



ADVOCACY FOR CRIME VICTIMS SINCE 1982

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## New ‘AVAP’ App Enhances Crime Victims’ Access to Vital Services

**Montgomery, AL — April 30, 2026** — Each year, thousands of Alabamians are victims of violence, and in their despair, they wonder where to turn. Their spouse may have been murdered, a loved one has been sexually assaulted, or their child may have endured abuse. Possibly, they’ve survived a random shooting or escaped domestic violence. Victims desperately need assistance but often don’t know who to call. ***That changes today.***

**VOCAL – Victims of Crime and Leniency**, a nonprofit organization that has served crime victims across Alabama since 1982 – announces the official launch of the **Alabama Victim Assistance Portal (AVAP)**, a centralized statewide resource that connects crime victims, law enforcement and the public with trusted services.

Available through a new mobile app, as well as a dedicated website, the AVAP portal is easy-to-use and designed to quickly point those in need to specific assistance anytime and anywhere. Users can search for nearby services by county or filter by the type of victim service or agency, including domestic violence shelters, rape crisis hotlines, child advocacy centers, homicide support programs, anti-human trafficking services, financial assistance – or they can reach out to their local police or prosecutor.

“For more than 43 years, VOCAL has stood beside crime victims across Alabama,” said **Wanda Miller**, Executive Director. “With the launch of AVAP, we are using technology to expand access to vital services and ensure that victims — especially those in rural communities — can find the support they need quickly and safely. We also anticipate that AVAP will potentially be helpful to law enforcement at crime scenes, or as detectives work with survivors – especially since Alabama law requires police to provide certain information to victims within 72 hours of a crime being reported.” *[Code of Alabama § 15-23-62]*

A unique and impactful aspect of the AVAP project is the collaboration with students from the **University of Alabama MIS Capstone Program**, who played an integral role in bringing AVAP to life. This team of 5 students embraced the goal of supporting crime victims and worked diligently for 4 months to develop technology that is both functional and meaningful.

“We are incredibly grateful to the University of Alabama Capstone students who helped make AVAP a reality,” said **Sonya Shehane-Bradford**, VOCAL Board Chair. “Their dedication, innovative spirit, and commitment to this project will have a lasting impact on crime victims across our state.”

**AVAP can be accessed on the Web at <https://avap.me>, plus a mobile app is available FREE for download from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store by searching for “AVAP” or using the following links:**

**App Store:** <https://lnkd.in/gp3ifzmi>

**Google Play:** <https://lnkd.in/gVQr9DWk>

**On Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at 2 p.m., VOCAL will host a 20-minute online demo and discussion about AVAP via Zoom,** and invites members of the media, victim service providers, law enforcement partners and anyone interested to participate. Simply click on:

<https://zoom.us/j/98328221246?pwd=3jmgrgsOHasOKmloYvMDmegoEyL74n.1> to join the Wednesday demo.

The AVAP platform reflects VOCAL's continued commitment to survivor-centered advocacy, while embracing innovative solutions to meet the evolving needs of victims. The portal is designed with privacy and safety in mind, allowing users to access resources without creating an account or sharing personal information. Further, AVAP's resources can be helpful to survivors immediately following a crime, or years later as they approach a parole hearing.

Additionally, AVAP includes a convenient one-tap dialing option on mobile devices, as well as a map function to assist users in locating agencies and organizations. And, if a specific service is not available in a particular county, AVAP can provide the user with a nearby resource or state/national hotline number, in hopes of filling any gaps in rural areas.

"We know that when crime survivors receive valuable support services, they are more likely to report crimes and assist with the prosecution of the perpetrator, which is essential to public safety," said **Darlene Hutchinson**, a longtime victim advocate who is a Commissioner for the **Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission**. "It has been incredible to witness the synergy and development of AVAP, and I'm truly grateful for Wanda's vision to initiate and lead this project. Victim services are sorely underfunded nationwide, so it would have been impossible to create the AVAP platform without the tech services of the University of Alabama students during their senior project. Their collaboration with VOCAL has helped create a tool that is an absolute game-changer."

Decades ago, a booklet of Alabama's victim services and law enforcement agencies was compiled and printed periodically and distributed statewide, but it was quickly outdated and was only useful to those who owned the cumbersome printed directory. AVAP is a modern version of that relic.

The timing is ideal to unveil this revolutionary resource as Alabama closes out Crime Victim Rights Month, and VOCAL urges all partners to actively share information about AVAP and the app's availability, so this critical resource reaches those in need.

VOCAL thanks service providers across Alabama, as well as law enforcement, prosecutors and other partners, who were very responsive in providing their contact info to be listed within AVAP.

#### **About VOCAL**

*Founded in 1982, **VOCAL (Victims of Crime and Leniency)** is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting crime victims and their families as they navigate the criminal justice system. For more than four decades, VOCAL has been a leading advocate for victims' rights in Alabama, providing guidance, support, and a voice for those impacted by crime.*