

FY 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Violent Crimes
Compensation Board

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022
Prepared by: VCCB Staff & Board
Approved by: Department of Public Safety

02

STATE OF ALASKA VIOLENT CRIMES COMPENSATION BOARD FORTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT

Greg Bringhurst
Chair

Bob Urata
Member

Anne Helzer
Member

THE HONORABLE MICHAEL DUNLEAVY

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
MEMBERS OF THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are pleased to submit the Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Violent Crimes Compensation Board for the period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. This annual report is submitted to meet the requirements of Alaska Statute 18.67.170 and to highlight the efforts of the Administration, the members of the Thirty-Second Legislature, law enforcement, public and private persons, agencies, and the Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB). VCCB's mission is to help victims of violent crimes to pick up the pieces. While monetary compensation for losses does not make victims of violence whole, financial help does lessen the burden and can provide hope. The Violent Crimes Compensation Board and staff are thankful for the opportunity to serve the people of Alaska in this capacity.

Respectfully,
The Violent Crimes Compensation Board

BOARD MEMBERS

Our board members are 100 percent volunteers and committed to serving Alaskans impacted by violence

Chairperson and Public Member

Greg Bringhurst

May 21, 2019 to Present

Member

Anne Helzer

November 20, 2020 to March 1, 2023

Member

Bob Urata

March 1, 2021 to March 1, 2024

STAFF

Board Administrative Staff listed were not present for the entirety of FY22.

Executive Director

Victoria Shanklin

Administrative Assistant

Debbie Wuerch

“

[We] exist to alleviate some of the financial burden victims face following a violent crime.

”

FY22 ACTIVITY SUMMARY

New Applications Received **653**

Applications Approved **425**

Applications Denied/Closed **214**

These applications are from people who have lost children to homicide, been the victims of random acts of violence, experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, or any number of other violent incidents that leave an individual living with the aftermath of a traumatic event.

This type of support offers many benefits beyond what the victim directly receives. Efficient and victim-centered compensation programs likely lead to a reduction of costs associated with the long-term consequences of crime; and greater victim participation in the criminal justice process.

Note: The majority of claims not awarded were closed due to a lack of response or incomplete applications.

05

FUNDING AND EXPENDITURES

VCCB is funded through Federal and State funds built from restitution and penalties paid by State and Federal convicted offenders.

State Funds:

A pioneer of its time, in 1973 Alaska created the VCCB and the Crime Victim Compensation Fund (AS 18.67.162). In September 2008 the legislature's amendment to AS 18.67 took effect, allowing "donations, recoveries of or reimbursements for awards made from the fund, income from the fund, and other program receipts from activities under this chapter" to be included in money appropriated by the legislature to the fund. The amendment also ensured that appropriations to the fund do not lapse. Restitution monies received through the Alaska Court System are also paid into the Fund.

Federal

In 1984, the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) established a Crime Victims Fund. This Fund is used to support both State crime victim compensation programs and State victim assistance programs. Funds are made available annually to state crime victim compensation programs by way of a formula grant program and based on State funding contributions in prior years.

Alaska's compensation program must qualify annually for its federal grant. As of December 2022, Alaska is current with reports and requirements for maintaining funding eligibility.

06

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible, a person must:

- Be an innocent person victimized in Alaska; or
- Be an Alaska Resident victimized in a US territory or foreign country without a compensation program
- Report the crime to law enforcement within 5 days of the crime or when a report could reasonably have been made
- File the application with the VCCB within 2 years from the date of the crime

Benefits may be denied if the victim:

- Participated in the crime or was otherwise engaged in criminal activity
- Contributed to the crime
- Did not cooperate fully with law enforcement and prosecution
- Knowingly or intentionally submitted false or forged information to the VCCB

CLAIMS PROCESS

It has been 50 years since Alaska's compensation program was initially created, and VCCB is still operating in the same way as it was originally designed and mandated in AS 18.67.040. All claims are processed by three (3) staff members and decided by three (3) volunteer board members. Due to statutory regulation, the system has remained stagnant while the program saw over 350 percent growth in just the last 30 years.

The claims process is currently under review and VCCB is working with national technical assistance providers to make updates based on best practices. New processes should allow VCCB to better meet the needs of innocent victims in Alaska and address federal audit findings from 2020.

Based on current crime trends, VCCB should be processing over 1,000 claims per year. Both crime rates and the number of applications received have significantly risen since the program's inception.

TYPE OF COMPENSATION AVAILABLE

Awards may be made in the following general categories for necessary and reasonable expenses related to the crime:

Crime Scene Clean Up (up to \$7,000) costs must relate to the cleaning up of crime scene elements that may cause further trauma or pose a health or safety risk.

Evidence Replacement (up to \$1,500) awards may be made to replace items such as clothing, bedding or cell phones that have been seized by law enforcement for use in the investigation or prosecution of a case.

Funeral and Burial expenses (up to \$10,000) include reimbursement for professional funeral home services, caskets, flowers, headstones etc. Costs for transporting the body to another state, or to pay for immediate family to travel to attend funeral services may be included. The award limit is \$10,000.

Lost Wages (up to \$10,000) may be paid to a victim who is unable to work as a result of physical or mental injuries related to the crime. Lost wages may also be awarded when a victim misses time from work to seek medical or mental health treatment related to the crime, or when they take part in the criminal justice process (other than subpoenaed testimony).

Medical expenses (up to \$40,000) related to the crime may be paid after Medicaid, Medicare, or private insurance. Medical appliances may also be paid - including wheelchairs, prosthetics etc.



08

TYPE OF COMPENSATION
AVAILABLE CONTINUED

Awards may be made in the following general categories for necessary and reasonable expenses related to the crime:

Mental Health counseling expenses may be offered to a claimant and will include children who witness domestic violence, or other children impacted by family violence. An initial award is made between \$3,000 - \$4,000. Additional funds may be available if a treatment plan is provided by the counselor. Licensed counselor costs are capped at \$200 per hour, but psychiatric services are paid in full (as they are considered medical expenses).

Loss of Support (up to \$40,000 per incident per victim, not to exceed \$80,000 in a case when there are 2 or more dependents are left behind) benefits are available to dependents of homicide victims. Awards are generally payable into an interest-bearing bank account, with annual support installments paid to the dependent's guardian until they reach the age of 18.

Relocation expenses (up to \$7,500 per household) This benefit typically provides victims of family violence and/or sexual assault or abuse with funds to pay for moving expenses, security deposit and rent, and utility deposits. Relocation may also be available where a credible threat to a victims' safety exists.

Security measures may be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$1,000 if there is a credible safety threat or if it would improve the emotional well-being of the victim and/or claimant. Expenses may include security cameras, monitoring costs, new locks for exterior doors and windows, replacement cell phone and new Post Office box.

Travel expenses (up to \$5,000 per eligible person) may be reimbursed for any travel necessitated as a result of the crime or its aftermath (for example to attend medical or mental health appointments, to participate in criminal justice proceedings, to attend a funeral etc). Travel may be limited to specific immediate family members.

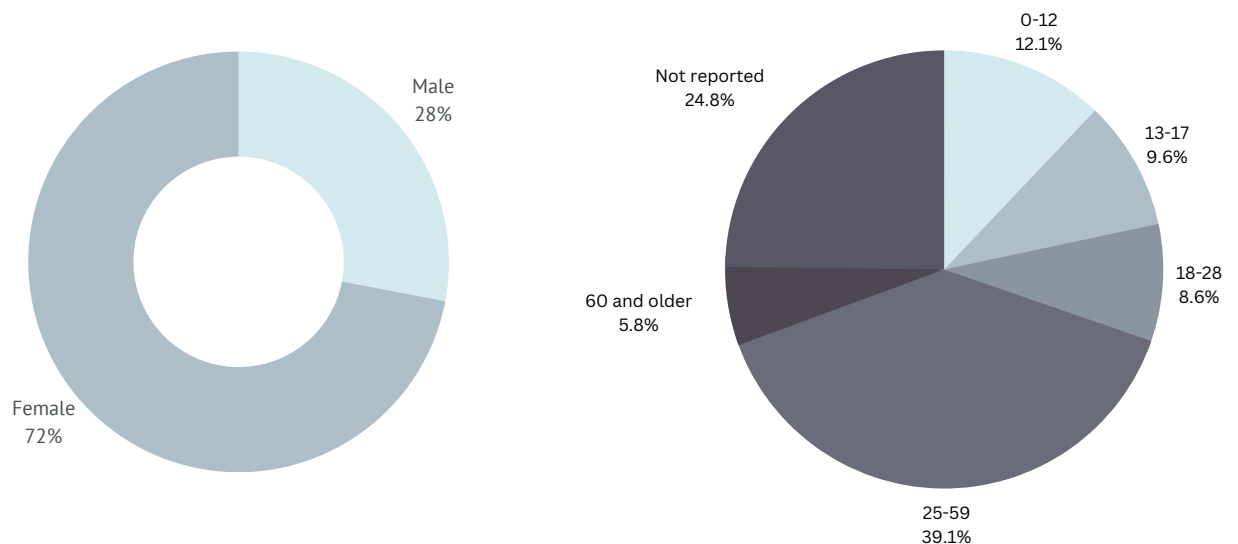
Note: The Board does not compensate loss or damage to personal property. Exceptions only when items involve personal safety.

09

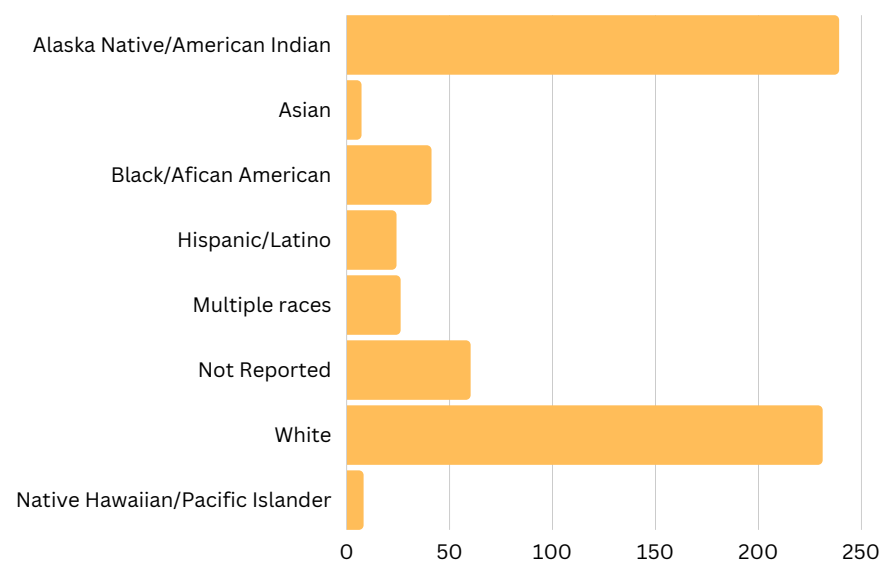
DEMOGRAPHICS

Age and Gender

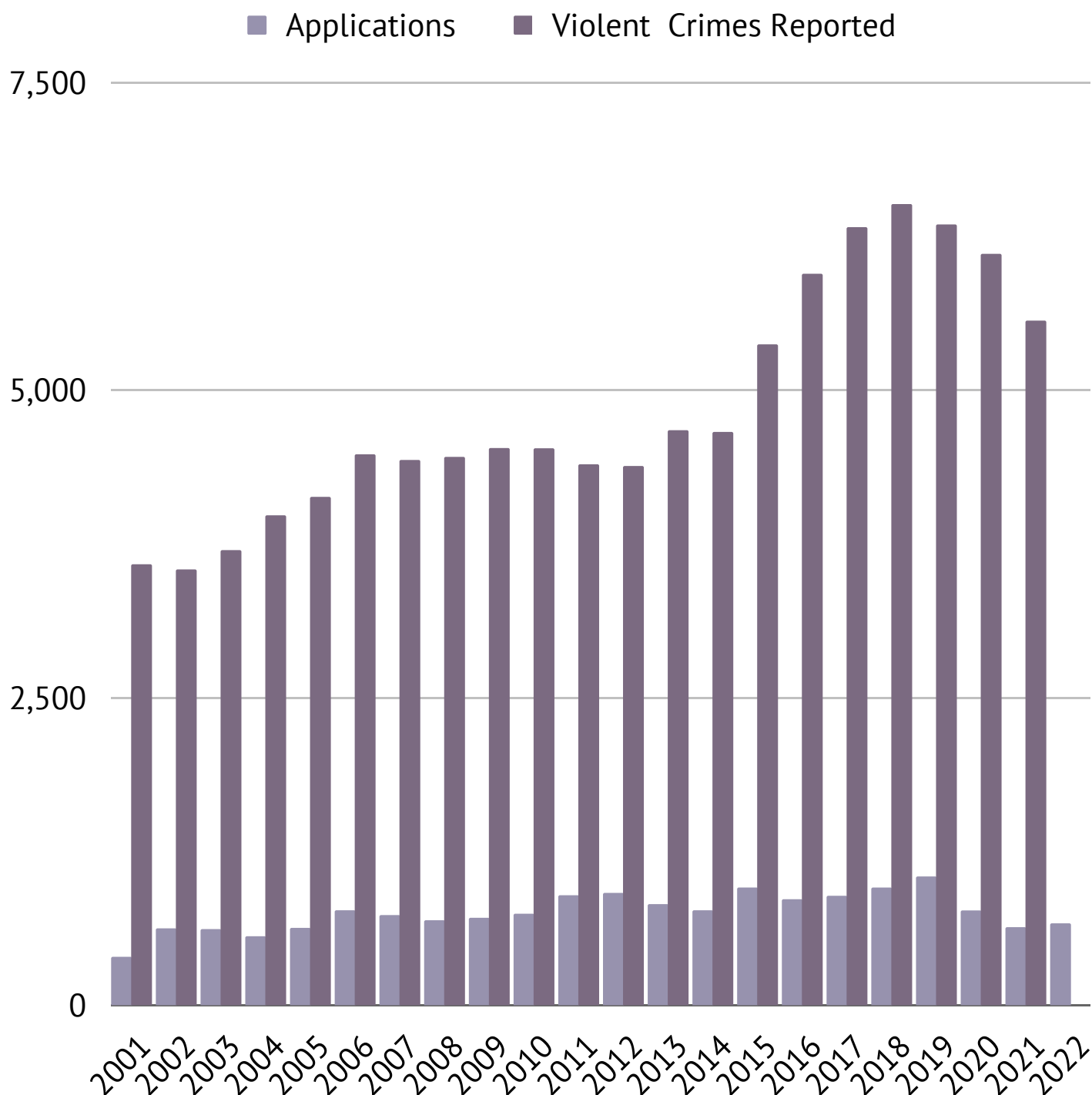
Consistent with prior years, the majority of claimants applying for compensation were females between the ages 25 - 59.

**Race/Ethnicity**

At just over 36 percent, people who identified as Alaska Native or American Indian made up the largest percentage of applicants. White identified claimants represented another 35 percent of total applications.



APPLICATIONS RECEIVED PER YEAR COMPARED TO VIOLENT CRIMES REPORTED

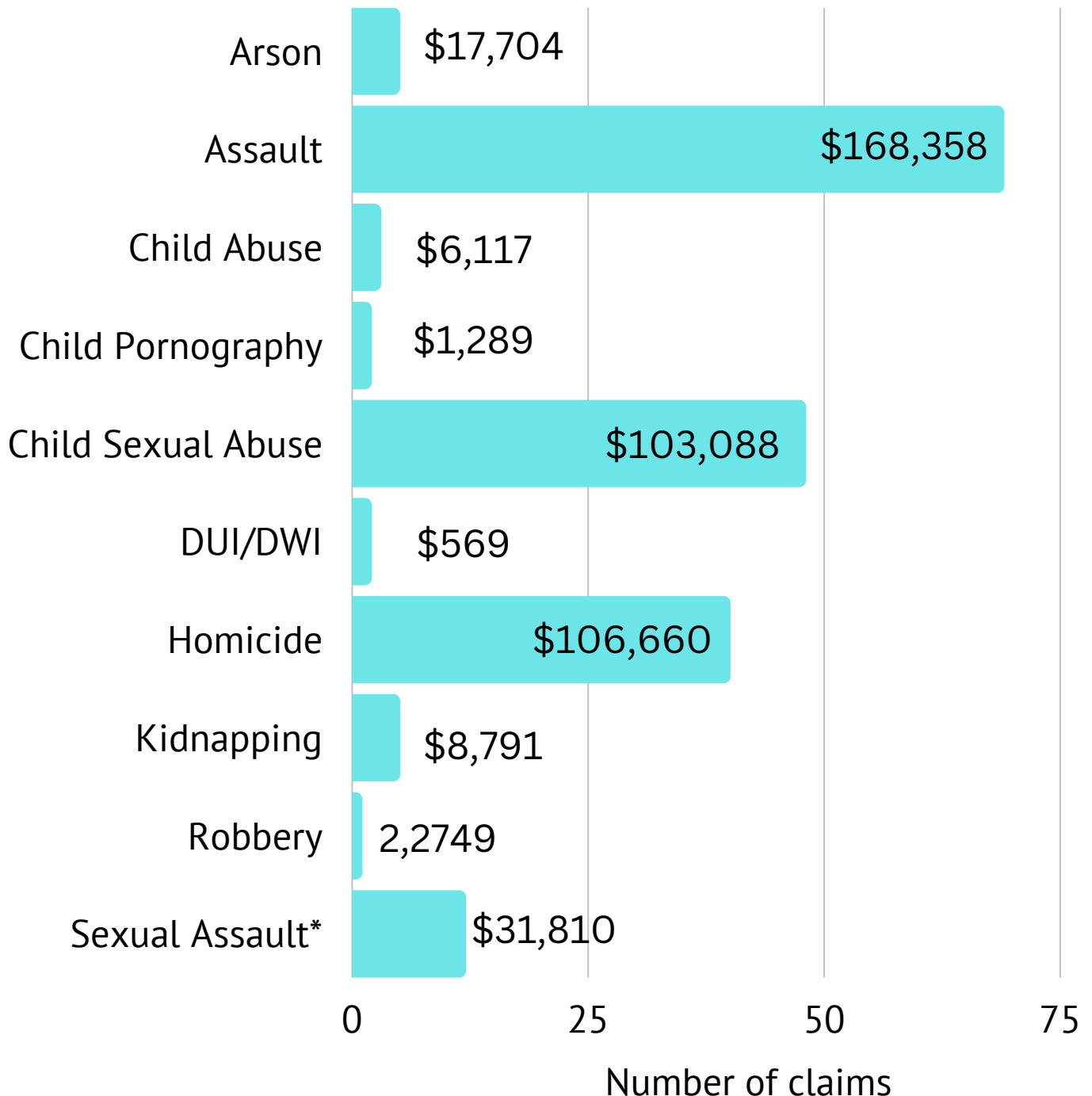


Application submissions have declined significantly from prior years when the Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB) processed approximately 1,000 claims per year. Several factors likely contributed to the recent decline, including staff turnover, the pandemic and current statutorily mandated claims processing practices. As of December 2022 incoming applications are on track to meet or exceed 2019 numbers (over 1,000 applications). **In 2021 applications were down to 2002 levels despite a 30 percent increase in violent crime during that same period.**

CRIME TYPES PAID IN FY22

The total amount paid in crime compensation during FY22 was \$446,659.93.

These payments can be broken down by crime type and may be from claims approved in prior years. Please note, the category includes many various criminal incidents involving bodily injury. Payment totals have been rounded to the nearest dollar.



**This number does not include resources dedicated to forensic sexual assault exams performed by sexual assault nurse examiners.*

12

COMMUNITIES AND REGIONS SERVED

**IN FY2022 VCCB RECEIVED CLAIMS FROM 75
COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT ALASKA.**

While a significant portion of claims (35 percent) came from Alaska's largest city, Anchorage, the majority of claims came from communities with populations under 8,000.

In total 653 applications were received in FY22. **425 of those applications were either approved or received an emergency award of \$5,000 or less.**

