



Ministry of the
Attorney General

Victim and Vulnerable Persons Division
Ontario Victim Services

Ministère du
Procureur général

Division des services aux victimes et
aux personnes vulnérables
Services aux victimes Ontario

Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP) Standards

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Exhibit: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls		
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Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP) Standards

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1 Program Overview

The Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division (VVPD) of the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) funds the Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP or the Program) to support direct victims, witnesses, and immediate family members of victims of violent crimes by providing financial assistance with essential expenses in order to lessen the impact of the crime, enhance safety, and meet practical needs.

VQRP is a program of last resort and is only available when there is **no other publicly funded service** available that can meet the individual's needs, and the individual is **in need of financial support**.

Financial assistance is available to help cover:

- Safety expenses;
- Practical assistance expenses;
- Travel and related expenses;
- Expenses for restoration of crime scene;
- Counselling services and associated transportation expenses;
- Funeral expenses for homicide victims.

2 Definitions

- a) **Applicant:** a direct victim, witness or immediate family member applying for VQRP benefits. If the direct victim, witness, or immediate family member is less than 16 years of age or unable to apply (e.g. incapacitated or deceased), applicant includes a parent, guardian, or person authorized to act on his/her behalf.
- b) **Attempt to commit murder:** attempting, by any means, to cause death or bodily harm that is likely to cause death.
- c) **Child Abuse:** inflicting or threatening to inflict physical or sexual harm on a child.
- d) **Crime:** any of the crimes listed in *Section 3.1 Eligible Crimes*. To qualify for VQRP, the crime must amount to an offence under the *Criminal Code of Canada*.
- e) **Criminal Harassment:** engaging in conduct that causes another person to fear for their safety or the safety of others. This includes a) repeatedly following the person or anyone known to them from place to place; (b) repeatedly communicating with, either directly or indirectly, the person or anyone known to them; (c) besetting or watching the dwelling-house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on business or happens to be; or (d) engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person or any member of their family.
- f) **Direct Victim:** a person who is injured (suffers actual or threatened physical harm) or is killed as a result of the commission of a crime.
- g) **Domestic Violence:** the use of physical or sexual force, actual or threatened, by an intimate partner or ex-partner. It can include actual harm or threats to harm children or other members of

the family. It includes both the original act of violence and any breach of conditions or subsequent acts.

- h) **Hate Crime:** a criminal offence committed against a person or property which is motivated or perceived to be motivated, in whole or in part, by hate/bias or prejudice based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or any other similar factor.
- i) **Homicide:** causing the death of a human being, either directly or indirectly, a) by means of an unlawful act; b) by criminal negligence (not including motor vehicle accidents); c) by causing that human being, by threats or fear of violence or by deception, to do anything that causes his death; or d) by wilfully frightening that human being, in the case of a child or sick person. Culpable homicide includes murder, manslaughter and infanticide.
- j) **Human Trafficking:** recruiting, transporting, transferring, receiving, holding, concealing or harbouring a person, or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation. Exploitation includes forced labour and sexual exploitation.

*Refer to the VQRP Standards for Victims of Human Trafficking for eligibility and expenses related to direct victims of this crime.

- k) **Immediate family member:** the direct victim's:
 - i. married or common-law spouse;
 - ii. biological, adoptive or step:
 - parent;
 - child;
 - sibling;
 - grandparent;
 - grandchild.
 - iii. legal guardian; or
 - iv. caregiver or relative who has been living with the direct victim for a period of at least one year immediately before the crime, and where the direct victim is a child.
- l) **Serious Assault:** includes the following criminal offences: assault/threaten with a weapon, assault causing bodily harm, aggravated assault, criminal negligence causing bodily harm, kidnapping/abduction, forcible confinement, discharge of a firearm (where the individual is at substantial risk of harm), and failure to provide the necessities of life.
- m) **Sexual Assault:** Any sexual contact not agreed to, including: unwanted sexual touch or sex; the use of force, threats or intimidation to make an individual do something sexual that they do not want to do; and/or sexual activity that an individual is unable to agree to because they are, for example, unconscious or intoxicated.
- n) **Witness:** a person who:
 - i. observed the commission of a crime;
 - ii. discovered the injured person as a result of the commission of a crime; or
 - iii. discovered the body of a person killed as a result of the commission of a crime.

3 Program Eligibility

3.1 Eligible Crimes

Program funding comes from the Victims' Justice Fund which can only be used for programs that support victims of offences under the *Criminal Code (Canada)*.

Program funding is available to a direct victim, witness, or immediate family member who was impacted by any of the following crimes:

- a) Attempt to commit murder;
- b) Child abuse;
- c) Criminal harassment;
- d) Domestic violence;
- e) Hate crimes;
- f) Homicide;
- g) Human trafficking*;
- h) Serious assault;
- i) Sexual assault.

*Refer to the VQRP Standards for Victims of Human Trafficking for eligibility and expenses related to this crime.

3.2 Individual Eligibility

A direct victim, witness, or immediate family member (hereinafter "victim") may receive benefits under the Program. If a victim is less than 16 years of age, a parent or guardian may apply on the victim's behalf. A person authorized to act on behalf of a victim may also apply on a victim's behalf, if required.

In order to receive benefits under the Program, individuals must:

- be either a direct victim, a witness, or an immediate family member of an eligible crime;
- live in Ontario (does not include those visiting Ontario);
- lack the personal resources to cover the cost of the expenses or the insurance deductible;
- not have previously received Program funding for the same service arising out of the same criminal occurrence;
- not have been charged in the reported occurrence.

3.3 General Program Eligibility

The following conditions must be met in order to be eligible for the Program:

- All Program funds received must be spent in Ontario;
- The crime must have occurred in Ontario;
- There is no publicly funded program available that can meet the individual's needs;

- In the case of homicide, attempt murder, serious assault, or child abuse, the crime must have been reported to a police service or a child protection authority in Ontario and a police Incident Report or Referral/Child Welfare Referral must have been completed;
- In the case of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and hate crimes, the crime must have been reported to police, a domestic violence shelter, sexual assault centre, hospital, other community agency or Indigenous organization that provides services to victims;
- In the case of homicide, the deceased victim must not have been committing a *Criminal Code* offence at the time of death.

3.4 Timeline Eligibility

Applications for counselling and related transportation must be submitted within 90 calendar days after the date of the crime.

Applications for all other expenses must be submitted within 45 calendar days after the date of the crime.

See Table 1 for a summary of submission deadlines and associated expenses.

3.5 Eligible Expenses

See Table 1 for a summary of all eligible expenses and maximum allowable coverage.

3.5.1 Safety expenses

The Program will provide funding to help cover the cost of emergency expenses related to home and personal safety.

Home Safety expenses include repairing or replacing items that have been broken during the commission of the crime where repair or replacement is necessary to secure a victim's home in order to mitigate the risk of a victim being re-victimized. Eligible items include damaged or broken windows, locks, or doors. This does not include screen doors, interior doors, or garage doors.

Home safety items also include dead bolts or bars, peepholes, window contact alarms, and window/door stops/guards.

Safety expenses also include a costs toward a cellular phone, cellular phone activation, cellular minutes, SIM card, or charging cables.

In the case of a cellular phone and related expenses, the following conditions must be met:

- The victim is at risk of being re-victimized;
- The victim participates in the development of a personal safety plan as per the Victim Crisis Assistance Ontario Standards;
- The victim is not living with the accused; and,
- The victim does not have a cellular phone.

Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP) Standards

In certain circumstances where the maximum amount covered by the Program is not sufficient to cover the cost of specified eligible expenses (see Table 1), a **total** one-time amount of up to \$300 may be requested for:

- after-hours/holiday service fees;
- travel surcharges in rural/remote communities;
- expenses resulting from condominium association vendor restrictions.

The \$300 allowance is a total amount available one-time only per occurrence. (See also 3.5.2 Practical assistance expenses).

3.5.2 Practical assistance expenses

Practical assistance expenses are those required to meet a victim's practical needs. Basic necessities such as clothing, shampoo, medication, etc. are eligible. This does not include beauty products or other non-essential items.

Meals and/or groceries are included.

Temporary accommodation is included. In circumstances where the maximum amount covered by the Program is not sufficient to cover the cost of accommodation a one-time amount of up to \$300 may be requested to cover higher accommodation costs in urban cities and during holidays/special events. The \$300 allowance is a total amount available one-time only per occurrence. (See also 3.5.1 Safety expenses).

Repair or replacement of eyeglasses that were damaged or destroyed during the commission of the crime, purchase of newly required eyeglasses as a result of the crime, and associated eye examinations are included.

Aids for victims with disabilities, which may include such things as an American Sign Language interpreter or professional support person to attend counselling sessions, are included.

Interpretation services for victims who do not speak either English or French are included.

3.5.3 Travel and related expenses

The Program will provide funding to help cover travel costs, including parking, to enable an eligible victim to:

- travel to attend a specialized medical treatment for injuries sustained during the commission of the crime;
- access safe accommodation in cases where the victim cannot return to his or her home due to safety concerns or police investigation, or is stranded as a result of the crime;
- visit a direct victim who has been hospitalized as a result of injuries sustained during the commission of the crime;
- identify a homicide victim.

The means of travel used must be the most **economical** method, unless pre-approval from the Program has been obtained for a costlier method. Eligible transportation includes public transportation, bus, rental vehicle, personal vehicle, taxi, rail, ambulance, and air.

In the case of travel expenses using a personal vehicle, distance travelled will be paid at \$0.15/km in Southern Ontario or \$0.20/km in Northern Ontario to cover fuel costs. Vehicle maintenance, wear-and-tear, and travel time are not covered.

In cases where the eligible victim is a primary caregiver the Program will provide funding to help cover the costs of child care, care for elderly dependents, or care for dependents with disabilities. Care for pets is also covered. Care for dependents or pets provided by family members is not covered.

3.5.4 Expenses for restoration of crime scene

The Program will provide funding to help cover the direct cost of crime scene cleanup, or the insurance deductible, if applicable. Only companies that specialize in crime-scene cleanup are eligible under this coverage. Coverage is limited to the cleanup of biological substances and noxious materials that arise during the commission of the crime or the investigation of the offence.

The Program will provide funding to help cover the costs of the removal of publicly visible hate crime graffiti from home property or personal motor vehicle.

3.5.5 Counselling services and associated transportation expenses

The Program will provide funding to help cover the costs of counselling services up to a maximum of \$1,000 (including HST) per individual.

Eligible costs for counselling services include individual counselling sessions or group counselling sessions.

Private counsellors used must have a criminal reference check issued within the last 5 years or, if working with children, a vulnerable sector check issued within the last 3 years. All private counsellors used must maintain a minimum coverage of \$2,000,000 aggregate in professional liability insurance.

The Program will pay only for counselling appointments attended and will not pay for missed appointments or late cancellations.

Counselling services must be completed within 10 months of the date from Program approval.

In Domestic Violence cases where there is a pattern of abuse against the victim by the same person, the eligible maximum of \$1,000 is only available once in a two year period.

The Program will cover up to a total of \$250 in transportation costs for a victim to attend counselling sessions provided that the victim would otherwise be unable to attend counselling sessions.

Where a victim is unable to travel to counselling, the counsellor may travel to the victim's location to provide services. The total amount of counsellor travel expenses cannot exceed \$250. This amount includes the cost of transportation only and does not include costs for the counsellor's travel time.

Where there is more than one victim, and circumstances permit, victims are expected to travel together.

3.5.5.1 Traditional Indigenous health services

Indigenous applicants are eligible to receive services from Indigenous Healers or Elders where these services are not covered through federal government funding. Healers or Elders should be identified in collaboration with local Indigenous service providers, as well as, local Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy partners.

The Program will pay up to a maximum of \$2,550 for counselling services and associated travel expenses for a Healer or Elder to travel to a fly-in community in northern Ontario to provide counselling services. This amount includes the purchase of sacred medicines for Elders, service expenses (i.e. honorarium), transportation expenses, meals, and accommodation. This amount does not include costs for the Healer's or Elder's travel time.

3.5.6 Funeral expenses for homicide victims

The Program will contribute up to a maximum of \$5,000 for funeral expenses of homicide victims. This may include transportation of the body, basic services fees, casket and burial, or cremation.

The Program will not pay for the costs of catering, vaults, plaques, keepsakes, fraud protection, or for family members to travel to attend a funeral.

Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP) Standards

Table 1: VQRP Eligible Expenses

Expense Category	Expense Type	Maximum (including HST)	Submission Deadline
Counselling	Counselling	\$ 1,000	90 days
	Transportation associated with counselling	\$ 250	
	Traditional Indigenous Health Services	\$ 2,550	
Safety	Window (damaged or broken) *	\$ 550	45 days
	Lock (damaged or broken) *	\$ 175	
	Door (damaged or broken) *	\$ 900	
	Dead bolts, bars, peepholes *	\$ 300	
	Window contact alarms	\$ 50	
	Window/door stops/guards	\$ 50	
	Cellular phone, activation, cellular minutes, SIM card, charging cables	\$ 125	
Practical Assistance	Basic necessities	\$ 75	
	Meals and groceries	\$ 40/ day (max \$200)	
	Accommodation *	\$ 120/ day (max \$500)	
	Eye glasses and exams	\$ 300	
	Aids for victims with disabilities	\$ 1,000	
	Interpretation services	\$ 750	
Travel and Related	Transportation and parking for medical treatment, to visit victim in hospital, to identify homicide victim	\$ 250	
	Transportation to access safe accommodation	\$ 800	
	Care for dependents and pets	\$ 200	
Restoration	Crime-scene cleanup	\$ 1,500	
	Graffiti removal	\$ 400	
Funeral	Funeral	\$ 5,000	

* Expense is eligible for up to \$300 above the maximum specified, as per circumstances listed in sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2. Note that the \$300 allowance is a total amount available one-time only per occurrence.

4 Special Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances where a request does not strictly meet the eligibility requirements, an application can be submitted to the Special Circumstances Review Committee for consideration. The request must contain clear information and context explaining why the application warrants a further review.

Special circumstances requests may include:

- The application was made outside the Program's time limits due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., applicant was hospitalized and could not complete the application);
- Requests for services for victims with disabilities that do not fit within the standards;
- Requests for services by extended family or friends, where there are no other immediate family members who have requested service;
- Requests for funding amounts that exceed the maximum coverage specified;
- A child under 16 who discloses historical sexual abuse;
- A crime affecting a large group of people (e.g., a shooting in a public place) that requires a large scale community response.

All decisions of the Special Circumstances Review Committee are final.

5 Program Administration

Applicants to the Program must apply through a designated Service Delivery Organization (SDO). SDO is a legal entity that the Province of Ontario has entered into a transfer payment agreement with to deliver the Victim Quick Response Program.

In respect of all Program applications, SDO's shall perform the following functions:

Application

- Meet with and assess the victim's need and eligibility for funding and confirm that all eligibility criteria have been met;
- Canvass whether the applicant can safely receive mail at her/his current address (if applicable). If the applicant is unable to safely receive mail at her/his current address, the SDO must notify the VQRP coordinator, and also ensure that the applicant is notified of Program approvals;
- Assist the applicant in completing all sections of the Application;
- Ensure that the Application is signed by the applicant, if over the age of 16, or by a person authorized to sign on the applicant's behalf. If the applicant is under the age of 16, proof of authority to sign must be provided by the person so authorized. If there is no authorized person available to sign on behalf of the applicant, the Program should be consulted;
- Retain the original signed Application and accompanying documentation on file for a period of 7 years;

Safety Expenses

- Obtain a minimum of three quotes at least once per year from service providers (unless there are fewer than three service providers in the jurisdiction) who provide safety and funeral services in order to ensure that the Program is receiving good value for money;
- Ensure that conflict of interest guidelines are in place that govern the relationships between the SDO and service providers;

Counselling

- Provide the victim with an up-to-date list of service providers who have a valid criminal reference check, a vulnerable sector check (where applicable) and liability insurance.

Submission of Receipts

- Submit itemized receipts that list each item for which funding is being sought. Invoices for completed work do not have to accompany the Application and can be provided to the Program as soon as they become available. Pre-paid cards are permitted for gas and food.

In the case of traditional Indigenous health services where the SDO pays the Healer or Elder by honorarium and no invoice is provided, the SDO is expected to create an invoice detailing the service date, service rendered, and amount paid.

The Program will review all requests for counselling services within five business days. The Program will review all other expenses requested within three business days.

The Program will reimburse SDOs for approved expenses upon receipt of invoice.

Counselling invoices must be received within one year of approval. All other invoices must be submitted within one year of service rendered.

In the case of counselling and funeral expenses, the Program will send an approval letter to the victim and the selected service provider. The Program will pay the service provider directly upon receipt of an original invoice for services rendered.

The program does not reimburse victims directly.