



Department of
Finance &
Administration

Office of Criminal Justice Programs

2023 Addendum

to

OCJP 2022 Five Year Strategic Plan



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OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS MISSION STATEMENT:

The Office of Criminal Justice Programs (OCJP) under the State Department of Finance and Administration functions as a strategic planning agency that secures, distributes, and manages federal and state grant funds for Tennessee. While collaborating with other public and non-profit agencies, OCJP utilizes these grant monies to support innovative projects statewide in efforts to reduce criminal activity, provide services for victims of crime and promote overall enhancement of the criminal justice system in Tennessee.

INTRODUCTION

The Tennessee Office of Criminal Justice Program's (OCJP) five-year strategic plan began in state fiscal year 2022 and will continue to be the overarching guide for the agency throughout its duration. In order to provide the most current information related to OCJP's ongoing planning process, each year OCJP briefly outlines updates in our strategic planning process and program priorities. All annual updates will be in the form of an addendum to the five-year strategic plan, from this point forward referenced only as the [FY22 Plan](#).

For state fiscal year 2023 (FY23), much of OCJP's planning and programming focus takes the form of virtual engagement, safety and mental health, and thinking creatively to continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The state and local government agencies and community-based organizations that OCJP funds have shown great resiliency and flexibility in meeting obstacles and achieving their missions. OCJP looks forward to continuing our support of Tennesseans in keeping victims safe and holding offenders accountable.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

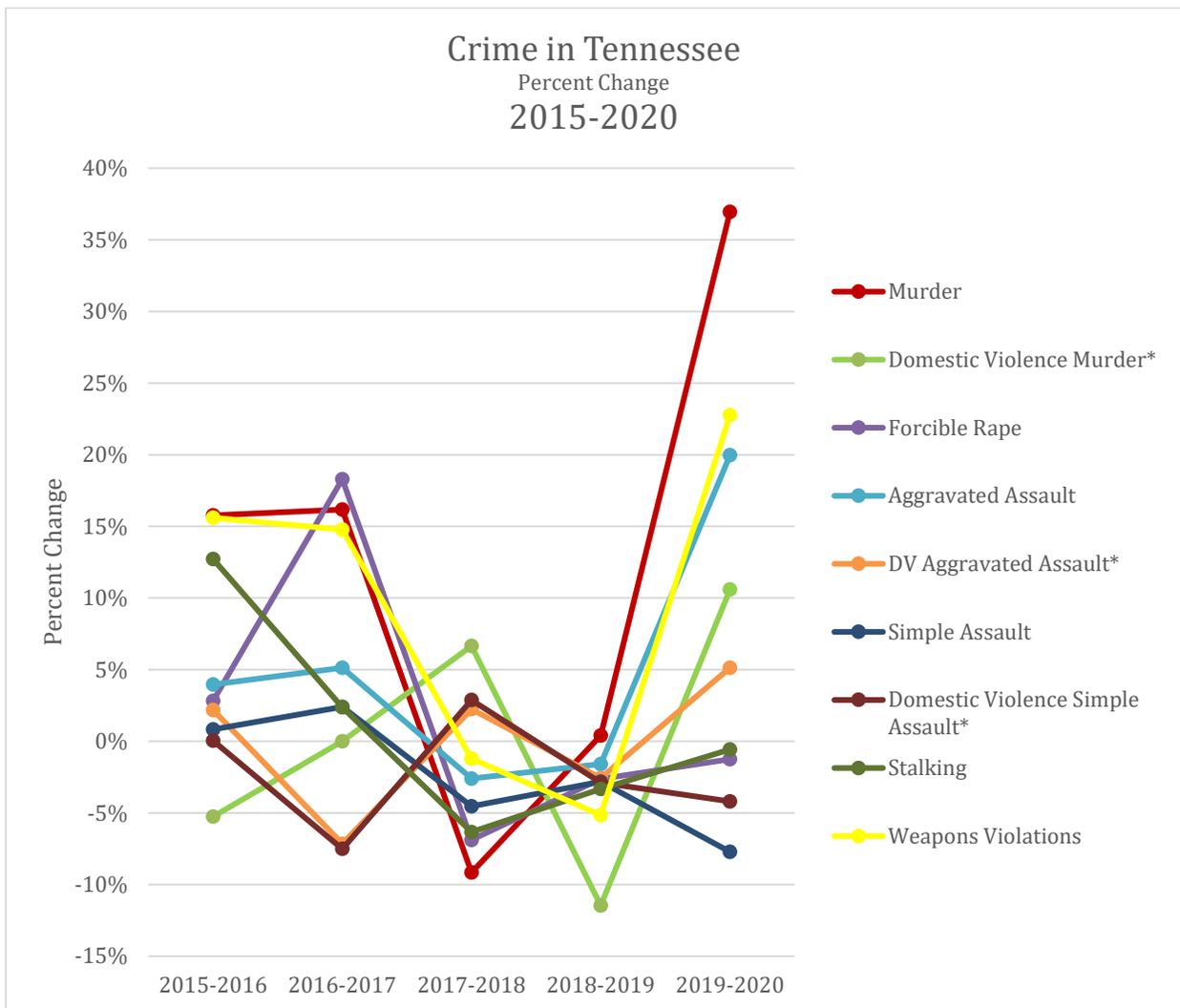
Hearing from Tennesseans

To inform our FY23 priorities, OCJP conducted a number of strategic planning activities between the time of publication of our FY22 5-year strategic plan and the publication of this FY23 addendum. In addition to ongoing taskforces and statewide advisory groups, these activities include:

- **FY23 Criminal Justice Roundtable** – OCJP’s standing roster of roundtable participants serve three-year terms and meet in the fall to discuss topics including innovative projects, essential priorities, and ongoing community and organizational support. The participants include Chiefs of Police, Sheriffs, Judges, District Attorney Generals, Public Defenders, Executive Directors of community-based victim service organizations, and other experts in the field of criminal justice and victim service work in Tennessee.
- **FY23 Victim-Centered Forums** – Facilitated by OCJP subrecipient agency, Tennessee Voices for Victims, this year’s three forums were conducted over the course of several weeks and included individuals representing crime survivors, justice-involved individuals, underserved populations, domestic violence and sexual assault victim services, family justice centers, and local law enforcement and prosecution. Each group was guided through a two-hour long discussion exploring what is currently working within the criminal justice and victim service systems and should be replicated, as well as gaps and opportunities for improvement.
- **Tennessee Elder Victims of Crime Forums** – New this year, these forums are part of a broader statewide needs assessment conducted by OCJP’s VOCA-funded Elder Victim State Liaison project. Three forums were conducted over several weeks, discussing resources, issues, innovative ideas, and recurring needs among local and state government agencies and community-based organizations that serve elder victims of crime. The prevailing themes from all three forums will be included in a survey tool that will be distributed to stakeholders as part of the statewide assessment and will inform technical assistance efforts by the Elder Victim State Liaison in FY23.

Data-Informed Decisions

OCJP uses data at the agency, local, and state levels to understand trends and anticipate needs among criminal justice and victim service agencies. This includes tracking crime rates across the state – as illustrated in the graph below – which shows that between 2019 and 2020, reported domestic violence (DV) murders increased by more than 10%, while DV assaults rose by 5% in the same period. Reported murders increased by more than 35%, while reported weapons violations and aggravated assault each increased by more than 20% in that time.



*A subset of the overall offense category

- <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tbi/documents/tibrs/Crime%20In%20Tennessee%202015.pdf>
- https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tbi/documents/2016_CRIME_IN_TN_Final.pdf
- https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tbi/documents/2017%20Crime%20In%20Tennessee_Final.pdf
- https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tbi/documents/Crime%20in%20Tennessee%202018_Final_7-19-19.pdf
- <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tbi/documents/CrimeInTennessee2019.pdf>
- <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tbi/documents/000%20Crime%20in%20Tennessee%202020.pdf>

Common Themes

Together with criminal and victim service data, common themes are identified around successful practices that should be replicated throughout the state, as well as opportunities for systemic improvement. The program priorities outlined in the following section reflect OCJP's focus on addressing these themes, which include:

- Co-located, multi-disciplinary models of service provision, such as Family Justice Centers (FJCs), are widely valued by victims and service providers and should be replicated beyond domestic violence and sexual assault to other violent crimes.
- Coordinated, cross-system response teams, including Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) and High-Risk Review Teams, have proven effective at elevating the most serious and dangerous cases, and should be replicated where possible and appropriate.
- Safer ways for victims to participate in the justice system – including virtual options, special dockets, and safe spaces – increase victim participation and reduce intimidation and should be more accessible across the state.
- Secondary traumatization and staff burnout occur frequently in organizations that address violent crime. Agencies need wellness programs to help mitigate and address these issues.
- Organizations need improved training and programming that is victim-centered, culturally sensitive, and responsive to the unique needs of underserved victim populations. Such individuals are often revictimized through their interactions with systems and services that are not created with underserved populations in mind.
- Gaps in timely, accurate information impede law enforcement, prosecutors, victim service providers, and other system professionals. Stakeholders request improved policies and technology to enable appropriate sharing of information and enhance collaboration.
- Tennessee jails currently offer a disjointed approach to re-entry programming, largely due to limited resources and operational capacity. Governor Lee has identified evidence-based re-entry programming as a priority within his criminal justice reform initiative. Enhanced technology, training, and curriculum will allow local jails to provide inmates with improved education, life skills, and vocational training for successful return to their communities.

FISCAL YEAR 2023 PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Coordination and Co-Location of Services – Family Justice Center Expansion and Partner Funding

Through each victim-centered forum and stakeholder roundtable hosted and facilitated by OCJP, participants across the state have spoken clearly and consistently in their praise for the Family Justice Center (FJC) model of real-time coordination and co-location of services under one roof. The FJC has proven beneficial in urban, suburban, and rural communities and has made a lasting impact on the way local systems respond to domestic violence and sexual assault. The newest generation of FJCs are focusing on these same benefits for elder abuse, underserved and inadequately served victims, and other groups.

In FY23, OCJP plans to leverage the continuing support of this model by administering an additional round of Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) funding on a competitive solicitation. The three-year grant provides salary, training, and start-up costs for a Site Coordinator position to oversee planning and implementation of each FJC project in three new communities. The communities will be selected based on local crime data and population, as well as on the merits of their application materials, including partnership agreements and demonstrated history of collaboration. JAG funding allows for communities to strategically plan their unique FJC model, based on their specific local needs and resources.

Additionally, OCJP is leveraging VOCA funds in FY23 specifically for domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) service provider partners who:

- co-locate victim advocates inside an FJC,
- maintain a formal partnership agreement to provide on-site DV and SA services, and,
- participate in collaborative DV and SA Response Teams.

The goal of the available funding is to facilitate and enhance the on-site presence of key partner agencies at the FJC in order to provide victim-centered services in a safe and convenient location.

Family Violence Prevention and Services Act American Rescue Plan

OCJP stands ready to respond with creativity and flexibility to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. For FY23, OCJP has received \$12,382,512 in federal funds as part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) to support domestic violence and sexual assault victim service agencies in transitioning to virtual/remote services and supporting the increased emergency needs of domestic violence and sexual assault survivors as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Activities covered under this additional fund source, for which agencies will apply on a competitive solicitation, include:

- **Prevention:** Activities that help provide victims and survivors with the care, support, and services they need while reducing the exposure to and risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus.
- **Preparation:** Activities and technical assistance to assess victims' needs, provide training, information, and assistance necessary to ensure the continuity of services, and assessing the capacity of domestic violence and sexual assault programs' emergency operation plans to reduce the exposure to and risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus.
- **Respond:** Activities and technical assistance for ensuring the continuity of domestic violence and sexual assault programs during the COVID-19 public health emergency, which includes responding to issues such as adapting to fluctuating needs and changing circumstances.

Throughout the last two years, communities across the state have experienced a “shadow pandemic” – a pandemic within the pandemic – with domestic violence crimes increasing, yet options for safe assistance dwindling amidst closures, health risks, and economic concerns. OCJP is committed to supporting victims and the agencies that serve them through innovative approaches to health advocacy, organizational wellness, community partnerships, access to safe and effective programming, and healthy working conditions for advocates and other staff. Through ARP and other state and federal funding, domestic violence and sexual assault service providers will receive the support they need to continue to meet victims where they are, providing resources and assistance in a safe and healthy environment.

Victim-Centered, Trauma-Informed Interventions - Restorative Justice

In partnership with Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), OCJP has begun the process of developing a comprehensive Restorative Justice project design for the state of Tennessee. We are developing a two-year plan to define the Restorative Justice model according to nation-wide best practices, validated evidence-based models and Tennessee statute, with an emphasis on capacity building. Our process will include the development of a survey instrument and stakeholder interviews to determine existing knowledge and use of restorative justice practices throughout the state. The resulting project design will be used in future OCJP funding solicitations to support evidence-based, voluntary programs that include both the person harmed (victim) and person who caused the harm (juvenile or adult offender) with activities that demonstrate a clear understanding of a trauma-informed, victim-centered approach to restorative justice.

Information Sharing - Interstate Prosecutor Collaborative Team

In response to the call for improved information sharing across jurisdictions, OCJP is utilizing a federal Office of Violence Against Women Improving Criminal Justice Responses (ICJR) grant to partner with Claiborne County Government, the 8th Judicial District, and other local victim service agencies to pilot an Interstate Prosecutor Information Sharing project, which will create a cross-border collaborative team, comprising law enforcement and prosecution from districts in three neighboring states. The goals of the coordinated community response (CCR)-style project are to:

- formalize collaborative relationships between prosecutors' offices in Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia, conducting active case review to enable identification of gaps and opportunities for partnership;
- develop an electronic system to track offenders even as they move across state and county jurisdictions, which would be kept up to date with criminal history data (ex: active warrants, probation and parole information, violations, orders of protection, etc.); and
- develop training curricula on enforcement of orders of protection, cross-border collaboration, and other best practices as developed by the Coordination Team that would be shared with the entire state.

Validated Pre-Trial Process

The Pre-Trial project provides federal JAG funds to local criminal justice agencies to enhance their pre-trial practices through the implementation of an empirically validated risk assessment process – meaning that the process must have been evaluated and deemed to be valid and effective in order to qualify for funding through this grant. The project centers around screening all booked defendants for risk of flight and pre-trial recidivism – which means the likelihood that they will flee or break the law again before they can be tried in court – using a validated risk assessment tool.

The goals of this project are to:

- enhance public safety by improving justice system effectiveness and efficiency through the implementation of a data-driven framework for pre-trial release decision making, and
- eliminate the unnecessary detention of low-risk defendants while simultaneously allocating more intensive and restrictive options (e.g., pre-trial supervision, detention) for higher risk defendants.

Key elements of the process include:

- early review of charges by a prosecutor,
- immediate or early release of all eligible arrestees after positive identification and risk assessment,
- the presence of a defense counsel prepared to provide effective representation at the earliest hearing that could result in pre-trial detention,
- release or detention decisions being informed by the outcomes of the risk assessment and adversarial hearing,
- use of court reminder protocols and risk-based supervision and/or diversion for released defendants; and
- if convicted, the transfer of information about the defendant’s pre-trial supervision outcomes to the sentencing court, prosecutor, defense counsel, as well as any subsequent supervising authority.

Evidence-Based Re-Entry Programming in Local Tennessee Jails

Governor Lee's Re-Entry Success Act of 2021 opened the doors to innovative funding opportunities for the local jails of Tennessee. The legislation offers increased reimbursement to jails that house felon inmates through an agreement with the [Tennessee Department of Correction](#). This reimbursement rate is determined by a new tier and accreditation system, a key component of which is the creation or enhancement of evidence-based re-entry programming (EBP) for inmates. Throughout FY22, OCJP administered state and federal grant funds to build capacity for local jails across the state. This included a competitive solicitation of \$5 million in state funds for round one of the EBP project and the purchase of instructional tablets for those EBP-funded jails through a grant contract with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Additional projects included federal JAG-funded trainings for local jails on Strong-R (felon inmate risk and needs assessment) and Moral Reconciliation Therapy training.

Due to the overwhelming interest from local communities in the initial round of EBP projects, Governor Lee's office has proposed \$25 million in the FY23 state budget, pending legislative approval, to support expansion of the initiative. The increase in funding will allow for improvement of instructional facilities to enhance classroom space and support vocational programming. The funds will also pay for staffing and community partnerships to offer evidence-based programming, as well as the needed technology, curricula, supplies, and materials. Outreach to county governments and jail administrators has already begun to ensure access to the competitive solicitation in the spring of 2022. An informational webinar will be hosted at that time by OCJP, together with the Governor's Office, Tennessee Department of Correction, Tennessee Corrections Institute and other state partners, to help support local communities in their application process.