



## Fact Sheet Series for the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly

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### **The State of Rape Crisis Funding in Ohio** The Devastating Fiscal Impact of VOCA Cuts and COVID-19

#### **VOCA Funding Cuts:**

- The Crime Victims Fund (“VOCA fund”), administered by the United States Department of Justice Office on Victims of Crime, is comprised of specific criminal fines, bail bond forfeitures, and conviction assessments. Grants for Ohio victim service providers are administered by the Office of Attorney General Dave Yost.
- VOCA serves as a backbone funding stream for rape crisis services across Ohio and the nation.
- In 2019, the Ohio Attorney General’s Office announced that due to reductions in federal VOCA contributions, Ohio grant recipients would experience a 7% cut.

#### **Impact on Ohio Rape Crisis Centers:**

At the conclusion of the 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, 77 Ohio counties received rape crisis services. Members of the House and Senate introduced and passed a 227% increase in the Rape Crisis Centers Line Item in the Ohio Operating Budget for FY 2020 and 2021. This money, intended to expand rape crisis services to the remaining eleven counties, has instead served to stabilize programs in the wake of VOCA cuts.

#### **COVID-19 Crisis & Survivor Services:**

Ohio sexual violence survivors still need services, and community-based rape crisis programs are shifting to meet demands:

- Sexual violence and sexual harassment do not stop during isolation
  - Most survivors know their abusers;
  - Essential workers may have to interact with abusers in the workplace;
  - Some survivors have to interact with their abusers at home;
  - Increased computer use for school work increases the risk of sexual exploitation;
- Crisis often exacerbates trauma, leaving many survivors in need of increased support;
- Delays in jury trials and other justice system proceedings leave survivors with uncertainty and fear;
- K-12 institutions and campuses are conducting Title IX investigations and hearings virtually;
- As mental health treatment shifts to virtual platforms, many survivors lack privacy options while seeking treatment from home;
- Advocates must innovate to create confidential spaces from which they can provide remote services.

#### **Fiscal Needs:**

The COVID-19 stay at home orders require rape crisis centers to purchase equipment for remote advocacy, pay to conduct outreach to survivors without access to technology, produce videos for hospital advocacy (presentations to survivors before a medical forensic examination where internet is not available in emergency departments), secure funding for emergency survivor needs such as food, transportation, and housing support, and meet the needs of vulnerable populations.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Thus, most rape crisis centers host their program-sustaining annual fundraisers during this period. As these events were cancelled, substantial fiscal resources were lost. If the state rape crisis fund is not increased in the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, many programs will face closure, leaving survivors without life saving services.

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