



Shape Ohio Together: Raising 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
Hope & Healing Survivor Resource Center

YWCA of NWO DVS
New Directions
Tri County Help Center
Hope and Healing
Journey Center for Safety and Healing
Center for Women and Families
Compass Family & Community Services Rape Crisis & Counseling Center
Montgomery County Prosecutor Mat Heck's Office, Victim/Witness Division
Auglaize County Crisis Center
Greene County Prosecutor's Office
Turning Point Programs for Victims of Domestic Violence
Battered Women's Shelter and Rape Crisis Center of Medina and Summit Counties
Battered women's shelter and Rape Crisis Center of Medina and Summit Counties
Battered Women's Shelter and Rape Crisis Center of Medina and Summit Counties
Lyndhurst Police Department
Crime Victim Services
All-En Consulting LLC
Townhall II
DWAVE
EVE Incorporated
SAFE on Main
Tri-County Help Center, Inc.
Children's Advocacy Center of Portage County
YWCA NWO
Open Arms Domestic Violence & Rape Crisis Services
Asian American Community Services
Hope And Healing Resource center
Journey Center for Safety and Healing
Journey Center for Safety and Healing
Coming Resources
Journey Center for Safety and Healing
Journey Center for safety and Healing
Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center
Forensic Nursing Network
Townhall II
Athens County Sheriff's Office
Haven of Hope
Medina County Prosecutor Victim/Witness Division
WomenSafe, Inc.
The Black Survivors Of Sexual Assault Institute
Harcum House Child Advocacy Center
Coshocton County Prosecutor's Office
Crawford County Prosecuting Attorney's Victim Assistance Program
Eastlake Police Victim Assistance
Meigs County Victim Assistance Program
Willoughby Victims Assistance
Meigs County Prosecuting Attorney - Victim Assistance Program
Journey Center for Safety and Healing
City of Xenia Victim Advocate Division
Southern Ohio Sexual Assault Treatment Center
Journey Center for Safety and Healing
Jourjney Center for Safety and Healing
Warren Municipal Court
Washington County Prosecutor's Office
Women Helping Women

Xenia Law Department
Washington County Prosecutor's Office
Catholic Charities Regional Agency/Christina House D. V. Program
New Directions
Erie County Prosecutors Office Victim Assistance Program
Victim Assistance Program of Wyandot County
Lake County Prosecutors Victim Assistance Program
Survivor Advocacy Outreach Program
The Washington County Prosecutor's Office
East Cleveland Domestic Violence Program
The Center for Safe & Healthy Children
Homesafe, Inc.
Richland County Prosecutor's Office - Victim Services
Mentor Police Victim Assistance Program
Nirvana Now!
Marion Victim Assistance Program
Wayne County Children's Advocacy Center, Inc.
Marion Victim Assistance Program
Advocating Opportunity
Harrison County Prosecutor's Office
Huron County Victims' Assistance
Cleveland Rape Crisis Center
Someplace Safe
Appleseed CMHC/Safe Haven
Marion County Municipal Court
Transitions, Inc.
Journey Center for Safety and Healing
Sarah's Friends
HelpLine
Akron Children's Hospital
Cleveland Rape Crisis Center
The Center for Women and Families
Harcum House Child Advocacy Center
Advocating For Change, LLC
Brenda Glass Multipurpose Trauma Center
Cleveland Rape Crisis Center
Brave Beginnings Children's Advocacy Center of Muskingum Ohio
Battered Women's Shelter and Rape Crisis Center of Medina and Summit Counties
Ashtabula County Victims of Crime
Domestic Violence Project, Inc.
Journey Center of Safety and Healing
Williams County Victim Assistance
Journey Center
Clark County Prosecutor's Office
Ottawa County Prosecutor's Office
Muskingum County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Portage County Prosecutor's Victim Assistance
Turning Point
Alliance Area Domestic Violence Shelter
Crime Victim Services
Artemis Center
Alliance Area Domestic Violence Shelter
Crossroads Crisis Center
Family Abuse Shelter of Miami County, Inc
Southern Ohio Task Force on Domestic Violence

Community Action Commission of Fayette County- Peace House
COMPASS Family and Community Services
Shepherd's House
Bethany House
Southern Ohio Sexual Assault Treatment Center
Victim Assistance Program, Inc.
Turning Point
Concerned Citizens Against Violence Against Women, Inc.
The Lighthouse
Hope & Healing Survivor Resource Center
Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland
Forbes House
Concerned Citizens Against Violence Against Women - Turning Point
The Center for Child and Family Advocacy, Inc.
Auglaize County Crisis Center
The Center for Child and Family Advocacy
YWCA Dayton
Survivor Advocacy Outreach Program
The Center for Child and Family Advocacy, Inc.
Haven House of Pickway County Inc.
Homesafe, Inc.
My Sister's Place
Lorain County Safe Harbor
WomenSafe, Inc.
Victim Assistance Program
Erie County Domestic Violence Shelter
Safe Harbour Domestic Violence Shelter Inc
First Step Domestic Violence Services
YWCA Hamilton
Washington County Prosecutor's Office
Violence Free Futures
Women Helping Women
Safe Harbour Domestic Violence Shelter
Advocates for Families
Advocate for families
CASA of Noble County
Athens Ohio CASA/GAL Program
Advocates for Families
Advocates for families
AxessPointe formerly Family & Community Services, Inc.
Advocates for Families
Advocates For Families
Advocates for Families CASA program
Violence Free Futures
Violence Free Futures
YWCa Hamilton
Violence Free Futures
Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services (ETSS)
Child and Family Advocates of Cuyahoga County/CASA of Cuyahoga County
PARACHUTE: Butler County CASA
Clark County CASA/GAL Program
Perry County CASA
Advocates For Families
Violence Free Futures
The Center for Child and Family Advocacy, Inc.

Meigs-Gallia CASA/GAL Program
Advocates for Families
Ohio CASA and CASA of Madison County, Ohio
Child Protection Center of Ross County
Voices for Children
Violence Free Futures
Advocates For Families
Violence Free Futures
CASA of Seneca, Sandusky and Wyandot Counties
CASA for Kids of Geauga County
Safe Harbour Domestic Violence Shelter
Ohio CASA/GAL Association
Violence Free Futures
Violence Free Futures
OhioHealth Sexual Violence Services
Erie County CASA Program
CASA of Cuyahoga County
CFACC
Tri-County Help Center, Inc.
Ohio/Cuyahoga County Court Appointed Special Advocates
Child and Family Advocates of Cuyahoga County
Child and Family Advocates of Cuyahoga County
safe harbour Domestic violence shelter
Child and Family Advocates of Cuyahoga County
Alliance Area Domestic Violence Shelter
The Center for Child and Family Advocacy, Inc
Miami County Victim Witness
Miami County Victim Witness
Canopy Child Advocacy Center
Southern Ohio Sexual Assault Treatment Center
House of Ruth
Mentor Police Department
Advocates For Families
Tri-County Help Center, Inc.
Appleseed CMHC/RCDVS SafeHaven
OhioGuidestone Harbor House
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Tarah Mongold
Stacey Castellucci
Christel Keller
Jaelyn Corning
Mary Smicklas
Ryan Hensley
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