



Fact Sheet Series for the 135th General Assembly

GRF 055501:

Rape Crisis Centers Line Item

House Bill 33 – Operating Budget for Fiscal Years 2024–2025

Current state of funding:

The Rape Crisis Centers line item (GRF 055501) was established in 2014 to address the deficit of rape crisis services for victims of sexual assault in Ohio. Prior to creation of this line item, Ohioans in just 42 counties had access to rape crisis center services. Recognizing this disparity, OAESV worked closely with the Ohio Attorney General and numerous legislators to establish a non-restrictive state funding stream to achieve expansion. In the first-year of distribution, counties receiving services jumped to 51, and have incrementally increased ever since. Today, **36 rape crisis programs extend their home county borders to provide services to survivors in 78 counties**. OAESV provides stopgap services in the remaining 10 counties.

In 2021, the Rape Crisis Centers Line Item was increased to \$10 million and \$7.34 million for the respective first and second fiscal years. While we deeply appreciated this increase in funding, it mainly served to cover the loss of federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. VOCA is the main funding source for Ohio victim service providers, including services for survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence, child abuse, trafficking, homicide, and other crimes. Between 2019–2021, victim service providers in Ohio experienced significant cuts to their VOCA funding. In 2022 and 2023, funding has remained at the level that it was reduced to in previous years for many rape crisis programs.

Subsequently, many Rape Crisis programs have been forced to **reduce direct advocacy staff, close programs, and remove services** stemming from these funding reductions. Despite the 2021 "VOCA Fix" passed by Congress to address shrinking deposits into the Crime Victims Fund that supports VOCA, it will take several years to see increasing VOCA awards for our state.

The ask:

- The Rape Crisis Centers Line Item is in the Governor's as-introduced version of the budget at \$15 million per fiscal year (\$30 million total). This is positive news for Ohio's rape crisis programs.
- **We are advocating for this amount to remain at the level proposed by the Governor; We ask that State Representatives and Senators keep the full amount (\$15 million each fiscal year) allocated by the Governor in the Operating Budget.**
- This increase is necessary to sustain Ohio's 36 rape crisis programs – allowing us to account for continued VOCA funding reductions, the ongoing workforce shortage, and lingering impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This funding will be used to maintain existing rape crisis services and to expand coverage across the state. It is essential that rape crisis programs receive increased state funding to offset VOCA funding cuts so that they can retain existing staff and hire new staff to maintain quality services and meet the increasing demand for services in their local area.

Why this funding is important:

- In a survey distributed by OAESV in 2022, 96% of Ohio Rape Crisis Centers reported an increase in survivors seeking services from 2021 to 2022, noting an increase in the complexity and longevity of cases as well.
- Rape Crisis Centers provide essential, life-saving services to address this public health crisis in our local communities and need proper funding to maintain service provision.
- Rape Crisis programs are the least funded victim service providers in the Nation as a whole – programs in Ohio, like their peers nationally, qualify for less federal funding than programs serving other types of crime victims.
- Between 2018 and 2020, there was a 67% reduction in Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds awarded to Ohio, from \$117 million to \$58 million. In 2021, the amount awarded to Ohio was further reduced to \$36 million.
- The number of survivors served statewide increased by 96% from 2020 to 2021. In all of 2019 and 2020, rape crisis centers responded to over 23,000 hotline calls each year. In 2021, this number nearly doubled – with just over 45,000 hotline calls to rape crisis programs.