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Victim service provider agencies urge lawmakers to increase state funding to support crime victims

DES MOINES, Iowa – April 16, 2024 – The [Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence \(ICADV\)](#) and the [Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault \(IowaCASA\)](#), along with their network of 26 statewide victim service provider agencies, express cautious optimism regarding recent legislative progress while highlighting critical concerns about the capacity to aid crime victims without additional state funding.

Yesterday, the Iowa House Appropriations Committee approved a draft budget bill allocating \$5.5 million for victim services, marking a \$500,000 increase from the previous year. While acknowledging this is the first state funding increase for victim services in a decade, this amount falls significantly short of the \$10 million requested by victim service providers to meet the escalating demand for services.

Victim service provider agencies offer essential support services to victims of domestic violence, rape, human trafficking, child abuse, and other violent crimes. Their services range from crisis intervention to post-crisis support, including counseling, safety planning, legal system navigation, job applications, securing housing, and regaining financial stability. In the past year, these agencies served most of the 54,404 crime victims seeking assistance from agencies funded by the Iowa Attorney General's office.

"We believe in Iowa's commitment to supporting crime victims," says Dr. Maria Corona, executive director of ICADV. "However, the persistent underfunding of victim services is a policy choice. Investing \$10 million in state funds to aid Iowa crime victims is a modest ask compared to the state's overall budget. We implore the legislature to act swiftly and decisively to support victims in need across Iowa."

Compounding this challenge, Iowa faces a daunting 42% reduction in FY24 federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance grant funding – an estimated \$5.4 million loss – posing a catastrophic threat to victim service provider agencies' ability to support crime victims adequately. Regrettably, the current Iowa Senate budget proposal offers no additional funding for these vital services. Victim service provider agencies appreciate the efforts of House Justice System Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Brian Lohse (R-45) to mitigate the immediate impact of the substantial federal funding reduction and his ongoing work to find additional dollars to ensure that support remains available for crime victims and their families.

The impact of funding for victim services is profound, directly affecting the number of crime victims agencies can support. Serving rural areas; assisting victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking; aiding in securing safe housing; and financial stability requires significant resources. The current landscape of stagnant state funding, coupled with the substantial loss of federal funds, paints a stark picture where many victims' risk having no access to vital support services.

“I know that Iowans want rape, incest, child sexual abuse, human trafficking, and other survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence to receive the care and services they deserve. Therefore, I know the Iowa legislature can come up with a way to fund these vital services. Especially healing and prevention services.” Says Tamika D. Payne, interim Executive Director of IowaCASA. “The impact of the funding loss for sexual assault services is profound, directly affecting the number of victims that agencies can support. Sexual assault services providers are disappearing at an alarming rate, as we are witnessing the announcement of RVAP, one of Iowa’s oldest standalone programs closing. You have the power to show survivors their healing matters to you.”

Federal grants are crucial for enhancing access to comprehensive services. However, they are not intended to replace state funding. Dedicated state funds are essential for operational support, ensuring access to victim services statewide. Crime victims are not getting the services they need right now, yet Iowa has not increased victim services funding for 10 years. Iowa can do better. Action speaks louder than words. We urge policymakers to approve a Justice System budget providing \$10 million for victim services.

About the [Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence works to enhance the capacity of direct service providers and communities to support victims. We provide training, education, and technical assistance to service provider agencies to help increase access to effective services, meet the needs of victims, and ensure services are responsive. We serve as a statewide resource on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) to increase understanding of the problem, promote funding for effective responses, and improve access to support. The network has survivor advocates available throughout all 99 Iowa counties. To learn more, visit www.icadv.org.

About the [Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#)

The Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (IowaCASA) provides training, resources and support across the state to rape crisis centers, culturally specific programs, emergency sheltering programs, and allied agencies. Our mission is to end sexual violence and improve support available to survivors of sexual assault. We are a bridge between advocates at sexual assault service programs, statewide policy makers, and federal responses to sexual violence. To learn more, visit www.iowacasa.org.

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