

## **Illinois Attorney General's Office**

### **Violent Crime Victims Advisory Commission (VCAC)**

#### **Public Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** March 6, 2026

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Location:** Virtual

**Theme:** Advancing Survivor Safety in a Digital Era

**Chair:** Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra

#### **1. Opening and Welcome**

Theresa Geary welcomed attendees and provided housekeeping announcements. She reminded participants that the meeting was a public meeting and reviewed the virtual meeting procedures and technology guidelines.

#### **2. Roll Call and Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra conducted roll call.

**Members Present:** Rachel Garthe, Edwin Galletti, Kathy Daniher, Maria Garza, Xochitl Guerrero, Melissa Ellison, Dr. Sonia Mathies-Dinizulu, and Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra.

**Members Absent:** Amanda Pyron, Erica Katava, State's Attorney Julia Rietz, and Chief Lally.

Quorum was established. The Commission reviewed and approved the minutes from the previous meeting.

#### **3. Administrative Updates**

Presented by Christelle Perez, Illinois Attorney General's Office.

Christelle Perez provided updates regarding the Violent Crime Victims Assistance (VCVA) grant program, including relevant funding timelines and administrative considerations for grantees. She also discussed the increasing role of technology in grant administration, data management, reporting requirements, and compliance monitoring.

#### **4. Framing Remarks: Technology as Infrastructure for Survivor Safety**

Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra provided opening remarks framing the meeting's focus on technology and survivor safety. She situated the discussion within the statutory responsibilities of the Commission and recent conversations regarding victim services, prevention, and access to justice.

Dr. Bocanegra emphasized the ways technology can strengthen survivor support systems by enhancing reporting pathways, improving investigative integrity, reducing retraumatization, and

increasing survivor autonomy and confidentiality. She also acknowledged important concerns related to digital surveillance, privacy, and the potential for technology to disproportionately impact marginalized communities.

The Commission was encouraged to consider how Illinois can steward technology in ways that increase safety, trust, and access to justice for survivors.

## **5. Presentation: Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force**

**Presenter:** Investigator Ryan Pearce, Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force

Investigator Pearce provided an overview of the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force and its work throughout Illinois. He discussed current trends related to online exploitation of children, including sextortion, grooming, trafficking, and other forms of technology-facilitated victimization.

The presentation included information on how internet crimes against children are identified and reported, methods used to preserve digital evidence, and the investigative processes used to support successful prosecutions while minimizing harm to victims.

Investigator Pearce also highlighted ways that parents, educators, community members, and youth-serving organizations can partner with ICAC to promote internet safety and identify concerns early. He shared recommendations for safe online behavior and resources available to the public.

A question-and-answer session followed, during which Commission members discussed reporting pathways, prevention strategies, and public awareness efforts.

## **6. Presentation: Chicago Police Department Area Technology Centers**

**Presenter:** Commander Patrick Kinney, Chicago Police Department

Commander Kinney presented an overview of the Chicago Police Department's Area Technology Centers and their role in supporting criminal investigations.

He discussed the evolution of technology-assisted investigations within the department, including the use of video analytics, license plate readers, digital forensic tools, and integrated information systems. The presentation highlighted how these resources have enhanced investigative capacity, improved evidence management, and supported efforts to solve violent crimes.

Commission members asked questions regarding the implementation of similar technologies in jurisdictions outside of Chicago, including resource considerations and potential opportunities for broader adoption throughout Illinois.

Discussion also focused on privacy concerns and the safeguards used to balance investigative effectiveness with individual rights and community trust.

## **7. Presentation: SAFELab – Technology, Youth Safety, and Digital Harm Prevention**

**Presenter:** Anthony Shaw, SAFELab, University of Pennsylvania

Anthony Shaw provided an overview of SAFELab's work at the intersection of technology, youth violence prevention, and digital ecosystems.

He discussed emerging research on how social media platforms influence youth experiences of violence, grief, conflict, and safety. The presentation examined how social media trends are monitored and analyzed to better understand violence risk, online harm signals, and opportunities for intervention.

Mr. Shaw also explored ethical considerations associated with technology-based violence prevention efforts and discussed how research findings can inform survivor-centered and youth-centered prevention strategies.

During the question-and-answer session, Commission members discussed specific social media platforms, emerging trends in digital communication, and practical applications of research findings. Mr. Shaw shared additional resources for attendees interested in learning more about these issues.

## **8. Commission Discussion**

Dr. Bocanegra facilitated a discussion among Commission members regarding key themes emerging from the presentations.

Members reflected on the dual role of technology as both a source of risk and a tool for enhancing victim safety, investigation, prevention, and recovery. Discussion emphasized the importance of maintaining survivor-centered approaches while continuing to leverage technological innovations to improve outcomes for victims of crime.

Commission members also discussed the importance of privacy protections, equitable access to technology, and ensuring that emerging tools do not unintentionally create barriers for vulnerable populations.

## **9. Public Comment**

An opportunity for public comment was provided. No formal public comments were recorded.

## **10. Closing Remarks and Adjournment**

Dr. Bocanegra thanked the presenters and Commission members for their participation and thoughtful discussion. She highlighted the importance of continued dialogue regarding the role of technology in supporting survivors and strengthening public safety.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.