

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

**ATTORNEY GENERAL
BRENN A BIRD**



Chapter 6 Victim Advocate Certification and Training Requirements

The Iowa Victim Advocate Certification Program establishes certification for individuals providing victim services in the State of Iowa. This designation provides victim/counselor privilege (confidentiality) only if the advocate works/volunteers for a crime victim center.

Victim Counselor Definition in Iowa Code

As stated in the Iowa Code [915.20A](#), a “Victim counselor means a person who is engaged in a crime victim center, is certified as a counselor by the crime victim center, and is under the control of a direct services supervisor of a crime victim center, whose primary purpose is the rendering of advice, counseling, and assistance to victims of crime. To qualify as a “victim counselor” under this section, the person must also have completed at least twenty hours of training provided by the center in which the person is engaged, by the Iowa Organization of Victim Assistance (IOVA), by the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (Iowa CASA), or by the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV), which shall include but not be limited to, the dynamics of victimization, substantive laws relating to violent crime, sexual assault, and domestic violence, crisis intervention techniques, communication skills, working with diverse populations, an overview of the state criminal justice system, information regarding pertinent hospital procedures, and information regarding state and community resources for victims of crime.”

All CVAD domestic abuse, sexual abuse, shelter and survivors of homicide comprehensive programs are required to obtain and maintain victim counselor status by participating in victim counselor training provided by the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence, or the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault, or a like program approved by one of these coalitions or CVAD.

Victim Counselor Status: Anyone, who on behalf of this program, engages in any of the following activities must obtain and maintain victim counselor status: provides direct or indirect services to victims, has access to confidential client data, supervises direct service staff or volunteers or, interacts with victims on the telephone or in person, or provides any other related service where victims’ identifying information is available.

Advocate Certification: Everyone who provides direct victim advocacy services and supervisors of those providing direct services must, in addition to maintaining victim counselor status, also obtain and maintain the specific advocate certification respective to their field of work. This includes, but is not limited to: advocates, supervisors, volunteers who interact with clients and/or have access to confidential information, and executive directors.

If an employee or a volunteer, who is required to be certified, cannot obtain or maintain certification, or if certification is subsequently terminated by one of the coalitions listed above, the staff member or volunteer may not work or volunteer for any CVAD funded program. Failure to adhere to this assurance will put all of the agency’s CVAD funding in jeopardy. This certified assurance applies to all persons engaged in victim services work, even those whose salary is not paid by CVAD, or staff whose time is used for match purposes (paid staff and volunteers). Proof of training for all staff and volunteers must be maintained on site and shall be made available at the request of CVAD. Any program or person who is required to be a certified advocate but is unable to attain the proper training for any reason must advise CVAD immediately.

It is recommended, but not required, all agency staff who have contact with victims obtain and maintain the applicable advocate certification.

DV/Shelter Comprehensive Programs: Domestic Violence and Shelter Advocates are required to complete 20 hours of victim counselor training before providing any direct service to survivors. Certification must be renewed every two years. Certified victim advocates must complete 40 additional hours of training. For more information, contact ICADV, review their training manual or [visit their website](#).

SA Comprehensive Programs: Sexual Abuse Advocates are required to complete 20 hours of victim counselor training. Certified victim advocates must also complete the IowaCASA’s core and advanced trainings. Certification must be renewed every two years before providing any direct service to survivors. For more information, contact IowaCASA, review their training manual or [visit their website](#).

SOHP Comprehensive Programs: Survivors of Homicide Advocates are required to complete 20 hours of victim counselor training before providing any direct service to survivors. Contact CVAD for more information on how to obtain victim counselor training.

Certification and Training Requirements

Twenty hours of training as outlined in Iowa Criminal Code [915.20A](#), is required as a minimum for any staff or volunteer providing direct client services. The victim service program must be engaged with and receive the training from one of the following entities:

Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence:

As direct experience working with survivors of domestic abuse and sexual abuse is a required part of the process, only paid and volunteer staff of member programs of the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence are eligible for certification through this program. As domestic and sexual abuse work is difficult, stressful, and filled with complex issues and decisions, allied professionals are welcome to attend trainings for their own professional development but are not eligible for certification.

[Information on ICADV's Advocate Certification](#)

[Advocate Certification Manual](#)

Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (IowaCASA):

As direct experience working with survivors of sexual abuse is a required part of the process, only paid and volunteer staff of IowaCASA's member programs are eligible for certification through this program.

Allied professionals are welcome to attend trainings for their own professional development but are not eligible for certification.

[Information on IowaCASA's Advocate Certification](#)

[Advocate Certification Manual](#)

Iowa Organization for Victim Assistance:

This voluntary program is open to anyone providing direct and/or indirect services to crime victims.

[Information on IOVA's Advocate Certification Training](#)

**CVAD has the discretion to modify any and all training requirements. Training requirements will be outlined in each grantee's subaward.

