, a big one, to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of California's Victim Compensation Program. Also, we participated in the 25th anniversary of the federal crime victims program at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Foundation. We joined the Governor along with victims and families of victims in the commemoration of the 5th anniversary of September 11. We hosted the Western Regional Conference for the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards in 2007 and are the host state for this year's national conference.

In July 2008 the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board will accomplish a goal that no other state agency and very few other entities have successfully realized. It is the conversion of a mainframe corporate database (VOX) to a state-of-the-art web based claims processing system. The conversion affects 300 users and 970,000 claims. It was an extremely complex undertaking to convert from a mainframe to a web based system. CaRES has delivered many tangible benefits including an increase in efficiency and accuracy in claims processing. Going forward, CaRES will reduce data center costs by over 50% which is \$500,000 savings annually and eliminate the need for physical storage of paper claims.

In addition, Department of Justice statistics show a decrease in violent crime from 2006 to 2007 of 3.2% while our applications received are up 7.3% for this fiscal year. Equally noteworthy is that our payouts for this fiscal year will match our predictions: we will payout \$80 million to victims.

With the accomplishments of these past four years, a new roadmap was needed to implement our successes. In October 2007 the VCGCB's Executive Management Team met with consultants to develop a new strategic plan that would encompass all of these positive changes. Deputies and managers met monthly to develop leadership skills and to collaborate towards a new strategic plan for the future of the VCGCB. Staff at all levels were included in the final decision on the new VCGCB Strategic Plan. It is a grass roots approach to strategic planning with measurable and achievable goals and will be a magnet for attracting and retaining talent in the organization.

As a result of these efforts, the VCGCB will accomplish a goal that very few organizations have successfully realized. It is part of a much larger organizational change that includes transformation of the organizational culture, business processes and strategic vision. Our new Strategic Vision and Mission are:

Vision

By 2012, we will be recognized as the national model for victim compensation and one of the best places to work in California.

Mission

The California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board provides responsive financial compensation to victims of crime through a stable Restitution Fund, and for those with claims against the State, an opportunity to resolve those claims or proceed with other remedies.

I feel so honored to have been a part of the VCGCB these past four years. The Government Claims Program is a model for ensuring good government practices and we truly help victims of violent crime. The Executive Team has been such an integral part in supporting and implementing the changes that have been made; our managers have handled the day-to-day business and resource needs; and our staff has been our voice to the public. I appreciate you more than you could know. Changing a system and a culture is not an easy task. Each and every one of you have been an important part of this endeavor and helped to accomplish this successful change.

Thank you.

Karen McGagin
Executive Officer