

Crime Victim Support Services – Background

What are *victim service providers? victim services?* *Victim service providers* work with law enforcement, county attorneys, defense attorneys, and other human service providers to offer crisis response to crime victims and they specialize in providing post-crisis support services to help victims recover physically, mentally, and financially. Local victim service provider organizations that are members of the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) and the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (IowaCASA) serve victims of domestic and sexual violence, rape, human trafficking, child abuse, stalking, and families of homicide victims. They offer a range of [victim services](#) that vary by organization and available funding: crisis support, counseling and safety planning, finding stable housing, replacing identity documents, navigating the legal system (protection orders, victim witnesses), finding jobs, supporting children, and regaining economic security. These organizations served most of the [49,795 victims](#) seeking assistance last year from organizations receiving state and federal funds administered by the Iowa Attorney General's Victim Assistance Section.

Why Invest in Victim Services? Victim services help violent crime victims recover, care for families, and enhance their capacity to become contributing members of communities and valued employees. In doing so, investing in victim services enhances public safety and helps prevent violence. The amount of funding for victim services directly impacts the number of victims agencies can support, the type and quality of services available, and where victims can find support. Serving rural areas, rape and trafficking victims, and helping victims find safe housing, or navigate legal proceedings are resource intensive - access to these post-crises services are most threatened by lack of funding. ***Insufficient funding means fewer victims can access the most requested and effective services and leaves many without access to any support, especially in rural areas.***

Violent crime victims experience significant challenges to recovery because most often, they are harmed by someone they know and often lose financial security and the means to regain it. Post-crisis services are essential to recovery and the most frequently requested because these victims need support beyond what family and friends can provide. Given the prevalence of intimate partner violence and the concentration of repeat victimization, helping these victims recover can have an immediate ‘future’ violence prevention impact. ***Leaving so many violent crime victims without access to recovery support misses an incredible opportunity to prevent violence. Failing to prioritize funding for victim services undervalues the comprehensive needs of violent crime victims and the workforce dedicated to supporting them.***

Crime victims seeking support are being turned away now. Failing to fully support victims means people *and* communities lose the capacity to thrive. It keeps violence alive in every community and keeps preventable costs high for every business, workplace, and ‘system’ (school, legal, human services, corrections). It also increases the workload of other service providers and is ultimately more expensive because victims lacking stability continue to need services. When victim service providers help victims avoid homelessness, find employment, or keep children safe it eases caseloads of other providers. Helping victims navigate legal proceedings or criminal investigations enables police, attorneys, and courts to better support victims. Lack of access to support contributes to staggering human and economic costs. Lost productivity due to victimization increases employer costs and violence in the workplace impacts the safety of employees and customers. When a parent leaves a violent home or goes to prison, households lose 1-2 wage earners, parents lose homes and jobs, children lose one or both parents – leaving more children struggling in school, more struggling families, and the cycle continues.

How are victim services funded? Organizations rely on a variety of public (federal, state, local) and private funding but federal funding is currently the largest source of funding for publicly funded victim service providers. The Iowa Attorney General (AG) Victim Assistance Section (VAS) administers state and federal victim services funds and allocates funding through a competitive grant process ([2 different RFPs](#) – Criminal Justice and

Victim Services). In SFY 24, they administered \$5 million in state funds and \$17.5 million in federal grants for victim support services. (AG SFY24 Victim Assistance section Annual Report, p. 5); list of [current grantees](#))

Organizations can also apply directly for federal grants to support victims. After the massive cuts in federal funding for victim services in the last few years and the uncertainty of federal grant funds moving forward, it is clear states cannot count on consistent federal funding in the future. *However, federal funds were never intended to replace state responsibility to support crime victims.* Fully supporting victims means Iowa must make victim services funding a state budget priority. Adequate and dedicated state funding is needed to ensure statewide access to victim services and a vital service provider network. Summary of public [victim services funding](#) sources.

State funding: For the last decade, Iowa provided just \$5 million each year for victim services despite increased demand for services and significant losses in federal funds. *At least \$10 million in victim services funding in the Justice System budget is needed to maintain access to victim support services and a vital service provider workforce.* It is too late for an incremental state funding increase to prevent service providers from having to triage cases and priorities – crime victims are being turned away now.

Federal funding: Federal funding for victim services awarded to the state of Iowa comes from formula grants established by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), the Family Violence and Prevention Services Act (FVPSA), and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Victim service provider organizations can also apply for federal discretionary grant funding awarded through a federal competitive grant process. VOCA is the largest source of federal funding for victim services by far, e.g., even after a 42% cut in VOCA from the previous year, in federal FY24 Iowa received \$7.6 million in [VOCA victim assistance](#) funds compared to \$1.6 m from [FVPSA](#) and \$2.7 million from [VAWA](#) (STOP+SASP) formula grants. (Iowa receives a separate VOCA victim compensation grant each year that is deposited in Iowa's victim compensation fund- this grant has not been impacted by federal cuts because it uses a different formula.)

Note re status of federal funding (as of April 10): Congress recently approved the federal FY25 budget that froze spending at FY24 levels for most programs but included a provision to allow a higher allocation for FY25 VOCA victim assistance grants (award amount not available yet but likely closer to FY23). Congress is starting the FY26 federal budget process however already, the future of federal grants for victim support services is increasingly uncertain. For example, unlike previous years, organizations cannot even apply for discretionary grants right now because funding opportunity notices available through FVPSA, VAWA or housing funding through HUD have been removed from websites. Also, in addition to massive layoffs at the Department of Health and Human Services and the CDC's Division of Violence Prevention, the Director of HHS Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services was put on administrative leave. Federal funding has been vital to maintaining Iowa's capacity to provide comprehensive victim support services statewide but federal funds were never intended to replace state responsibility to support crime victims. It is time for Iowa to make victim services a state budget priority.

Resources:

- [Support Iowa Crime Victims](#)– summary of services provided, funding request
- Iowa One Day Count – DV [Services Provided](#) in Iowa
- State [budget request](#) letter for victim services
- List of victim [support services](#) offered by local victim service provider agencies
- List of [current grantees](#) for state funds and federal victim services grants to Iowa administered by Iowa AG
- Summary of state and federal [victim services funding](#) sources

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