

Support Crime Victims – Invest in Crime Victim Services

Support a Justice System budget bill investing at least \$10 million in state funds for crime victim services (currently funded at \$5 m) AND amending the victim services budget line to ensure funds can support all victims of violent crime including survivors of homicide, human trafficking, sexual assault, domestic violence, etc. Currently state victim services funds are limited to domestic and sexual abuse. Iowa homicides increased over 40% last year yet state funds currently cannot support services to these victims.

Lack of funding for crime victim services means at least 28,000 fewer victims will receive services over next two years without additional funds. Homicide support services will suffer most because they do not receive state funds, at a time when Iowa's homicide rate increased over 40% last year. COVID-19 created a crisis within a crisis of community and family violence and continues to significantly increase demand and cost of providing services. The surge in homicide and intensity of harm due to family violence has been widely attributed to the pandemic, especially in communities disproportionately suffering from the devastating health and economic impact of the pandemic.

Supporting crime victims requires reliable state investment in services and infrastructure to meet needs. Iowa MUST do better. Together, federal, state, local, and private funds support the provision of services to crime victims, and local agencies routinely pursue all avenues for funding. However, *state funding for victim services has long been inadequate regardless of the amount of funding from other sources.* State funds provide essential, consistent operational support for Iowa's victim service provider network, but state funds currently do not address unmet need and cannot pay for services to victims of homicide, human trafficking, and other violent crimes. Federal funds enhance program capacity to provide a broad range of services, but state funds provide foundational support. Without reliable, consistent state resources, maintaining a network of support services for victims is tentative and inadequate right now.

It takes money and people to support crime victims; Inadequate state funds mean fewer staff and fewer victims served. Crime victims rely on victim service agencies to meet immediate needs, but post-crisis support services currently provided by programs are essential to long-term stability and without additional funds, long-term support services will be cut. This has ripple effects negatively impacting entire communities and is more expensive in the long run as victims lacking long-term stability return for services again and again.

Consider that beyond the obvious importance of meeting individual needs, when crime victim service provider agencies help a victim avoid homelessness, maintain stable employment, and support children, it eases the workload of other community service providers. Assisting law enforcement at crime scenes and helping survivors navigate legal proceedings enables the legal system to better serve victims.

Crime victims need support right now, and always. Iowa's investment in support services for crime victims was inadequate prior to COVID-19 and prior to the massive loss in federal funds. But now, victim service providers are stretched beyond capacity and cannot address the unmet need and demand for services without additional funds. Right now, more crime victims have comprehensive needs for food, housing, health care, and employment. Regardless of the amount of funding from other sources, Iowa must invest at least \$10 million in state funds for victim services and amend the budget line item to ensure all state funds can support *all* victims of violent crime.

March 2022