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## BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2025

Fiscal Services Division

July 1, 2024



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Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

515.281.3566

## Victim Assistance Grants

### Background

The Victim Assistance Section of the Office of the Attorney General includes the Victim Support Services (VSS) Program, which administers Victim Assistance Grants.

### Program Overview

The Justice System Appropriations Subcommittee provides oversight and a State General Fund appropriation for Victim Assistance Grants to the Office of the Attorney General for the VSS Program. The appropriation is combined with federal funds to provide services to victims at the local level. The budget for the VSS Program varies annually. In recent years, approximately \$25.0 million to \$30.0 million has been available annually for the Victim Assistance Section to administer the VSS Program. This funding includes a mix of federal funds, the State General Fund appropriation, and the State Victim Compensation Fund. The Victim Assistance Section retains 5.0% of certain federal funds for administration at the State level. The VSS Program provides partial funding and technical assistance to community-based service providers for victims of violent crimes, including domestic abuse and sexual abuse crimes. These local service providers also seek federal, State, and local support for their programs. The VSS Program funds the operating costs of the statewide domestic violence and sexual abuse hotlines. The VSS Program also funds the statewide coalitions that provide certification, training, and technical assistance to victim service providers.

### Program Redesign — FY 2013

In 2013, the Victim Assistance Section focused on a rapid rehousing response and transitional housing model for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The Victim Assistance Section worked with the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and local providers to develop and implement requirements for local services to meet the federal initiative.

Services and advocacy for victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, and shelter care varied across the State. The Victim Assistance Section funded approximately 44.0% of these services in FY 2013 and established six service areas within Iowa, based on census data and geography. Local providers were encouraged to develop coalitions to strengthen victim services and advocacy within their service areas. The focus was to serve more victims while strengthening services to sexual assault victims and homicide victim survivors.

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### More Information

Office of the Attorney General: [iowaattorneygeneral.gov](http://iowaattorneygeneral.gov)

Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence: [icadv.org](http://icadv.org)

Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault: [iowacasa.org](http://iowacasa.org)

Iowa Organization for Victim Assistance: [iowaiova.com](http://iowaiova.com)

U.S. Department of Justice: [justice.gov](http://justice.gov)

U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime: [ojp.gov/about/offices/office-victims-crime-ovc](http://ojp.gov/about/offices/office-victims-crime-ovc)

LSA Staff Contact: Molly Kilker (515.725.1286) [molly.kilker@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:molly.kilker@legis.iowa.gov)

In FY 2013, there were 26 programs that served victims of either domestic abuse or sexual assault, 3 programs that served victims of domestic violence, and 3 programs that served victims of sexual abuse. There were 20 domestic violence shelters.

### **Transition — FY 2014**

Fiscal year 2014 was a transition year to implement the redesign of victim services at the local level. The Victim Assistance Section made FY 2014 grant awards of State and federal funds to the six service areas created in FY 2013.

There were 12 domestic abuse comprehensive programs and 10 sexual abuse comprehensive programs in Iowa's six service areas funded by the VSS Program in FY 2014. Comprehensive programs provide multiple services to victims, such as emergency shelter; crisis intervention; personal advocacy with other agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the criminal and civil court system, and medical services; and counseling by certified advocates. The VSS Program also funded five programs for homicide survivors within the four Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) regions. There was a collaborative homicide survivor program between Fort Dodge and Mason City.

### **Current Situation**

There are currently 12 domestic abuse comprehensive programs and 10 sexual abuse comprehensive programs in Iowa's six service areas funded by the VSS Program. These comprehensive programs also rely on funding sources other than the Victim Assistance Section to address the needs of victims. There are eight shelters focused on providing services to victims of domestic abuse and sexual abuse. These shelters must serve any victim of violent crime who accesses the Program, due to federal funding guidelines.

### **State and Federal Funding**

The Justice System Appropriations Bill provides a State General Fund appropriation to the Victim Assistance Grants Account.

Federal funds include:

- Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) Assistance. The funds are allocated to service providers of victims of violent crime. The Victim Assistance Section uses the VOCA grant award received from the U.S. Department of Justice to fund the domestic abuse and sexual assault programs, the homicide victim survivor programs, and victim/witness coordinators (19 in county prosecutor offices and 1 in the Office of the Attorney General).
- Family Violence and Prevention Services Act. These funds can only be used for domestic violence programs.
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). These funds are used for victim services, law enforcement, prosecution, and court services (pursuant to federal law) related to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.
- VAWA Sexual Abuse Services Program. These funds are specifically designated for nongovernmental sexual abuse/assault programs to provide direct services to victims.

### **Related Statutes and Administrative Rules**

Iowa Code chapters [13](#) and [915](#)

Iowa Administrative Code [61](#)

### **Budget Unit Number**

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