



### **Shape Ohio Together: Rising Above the Challenge & Preserving Victim Services in Ohio**

The bedrock of Ohio's victim services, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant, stands as a testament to our shared commitment to justice and compassion. For over three decades, VOCA has been instrumental in nurturing a network of support for crime victims across our state. Comprised predominantly of federal conviction fines, the VOCA fund has been distributed by the federal government to states, empowering them to allocate funding to individual social service providers.

In Ohio, VOCA has been a catalyst for positive change, driving the development of crime victims' rights agencies, domestic violence shelters, advocacy programs, rape crisis centers, children's advocacy centers, and culturally-specific service providers. It has also provided critical means for law enforcement agencies, hospitals, prosecutor offices, and others to hire dedicated staff to serve victims. VOCA-funded programs provide critical services such as crisis hotlines, counseling for survivors, transportation, court-appointed special advocates for children, protection order assistance, and accompaniment during legal proceedings. Ohio's robust crime victim service structure relies nearly entirely on VOCA funding.

The logic behind our reliance on VOCA is clear: governments historically turn to non-profits to fill voids in necessary social services for the safety and betterment of our communities. Non-profit staff possess local community knowledge and highly developed content area expertise, allowing for more effective and personalized services. Moreover, funding local providers is significantly less expensive for governments than replicating such services across their full jurisdictions.

Following years of consecutive reductions in federal VOCA funding, Ohio's network of victim services providers yet again faces significant cuts to their VOCA grant awards in 2024. For context, Ohio's VOCA award in fiscal year 2018 was around \$117 million. For fiscal year 2023, it was set at \$46 million and it now stands at \$26 million for fiscal year 2024, unless further action is taken to address the shortfall in VOCA funding. Altogether, Ohio has seen an extreme 77% reduction in VOCA funding in the last six years. The prospect of a roughly \$20 million reduction from last year to this year would not only jeopardize essential programs but would also undermine the fabric of support upon which our communities depend.

The reality is stark: no county in Ohio can afford to be without victim services. Whether it's providing accompaniment to survivors during forensic examinations, assisting with protection orders, or offering crisis intervention in the aftermath of a traumatic event, these services are the bedrock upon which our communities are built.

Moreover, the prospect of another 43% cut to VOCA funding is simply untenable. Such a drastic reduction would force victim service organizations to make impossible choices, potentially scaling back staffing and coverage of core programs or eliminating critical programs altogether; some agencies are confronted with staffing reductions of up to 90%. The ripple effects would be felt far and wide, leaving survivors vulnerable and communities fractured.

VOCA-funded programs provide critical services such as crisis hotlines, counseling for survivors, transportation, court-appointed special advocates for children, protection order assistance, and accompaniment during legal proceedings, and providing no-cost legal representation to help crime victims protect and enforce their rights. Advocates educate victims of crimes on their rights and assist victims in asserting their constitutionally-mandated rights. Yet, the recent cuts threaten to undermine these vital services, with some agencies facing staffing reductions of up to 90%.

The impact of these cuts is dire. Counties may lose access to rape crisis services, prosecuting attorneys may lack advocacy staff to comply with victim's rights laws, and domestic violence shelters may reduce their capacity at a time when demand remains higher than pre-pandemic levels. As demand surges, survivors face longer wait times for emergency services and support, exacerbating their trauma.

We must hold our government accountable and demand answers:

- Who will accompany survivors to the hospital after sexual violence?
- Where will domestic violence survivors go when shelters reach capacity?
- Who will support families and children during forensic interviews?
- Who will ensure victims' rights are enforced under Marsy's Law?
- Who will provide emergency services after mass crimes?

Ohioans deserve fully funded victim services and staffed agencies capable of providing holistic advocacy. Our lawmakers must recognize the essential nature of these services and take immediate action to ensure our agencies remain open.

In the face of these challenges, we must rise together, united in our determination to protect Ohio's most vulnerable. We cannot stand idly by and allow vital services to be stripped away from those who need them most. Now is the time to raise our voices, to urge our elected officials to prioritize the needs of survivors and safeguard the vital services upon which they rely.

As Ohioans, we're bound by a shared commitment to justice and compassion. We refuse to accept a future where survivors are left to navigate the treacherous waters of trauma alone. Instead, we'll forge ahead, fueled by the indomitable spirit of solidarity and compassion that defines our great state.

Signed,  
Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center  
Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
Ohio Network of Child Advocacy Centers  
Ohio Victim Witness Association  
Ohio Court Appointed Special Advocates  
Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association  
Ohio Access to Justice Foundation

Advocates for Families  
Advocates for Families CASA of Ashland and Knox Counties  
Advocates for Families CASA program  
Advocating For Change, LLC  
Advocating Opportunity  
Akron Children's Hospital  
All-En Consulting LLC  
Alliance Area Domestic Violence Shelter  
Appleseed CMHC/RCDVS SafeHaven  
Artemis Center  
Ashtabula County Victims of Crime  
Asian American Community Services  
Athens County Sheriff's Office  
Athens Ohio CASA/GAL Program  
Auglaize County Crisis Center  
AxessPointe formerly Family & Community Services, Inc.  
Battered Women's Shelter and Rape Crisis Center of Medina and Summit Counties  
Bethany House  
Brave Beginnings Children's Advocacy Center of Muskingum Ohio  
Brenda Glass Multipurpose Trauma Center  
Canopy Child Advocacy Center  
CASA for Kids of Geauga County  
CASA of Cuyahoga County  
CASA of Noble County  
CASA of Seneca, Sandusky and Wyandot Counties  
CASA of Tuscarawas and Harrison Counties  
Catholic Charities Regional Agency/Christina House D. V. Program  
Center for Women and Families  
Child and Family Advocates of Cuyahoga County/CASA of Cuyahoga County  
Child Protection Center of Ross County  
Children's Advocacy Center of Portage County  
City of Xenia Victim Advocate Division  
Clark County CASA/GAL Program  
Clark County Prosecutor's Office  
Cleveland Rape Crisis Center  
Coming Resources  
Community Action Commission of Fayette County- Peace House  
Compass Family & Community Services Rape Crisis & Counseling Center  
Concerned Citizens Against Violence Against Women - Turning Point  
Coshocton County Prosecutor's Office  
Crawford County Prosecuting Attorney's Victim Assistance Program  
Crime Victim Services  
Crossroads Crisis Center  
Domestic Violence Project, Inc.  
DWAVE  
East Cleveland Domestic Violence Program  
Eastlake Police Victim Assistance  
Erie County CASA Program  
Erie County Domestic Violence Shelter  
Erie County Prosecutors Office Victim Assistance Program  
Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services (ETSS)  
EVE Incorporated  
Family Abuse Shelter of Miami County, Inc  
First Step Domestic Violence Services  
Forbes House

Forensic Nursing Network  
Greene County Prosecutor's Office  
Harcum House Child Advocacy Center  
Harrison County Prosecutor's Office  
Haven House of Pickway County Inc.  
Haven of Hope  
HelpLine  
Homesafe, Inc.  
Hope & Healing Survivor Resource Center  
Hope And Healing Resource center  
House of Ruth  
Huron County Victims' Assistance  
Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland  
Journey Center of Safety and Healing  
Knox County CASA Program  
Lake County Prosecutors Victim Assistance Program  
Lorain County Safe Harbor  
Lyndhurst Police Department  
Marion County Municipal Court  
Marion Victim Assistance Program  
Medina County Prosecutor Victim/Witness Division  
Meigs County Prosecuting Attorney - Victim Assistance Program  
Meigs County Victim Assistance Program  
Meigs-Gallia CASA/GAL Program  
Mentor Police Department  
Mentor Police Victim Assistance Program  
Miami County Victim Witness  
Montgomery County Prosecutor Mat Heck's Office, Victim/Witness Division  
Muskingum County Prosecuting Attorney's Office  
My Sister's Place  
New Directions  
Nirvana Now!  
Ohio CASA and CASA of Madison County, Ohio  
Ohio CASA/GAL Association  
Ohio/Cuyahoga County Court Appointed Special Advocates  
OhioGuidestone Harbor House  
OhioHealth Sexual Violence Services  
Open Arms Domestic Violence & Rape Crisis Services  
Ottawa County Prosecutor's Office  
PARACHUTE: Butler County CASA  
Perry County CASA  
Portage County Prosecutor's Victim Assistance  
ProKids  
ProKids ( Cincinnati)  
ProKids OHIO  
ProKids/CASA  
Richland County Prosecutor's Office - Victim Services  
Safe Harbour Domestic Violence Shelter  
SAFE on Main  
Sarah's Friends  
Shepherd's House  
Single Parents Rock  
Someplace Safe  
Southern Ohio Sexual Assault Treatment Center  
Southern Ohio Task Force on Domestic Violence

Survivor Advocacy Outreach Program  
The Black Survivors Of Sexual Assault Institute  
The Center for Child and Family Advocacy, Inc.  
The Center for Safe & Healthy Children  
The Center for Women and Families  
The Lighthouse  
The Noble Family Violence Council, Inc.  
The Washington County Prosecutor's Office  
Townhall II  
Transitions, Inc.  
Tri-County Help Center, Inc.  
Turning Point  
Turning Point Programs for Victims of Domestic Violence  
Victim Assistance Program  
Victim Assistance Program of Wyandot County  
Victim Assistance Program, Inc.  
Violence Free Futures  
Violence Free Futures. Greene County ohio  
Voices for Children  
Warren Municipal Court  
Washington County Prosecutor's Office  
Wayne County Children's Advocacy Center, Inc.  
Williams County Victim Assistance  
Willoughby Victims Assistance  
Women Helping Women  
WomenSafe, Inc.  
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YWCA Hamilton  
YWCA NWO  
YWCA of NWO DVS  
YWCA of Van Wert County

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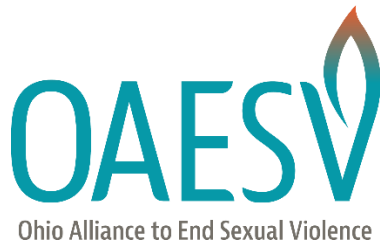
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Ohio Crime Victim  
Justice Center



OHIO NETWORK OF  
CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS



