

Nicole Cisne
Executive Director
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Davenport

Hello! My name is Nicole Cisne Durbin and I am the Director of SafePath Survivor Resources of Family Resources. We provide Domestic Abuse Comprehensive Services, Sexual Abuse Comprehensive Services, as well as Shelter Based Services in Clinton, Jackson, Scott, Muscatine, and Louisa counties in the new Region 6 in southeast Iowa.

I'm joined today by Beth Barnhill of the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Laurie Schipper of the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence, as well as Shari Kastein, Executive Director of Family Crisis Centers based in Sioux Center and Ben Brustkern, Executive Director of Cedar Valley Friends of the Family based in Waverly.

Today I will share details on our program as well as some general statistics on the number of new advocates in Iowa. I'll turn it over to Ben to discuss the transition process and why we're not going to ask you for more transition dollars! Finally, Shari will share our early success stories, talk about the national attention we're getting due to the success and conclude with a brief summary of our future need.

Senator Courtney, Representative Worthan, Members of the Committee:

Before I begin, I want to thank you for inviting us to speak today. It's been an incredible year—we would not be sharing stories of hope and success today if this committee hadn't taken a chance on Iowa's victim advocates this time last year.

First, I want to thank you for the increased appropriation and support for our services. Ensuring survivors receive comprehensive services makes our communities and state stronger.

These violent crimes traumatize individuals across their lifespan and the impact ripples through our communities. Whether we realize it or not, we all know someone who is a survivor of sexual or domestic violence. With staggering statistics such as 1 in 4 women becoming a victim of domestic violence and 1 in 6 boys being sexually assaulted before they turn 18, the likelihood of our neighbor, co-worker, friend, or family member being affected by these traumatic events is high—too high.

But I am not here to scare you with statistics on the prevalence of the problem. I am here to tell you we are now able to make better use of the state's money because it's going farther and working better. Thank you for taking a chance—and for having the confidence in our ability to deliver services in a way that turns a victim into a survivor.

We transitioned successfully, but it did come with challenges. Re-designing and implementing a new model of practice is a time-consuming process with many steps—and even best-laid plans go awry. Advocates who do this work are used to doing a lot with very little, but we couldn't

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have moved this quickly without the transition funds you secured for us. Hiring took longer than expected in some places, but we got many of the new advocates hired, trained, and on the ground within the first sixty days of the transition year. I'm happy to report that we are now over six months into the transition year and the modernization plan is already yielding positive results! I am also happy to report we will NOT be in need of further transition dollars to bridge to a successful future. With your help, we have created a sustainable model.

Statewide, there are now 336.49 FTE advocates providing services to survivors and of that number, 120.835 FTEs are new positions. Not only is modernization assisting more survivors, it has created new jobs for 137 Iowans.

On a local level this plan is working. In our service area, in the first six months of FY14, we have served 42% more victims of domestic violence, 56% more victims of sexual abuse, and 73% more victims in our shelter based program. This was possible with the increased resources which created a larger capacity to provide services.

In addition to serving more victims, the additional resources have allowed the program to focus on the comprehensive approach we knew we needed in order to address these issues. One example is the collaborative relationship we have with St. Ambrose University as well as the Eastern Iowa Community Colleges. College students are a high-risk population for sexual assault, but they don't necessarily need or identify with shelter-based services. On average 1 in 4 college students will be a victim of sexual assault. Our staff is collaborating with St. Ambrose University's counseling staff to establish a sexual assault response program as well as train students as advocates. We are working to change policies and protocols regarding the University's response to victims of sexual assault. This is in addition to our Volunteer Advocacy Training being offered as a credited course through St. Ambrose University as well as the Eastern Iowa Community Colleges in Clinton, Scott, and Muscatine counties. Without the increase in resources, we would not have been able to do this in-depth training.

For our Shelter Based Services we have transitioned into a Housing First Model and continue to expand our Rapid Re-Housing Program. We have also started using the word sheltering instead of shelter, because we are providing a continuum of options rather than just a fixed bricks and mortar location. This continuum ensures that services are meeting the unique needs of every survivor. Under the Housing First model, we have shifted from trying to provide a plethora of services in the shelter to focusing mainly on finding safe and permanent housing or reducing

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barriers to securing housing. Once that housing is secured, the Domestic Abuse or Sexual Abuse Comprehensive Services provides the wrap around support services for their ongoing needs to ensure they remain safe and self-sufficient. The shift into the Housing First Model has reduced our average length of stay from 90 days to 33 days. This has also allowed us to serve more survivors, resulting in the aforementioned 73% increase. In the first six months of FY14, 30.7% of clients exiting the shelter went into their own permanent housing which is up from 20% in FY13.

Our Rapid Re-Housing program has also been successful and has been a tremendous asset when transitioning individuals from shelter into permanent housing. During the last point in time census, our program had 80 individuals in Rapid Re-Housing. The financial assistance available to survivors through the Rapid Re Housing program has been critical to ensuring survivors are able to secure and maintain safe permanent housing.

We are extremely grateful for the increased appropriation. We have been able to accomplish so much in a short amount of time with the resources available. With further resources we can expand our education and community awareness efforts, provide more mobile advocacy, address the ever growing needs of underserved populations, and create multi-disciplinary teams such as Domestic Abuse Response Teams and Sexual Abuse Response Teams in every county in the state. When we work together, Iowa's survivors and communities benefit.

Thank you for your time and dedication.

Ben Brustkern
Executive Director
Cedar Valley Friends of the Family
Waverly

Good Morning. I am excited to be here and appreciate the support you have provided victim service agencies throughout the state. My name is Ben Brustkern, I am the Executive Director of Cedar Valley Friends of the Family which is located in Waverly and covers 14 counties, with outreach offices in Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, and Dubuque. I would like to thank you all for your support of those affected by domestic violence and sexual assault. We'll talk about the impact of dollars and cents, but you're helping to give a very vulnerable population something that is hard to quantify: peace of mind.

As my colleague stated, we do have fewer programs in Iowa now—and our story would have ended there if you all hadn't taken a leap of faith with us. You gave us more of what we needed in terms of resources, advocates and support, so our story is one of hope for the future.

The experience for victims is fundamentally different today, but that transformation was not easy or a sure bet. I attribute our success to the hard work, commitment and passion displayed by our advocates across Iowa. Many of us witnessed a kind of selfless devotion to the cause, as communities came together to put victims first and programs that were no longer going to be funded helped pave the way for the success of the new program. As you all know, when the plan was initially announced, many cities and counties were beyond hesitant—they were downright concerned about the level of service that they would receive. Programs spent time laying the groundwork for a successful transition and relied on established organizations to help introduce them to new territories. This level of cooperation locally and regionally has only benefited those in need of services. The Crime Victims Assistance Division, Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence assisted those efforts through joint technical assistance teams that traveled the state supporting programs in transition and dissolution. Their support and many other resources wouldn't have been possible without the dollars you secured to provide a seamless transition.

With any transition comes challenges—but we faced those challenges head on.

Many communities were concerned with the closing of shelters. As a shelter program, I understand our role in the community. Communities were invested in shelters—they provided a physical space for volunteering and were a tangible symbol of the support these victims need. But what we've all come to appreciate is that shelter is a concept. A community doesn't need bricks and mortar to embrace a victim in need. The coalitions worked with local programs to decrease the fear of losing a bricks-and-mortar shelter and to help them think of sheltering in a new, long-term way. As we've learned over the years, safe, long-term housing is one of the most

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significant barriers that would-be survivors face. We've learned that we may be able assure long-term success at a fraction of the cost by moving them through the shelter system faster. Emergency shelters were never designed to be a home; sheltering at such a facility for long periods of time is cost-prohibitive and disrupts lives.

After we opened our hearts to a new way of doing things, we faced the logistical challenge of helping programs across the state hire 137 new advocates in less than 6 months. Locally, Cedar Valley Friends of the Family hired 7 full time staff and opened 3 outreach offices in less than 4 months. We set an aggressive time frame to complete this transition and we did it, with your help.

Cedar Valley Friends of the Family was awarded the shelter contract for 14 counties in northeast Iowa starting July 1, 2013. Previously we had provided domestic violence, sexual assault, and shelter for families and individuals in Bremer, Butler, and Chickasaw Counties. We immediately went to work on designing a quality program that made sure the most vulnerable population always had an emergency option. We implemented a lethality screening for anyone seeking emergency shelter to triage care. That screening resulted in immediate service for those presenting with the most dangerous factors that could lead to a lethal situation. Implementing a rapid response plan of that kind meant that we needed to quickly move on agreements with local hotels, shelters, and cab companies for those communities farthest away from Waverly. Since implementing the screening on October 1st we have helped over 25 adults and 17 children leave the most lethal situations.

We also knew that within the region, many families struggled with homelessness due to domestic violence or sexual assault—and that without assistance they may return to their abuser. In response, we implemented a rapid re-housing and homeless prevention model to move these families into private market housing with rental and utility assistance while providing case management to ensure success within the housing unit. As stated before, one of the most significant barriers that survivors face is housing. I'm proud that we can now meet that need so that victims can be safe from abuse and their children can live in a healthy environment. The rapid re-housing model has allowed us to move people through shelter quicker and place them into their own housing. Consider that a night of shelter cost around \$75.00 per person while re-housing a whole family only costs from \$300-\$500. We have cut our shelter stay average from 22 days to 16 days, which is a cost savings of \$450.00 per person. For a family of 4, this results in an \$1800.00 savings. By re-housing them for 2 months at \$900.00, we have given them the hope and resources they need to rebuild their lives while giving their kids a chance to thrive in a

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stable, non-violent environment. Shelter is an important part of the work we do but it is only one step of what must be done to make sure that survivors are able to succeed.

As a regional shelter, we designed a plan that works for the client and keeps them in their community. We rehoused 31 families between September 1st and January 30th at a cost of only \$361.00 per family. When we see things working we continue to be excited about the regionalization model.

Before my time is up I would like to leave you with two stories, from different perspectives. One success story comes from our shelter coordinator, who was working with a client who originally contacted us from the hospital. The client had a heart condition and the abusive relationship she was in was starting to greatly impact her health. The hospital social worker made arrangements to get her to our Waverly shelter. During her stay at shelter, we worked with her to make a case plan and made sure that her goals were reached. Within the first week of her stay, we helped find resources that would move her quickly towards self-sufficiency. She was a recipient of SSI and knew she could afford a small apartment on her own, but did not have enough money for both first month's rent and deposit. We were able to use Rapid Rehousing funds to help with a portion of her first month's rent and get her housed. Since moving into her new place, her health and happiness have greatly improved and she has even started working a part-time job. Finding employment, dealing with health issues, and stabilizing her housing has allowed her to become less dependent on the government benefits she received when first accessing shelter. With our Rapid Re-housing program we will continue to follow up with this client and track her progress.

I would like to thank you for your support and let you know that the support you provide us truly changes lives.

Shari Kastein
Executive Director
Family Crisis Center
Sioux Center

Good Morning.

My name is Shari Kastein. I am the Executive Director of Family Crisis Centers located in Sioux Center, Iowa. I have the privilege of ending our presentation today with stories of promise for the future and another challenge for this committee.

The Family Crisis Centers provides comprehensive domestic abuse services for Region 1, which serves Lyon, Osceola, Dickinson, Emmet, Sioux, O'Brien, Clay, Palo Alto, Cherokee, Buena Vista, Pocahontas, Ida, Sac, Monona, Crawford, Carroll and Calhoun counties. This is a significant change from the four counties FCC served prior to Regionalization of victim services.

With growth comes growing pains, but you realized the effort would be worth the risk and gave us the resources to minimize the discomfort. You dared us to dream big. You believed in us, as victim advocates. You trusted us, as administrators. You saw the validity in this plan, even before many program directors. It's almost unreal that the vision that was presented here just a year ago has become a state-wide reality. As a survivor, there is nothing in life that can bring me greater joy.

One of the most heartening aspects has been the understanding that the principal goal would be to reach victims where they are, not what would be easiest for us, as service providers, or you as legislators. While the transition is over, we now look forward to working with you to identify the resources required to serve every Iowan in need.

As you may know Northwest Iowa is a very rural part of the state. Mobile advocacy—reaching out to victims and meeting them where they are—requires a great deal of time and resources. FCC exhausted all of our budgetary line item for travel in the first 6 months of this fiscal year. This is one of those growing pains I spoke about earlier, because success in our world means reaching more victims. Our budget must fluctuate if we're to meet the needs of Iowa's victims. I realize uncertainty is sometimes painful for providers and legislators, but I'm now confident we're up to the challenge.

Programs across the state of Iowa are working tirelessly, and steadily, to make Iowa's victim service regionalization process work—and work well. I am a 30 year veteran in the field of victim services. Over the last year, I have often said, “this has been one of the toughest tasks ever laid before me.” Simply put, the plan laid out by Iowa's Attorney General, Tom Miller's office, once terrified me. As a Co-Chair for the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault Joint Leadership Team, I often heard the whispers of fear and doubt from directors around the state. Frightened but faithful whispers of “if only we could see down the road 6 months, if only we could see effects this plan would have on victims and our communities. If only... If only. NOW, the comments have turned to a resounding “if only we had done this sooner.”

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The success experienced by Victims, Victim Advocates, Administrators and Board Members across the State of Iowa is more than we could have dreamed.

From Mary in Mason City:

In December 2012, CIS operated a traditional shelter and provided shelter to 17 adults and 9 children. Residents were from Cerro Gordo (17), Chickasaw (1), Franklin (1), Kossuth (4), Scott (1) and Winnebago (2). The cost of operating our shelter for one month was \$22,168.52.

In December 2013, CIS invested \$ 11,231.83 in direct financial/housing assistance to 23 adults and 26 children. This assistance allowed individuals and families to either remain in their own homes or move in to new safer housing options. CIS helped individuals and families from Cerro Gordo (6), Floyd (14), Franklin (2), Grundy (6), Hamilton (2), Kossuth (8), Webster (3), Winnebago (6) and Worth (2) counties. We served more people, gave them what they wanted and saved money.

In December 2012, CIS provided support group services to 33 individuals. In December 2013, we provided support group to 93 individuals. The increase in our group numbers is due to providing more groups targeting adolescents and specifically sexual assault survivors.

Spencer – Centers Against Abuse and Sexual Assault (CAASA)

In four months, CAASA served more victims in Buena Vista County with safe hotel/motel nights than in a whole year of a funded shelter in Spencer.

CAASA has been able to serve more sexual assault clients in the last 6 months than in the entire last fiscal year. You may be asking yourselves—are there more sexual assaults happening or is it because of CAASA’s increased presence and mobility? I don’t think we have a staggering increase in the crime rate; we have more victim advocates who are more approachable in new school settings and communities.

Other Success Stories

Last year, when we came to you for additional funds, we shared that only about 8% of sexual assault victims sought services from our programs because our previous service model didn’t resonate with that type of victim. We pledged that one of our goals was to reach more youth at risk for, or directly impacted by, sexual assault. Today, I am happy to say “mission accomplished.” The number of youth across the state who are now receiving sexual assault prevention tools and education is phenomenal. Sexual Assault Victim Advocates have developed and implemented innovative, age-appropriate new methods to reach our youth, including a colorful story time for Pre-K and kindergarten and a feelings charts and expression time for elementary students. We have room to improve our efforts for middle school, high

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school and college students. With your continued support, we can expand on the kinds of education and skills they'll carry with them into adulthood.

As you can tell, Iowa's new regional model isn't just providing hope for the victims we serve. It's given a renewed sense of hope and strength to the victim advocates committing their lives to saving others.

And so, thank you from the hundreds of new survivors who now receive state-of-the-art victim services through mobile advocacy. Thank you from the 137 Iowans who have new jobs as victim advocates—you've helped them pursue their passion for helping victims of crime while improving their own economic well-being. And thank you from all the executive directors in the state – you believed in us, our advocates, and our potential as a movement.

As you may have heard, the new State Regionalized Victim Service Plan is attracting national attention and inspiring other states. Researchers and other service providers across the country have been watching Iowa's new plan unfold—at first with skepticism, and now with envy. Over the last year, staff members from the Iowa Attorney General's Office, Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault have been invited to share insight on the fears, challenges and assumptions Iowa overcame to execute this plan with astonishing success.

Last year, you asked us for the amount we needed to operate. We estimated \$8.8M but made the concession to start with less until we had a better sense of our ongoing needs. We told you we would only ask for what we need to get started and transition responsibly. But we pledged that we would return for the rest when we proved the merits of this plan. Members of the Committee, our transition is complete and our needs are clear. We now respectfully ask you to consider funding us at the full amount we presented to you last session, which would require an additional \$2M be appropriated to the victim service line item. This funding will allow us to sustain services implemented under the new plan while permitting advocates to expand services to previously underserved areas of our state, including the 6000 or so victims that will go without services under a status quo budget. We've come so far—I hope you will help us go the distance.

The work of this committee is truly special. Many of the others fund initiatives that are important for a good quality of life, but you have the privilege of saving lives. I'm proud to live in a state that puts victims and public safety ahead of partisanship.

Thank you.