

Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence 2022 Legislative Priorities

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence represents 22 local crime victim service provider agencies supporting survivors in every Iowa county. We support member programs, communities, and organizations in seeking to change attitudes and behaviors perpetuating a culture of violence. Gender violence is not a single-issue problem and harm inflicted does not occur in a vacuum. It remains a persistent public health problem with crisis levels of prevalence. Inequity is a root cause. We cannot incarcerate our way out of this problem. We must create better responses to violence and better solutions for ending and preventing it.

Invest \$10 million for services to all victims of violent crime – Ensure access to rights and services. Iowa invests just \$5 million in state funds to crime victim services and limits funds to domestic and sexual violence services. Homicides increased 40% last year in addition to a surging demand for crime victim services overall. We must invest in all victims. Federal funds enhance program capacity, but state funds pay for the staff and infrastructure agencies need to provide services. Everyone cares about victims, but it takes money and people to provide support.

- **Provide \$10 million to victim services; amend state budget so funds also support victims of homicide and violent crime.** Increased funds will help address significant unmet need and reduce disparities in access to services.
- Improve Iowa victims' rights law: ensure access to rights and services; allow crime victims paid time off to access health services, attend court proceedings, etc.
- Support multiple options for responding to violence: community-informed approaches to safety, accountability, healing; prioritize access to housing, health care, economic security as paths to safety.

Enhance Economic Security. Economic insecurity compromises victim safety and undermines ability to maintain stable housing and employment. The lack of affordable housing, livable wages, food, good schools, health care, and clean air/water in communities increases the risk of violence and creates barriers to well-being. Additionally, easy access to guns dramatically increases the lethality risk for victims & children in homes experiencing family violence.

- Eliminate access barriers to affordable housing: seal eviction records for those who have not been evicted or if eviction occurred long ago; allow early lease termination for violent crime victims; promote housing non-discrimination; avoid penalizing victims for actions of abusive partners.
- Bolster employment & financial security: promote prize-linked savings programs; enact paid leave; increase minimum wage; expand earned income and child-care tax credits.
- Ensure employment non-discrimination and safety: enhance protections against workplace harassment and violence; ensure access to job protection and unemployment benefits for crime victims forced to relocate; enact fair chance hiring for Iowans with criminal records (ban the box).
- Improve access to services meeting basic needs: reduce barriers to health care including mental and reproductive health services; expand eligibility and amount of nutrition assistance.

Promote equity – Reduce barriers to well-being: Biases and disparities based on race, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, criminal background, etc., impact how individuals experience violence and how systems and people respond and meet survivor's needs. Prioritizing the needs of those carrying the heaviest burden of disparity helps all survivors.

- Uphold Iowa civil rights law: oppose weakening anti-discrimination protections, e.g., religious exemptions or prohibitions reducing access to LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Ensure access to rights and services: promote anti-discrimination protections in health access, housing, employment; ensure crime victims are not arrested for seeking safety; support criminal legal system reform including probation, parole, bail reform; disparities in sentencing; anti-profiling.
- Enhance civic participation: reduce barriers to voting; approve constitutional amendment to permanently restore voting rights of Iowans with felony convictions.