



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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General Crimes Service Standards

Program Administration and Direct Service Standards for General Crime Programs

Crime victims have a multitude of needs that cannot expect to be met by just one agency or provider. The standards that follow identify the rights and services crime victims deserve and as legislatively afforded to them according to Iowa Code 915. All VOCA funded projects have an obligation to know about these rights and services and then work with partnering Crime Victim Centers in their local communities and counties to provide a coordinated and collaborative continuum of care.

Standards for services for crime victims in Iowa:

- Respects people's rights and dignity, especially and specifically during challenging and life altering situation under which VOCA funded service providers engage them in the aftermath of criminal activity and victimization;
- Sets the level of competence expected to assure that all crime victims in Iowa will receive the same or similar level of care for the time they are engaged with any and all VOCA funded agencies;
- Creates a level of integrity that all victim service professionals can offer to the communities in which they live as well as the community of Victim Counselors;
- Victim Counselors are professionals supporting, advocating and caring for individuals, families and groups who are crime victims;
- Victim Counselors show concern and care for their neighbors and communities under the guidelines of professional ethics, standards of care and on-going professional development;
- Victim Counselors have a social responsibility to care for their communities prior to the occurrence of crime victimization and in the aftermath of crime victimization. Our professional responsibility is to work professional peers to prevent crime and promote healthy communities, as well as ensuring quality services when needed after crime victimization occurs.

The purpose of the CVAD Standards for Program Administration and Direct Service delivery guides VOCA funded providers to:

- Assure that all VOCA funded agencies providing services to victims of all crime adhere to the Code of Ethics.
- Ensure a standard level of service provided to all crime victims in Iowa regardless of type of

victimization or location (around the state of Iowa).

- Recognize the value of specialized, skilled providers serving all crime victims.
- Instill confidence in clients and the community that paid and unpaid staff of VOCA funded agencies have successfully completed the specialized training, experience and on-going professional development necessary to provide victim/survivor-centered, trauma-informed intervention with those impacted by crime across Iowa.

It includes: Iowa Code of Ethics, Program Administration Standards, Direct Service Standards.

Code of Ethics: Victim Counselors/Certified Victim Advocates

I. Victim Counselors have an ethical responsibility to adults and children who seek their assistance.

A. Victim Counselors will be competent.

1. Victim Counselors will have knowledge of the field of violent crime experiences and the skills to apply the knowledge.
2. Victim Counselors will constantly update their knowledge and skills.
3. Victim Counselors will not operate outside the limits of their competence, but make referrals or consultations in those areas. Advocates will seek advice and counsel from colleagues and supervisors whenever such consultation is in the best interest of clients.
4. Victim Counselors will understand how many cultural and social norms lead to and condone violence and how those norms impact the individual.

B. Victim Counselors will apprise clients of the following:

1. The array of services offered by the program;
2. The qualifications of Victim Counselors;
3. The expectations of the survivor services agency;
4. The grievance procedure;
5. The obligation to report child abuse to the Department of Human Services;
6. The limits of confidentiality.

C. Victim Counselors will protect the client's confidentiality within clearly defined limits. These limits will be explained to all clients as follows:

1. Informed, specific consent may be given to the Victim Counselors by the client to obtain services for the client from other service providers.
2. The client will be informed that confidentiality cannot be maintained in the following situations:

- a) When a dependent adult or child has been abused, exploited or neglected.
- b) When the client's life may be endangered and she/he cannot give consent.
- c) When the client makes a probable threat or is violent against another person.

3. The client will be informed that confidentiality may not be maintained when a court issues a court order for specific information.

4. The Victim Counselor will consider the potential for harm to a client when releasing information even with informed consent, and consult with a Certified Advocate.

5. A client will be given the option to remain anonymous within certain limitations, such as a crisis call or support group member.

6. The client has the right to refuse all or part of services to protect their anonymity.

D. Victim Counselors will delineate between work and social relationships and will be aware of the inherent privilege and power differences. The Advocate will never exploit relationships with clients for personal advantage.

1. Prior and/or present social or business relationships with clients require special consideration. The Advocate will, whenever possible, refer these clients to another service provider within the project or the nearest sister project.

2. Because victimization may be a long term issue, creating personal friendships between an Advocate and a client after receiving services is always inappropriate.

3. Provision of services to persons related by consanguinity or affinity, within the third degree is prohibited.

4. Sexual/romantic relationships with current or former clients is prohibited and is also a crime under Iowa Code Chapter 709.15.

5. Victim Counselors will work to increase victim safety; will respect the authority and autonomy of the adult victim to direct her own life; and will hold the perpetrator, not the victim, responsible for the violent behavior and for stopping the violence.

6. Victim Counselors will treat the client with respect and honesty in both verbal and nonverbal communication.

7. Victim Counselors will share knowledge they have with clients as it pertains to the client's situation. This may include but is not limited to the dynamics of domestic violence, sexual abuse, lethality issues, safety planning, effects on children, and the social and political issues that contribute to the continuance of sexual abuse and/or domestic violence and/or other violent crime.

8. Victim Counselors will accept what a client tells them about the violence.

9. Victim Counselors should withdraw services precipitously only under unusual circumstances, giving careful consideration to all factors in the situation and taking care to minimize possible adverse effects.

10. Victim Counselors who anticipate termination or interruption of service to clients should notify those individuals promptly and seek the transfer, referral, or termination of service in relation to the client's needs and preferences.

E. Victim Counselors will fairly distribute time, goods, and services among all clients. Advocates will not

practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, age, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, political beliefs, marital status, mental or physical disability, economic, or any other discriminatory basis.

1. Victim Counselors will have knowledge of and respect for cultural backgrounds.
2. Victim Counselors will be knowledgeable and accommodating of disabling conditions.
3. Should one client's needs conflict with another client's needs, Victim Counselors will act with regard to one client only after promptly referring the other to another qualified service provider.

F. Victim Counselors will assess clients to determine the nature of the violence, the extent of the violence, and the safety needs of the client. Victim Counselors will do nothing to increase the danger to or harm the client.

II. The Victim Counselor has an Ethical Responsibility to keep records.

A. Victim Counselors will keep records documenting services provided as mandated by funders in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

B. Victim Counselors will record statistical and factual information, not opinions, speculations, or conclusions.

C. Victim Counselors will allow clients access to their own records.

III. Victim Counselors have an ethical responsibility to themselves.

A. Victim Counselors with education, training, and experience have the right to be called professionals and to be treated professionally.

B. Victim Counselors have an obligation to join with other professionals to promote and support recognition and fair treatment of the profession.

C. Victim Counselors will see to their own empowerment and nurturing.

D. Victim Counselors will recognize when personal circumstances may compromise professional abilities, performance, or judgment, and will take steps to resolve those issues.

E. Victim Counselors will avoid relationships or commitments that conflict with the interests of victims/survivors.

IV. Victim Counselors have an ethical responsibility to employers and colleagues.

A. Victim Counselors will adhere to the policies and procedures of their employers.

B. Victim Counselors will treat colleagues with respect, fairness, and courtesy.

C. Victim Counselors should not assume professional responsibility for the clients of another agency or a colleague without appropriate communication with that agency or colleague within the bounds required by confidentiality.

D. Victim Counselors must clearly distinguish in public statements their personal views from positions adopted by organizations for which they work or are members.

E. Victim Counselors will report to competent authority any conflict of interest that prevents themselves or a

colleague from being able to provide ethical services, work cooperatively with colleagues or allied professionals, or be impartial in the treatment of any client.

F. Victim Counselors will report violations of the Code of Ethics by fellow Victim Counselors to the Certification Committee in a timely manner.

Crime victims have a multitude of needs that cannot expect to be met by just one agency or provider. The standards that follow identify the rights and services crime victims deserve and as legislatively afforded to them according to Iowa Code 915. All VOCA funded projects have an obligation to know about these rights and services and then work with partnering Crime Victim Centers in their local communities and counties to provide a coordinated and collaborative continuum of care.

Accompaniment

Core Standard:

Accompaniment is in-person support provided to a crime victim during crime related activities and procedural events.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall have policies for prioritizing accompaniment requests as they may not be able to fulfill all accompaniment requests. Agencies should consider collaborating with other Crime Victim Centers to fulfill such requests.

VOCA funded projects shall train staff to provide crisis intervention, crisis counseling, advocacy and resource referral that are likely part of accompaniment services.

Victim Counselors have an obligation to know about procedural events and explaining the purpose and process to crime victims who they accompany.

Victim Counselors and VOCA funded projects have an obligation to provide information to crime victims in the language they prefer. Language access partnerships and document translations services should be established proactively to be prepared to meet those needs as they arise.

Best Practices:

Crime victims should be provided with written and oral information about criminal proceedings in advance of the event/procedure and provided an opportunity to ask questions.

Victim Counselors should explain the role of the crime victim during proceedings.

It is important to learn about a victim's culture and how that may impact their availability for criminal justice proceedings. Their culture may also dictate who is present during court proceedings. It is important for Victim Counselors to learn about the victims they serve holistically.

Assessment

Core Standard:

Assessment happens when the crime victim gains access to the agency for services. Assessment includes acquiring information about the crime victim seeking services and offering information about the crime related services the Agency can provide.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall have written intake procedures to acquire necessary information to understand the need and request for service.

VOCA funded projects shall acquire demographic information required for reporting purposes.

VOCA funded projects shall provide information about available crime victim services both orally and in

writing. Information shall be provided in a language requested by the crime victim.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should provide information about confidentiality as soon as possible.

It is important to learn about a victim's culture and how that may impact their availability for criminal justice proceedings. Their culture may also dictate who is present during court proceedings. It is important for Victim Counselors to learn about the victims they serve holistically.

Victim Counselors will make referrals to other community providers who may better fulfill the needs and services requested by the crime victim that go beyond the scope of services of the VOCA funded agency.

Case Management

Core Standard:

Case management services happen when the crime victim accesses the agency for on-going services. Case management includes ongoing assessment of need for support and service and successful completion toward self-determined goals.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall have written case management procedures and guidelines for staff to document ongoing services and relationships with crime victims they serve.

VOCA funded projects shall provide information about the scope of case management services to crime victims both orally and in writing. Information shall be provided in a language requested by the crime victim.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should maintain relationship with a variety of human service providers in the community who can help meet the needs of the crime victims with whom they will provide case management services. Agencies should have MOUs established with such agencies and community partners in advance of service referrals being made.

Partnerships should be developed with agencies and community groups who support people from all cultural backgrounds.

Case Status

Core Standard:

Crime victims have the right to have updated information about the status of the criminal case in which they are involved as per Iowa Code 915.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to Victim Counselors about the criminal justice and juvenile justice processes from the time charges are filed through the disposition of charges.

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to Victim Counselors about the role of victims in the criminal justice system and their right to know about each court event throughout the prosecutorial process.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects shall maintain relationships with Victim Counselors who provide these services in an effort to make referrals to streamline services for crime victims.

VOCA funded projects should advocate that partnering agencies provide culturally competent services to all crime victims.

Civil Legal Services

Core Standard:

Crime victims may have legal needs resulting from the criminal activity that are outside of the criminal and

juvenile justice systems. Civil remedies can contribute to the restoration of the crime victim in meaningful ways during and after their engagement in the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to their staff about the scope and breadth of civil legal needs crime victims may have as a result of their crime victimization.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should network with local civil legal providers in their communities who can support the crime victims they serve. Agencies should provide training to these civil legal providers about the criminal and juvenile justice processes in their counties and how these systems may intersect with the civil legal needs crime victims may experience. A referral process or MOU should be established for making referrals to local civil practices who are willing to support crime victims.

Partnering agencies should be culturally competent and fully accessible for all crime victims.

[Collaboration with Community Partners](#)

Core Standard:

VOCA funded projects shall develop and maintain relationships with community agencies who can support crime victims beyond the scope of services they provide and avoids duplicating services provided by the agency.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall have information about community agencies that can support crime victims beyond the scope of their services.

VOCA funded projects shall establish a referral process with community agencies who can also support crime victims.

VOCA funded projects shall provide information about available services with community agencies both orally and in writing. Information shall be provided in a language requested by the crime victim.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should cross train with community partners to ensure other agencies are providing trauma informed and client centered services. Agencies should also ensure that their community partners understand the criminal justice process and the range of needs with which crime victims may present.

Partnerships should be developed with agencies and community groups who support people from all cultural backgrounds.

[Confidential Communications](#)

Core Standard:

The confidentiality of the communication between the Victim Counselor and the crime victim is essential in protecting the safety of crime victims and ensuring their privacy. Confidentiality is an ethical principle and legal right that Victim Counselors and VOCA funded projects will hold secret all personal information relating to a crime victim until or unless they provide written consent to disclose the information. Confidential communications and the extent to which crime victims have privilege with identified providers are outlined in Iowa Code 915.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall provide information orally and in writing to crime victims about the level of confidentiality they can expect with that agency and with the staff, volunteers and interns with whom they will interact. Information shall be provided in a language requested by the crime victim.

VOCA funded projects shall provide on-going training to Victim Counselors, both paid and unpaid, about the agency's confidentiality policy and release of confidentiality procedures.

VOCA funded projects will have written procedures for crime victims to provide permission to Program Staff to release information to other service providers as part of the continuum of service and care provided by the Program.

VOCA funded projects will have written procedures for keeping crime victim client files and information confidential.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should provide information about confidentiality upon first contact with the crime victim. Victim service staff should offer explanations about levels of confidentiality and what to expect from them and their agency, especially if the crime victim is working with other crime victim agencies.

[Counseling/Supportive Counseling](#)

Core Standard:

Supportive counseling is the provision of information, empathetic listening, feedback, clarification of options and assessment to a crime victim in response to the effects of the victimization. Supportive counseling assists the crime victim in managing the emotionally significant events that result from being a crime victim and assists them while using a victim-centered, trauma-informed process.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall provide supportive counseling in a safe and secure environment where the highest level of privacy can be reasonably assured.

VOCA funded projects shall provide applicable and ongoing training for victim services staff who provide supportive and ongoing counseling.

VOCA funded projects shall continually assess the need of the crime victim and provide supportive counseling if necessary. The agency shall have relationships with other professionals in the community who provide trauma-informed counseling and group counseling services so that they can make referrals when the needs of the crime victim exceeds the services provided by the agency or when the crime victim requests additional counseling services.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should advocate within professional networks for the need and development of trauma focused counseling and therapeutic services within their communities. Agencies can also advocate for therapeutic services to be provided in the languages accessible by those living in the community.

Partnerships should be developed with practitioners and community agencies/networks who support people from all cultural backgrounds.

[Court Events & Notifications](#)

Core Standard:

Crime victims have the right to be notified of court events according to Iowa Code 915. While designated offices or agencies working in or in partnership with the County Attorney's Office may be primarily responsible for making such notifications, it is critical that all Victim Counselors understand the process of the criminal court system and how victims are notified of procedural court events.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to Victim Counselors about the criminal justice and juvenile justice processes from the time charges are filed through the disposition of charges.

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to Victim Counselors about the role of victims in the criminal justice system and their right to know about each court event throughout the prosecutorial process.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects shall maintain relationships with Victim Counselors who provide these services in an effort to make referrals to streamline services for crime victims.

Court Orientation

Core Standard:

Crime victims have the right to be attend certain court events according to Iowa Code 915. While designated offices or agencies working in or in partnership with the County Attorney's Office may be primarily responsible for providing accompaniment to these specific events, it is critical that all Victim Counselors understand the process of the criminal and juvenile court systems and how crime victims participate in procedural court events.

Program Requirements:

VOCA Funded Programs shall maintain relationships with Victim Counselors who provide court accompaniment in an effort to make referrals to streamline services for crime victims, including orientation to these events provided in person and by phone.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects staff should attend formal court orientation meetings to better understand the criminal and juvenile justice processes. If no formal court orientation exists, Victim Counselors should attend court events as part of their training to better understand the criminal and juvenile justice systems so that they can better inform crime victims of such processes.

VOCA funded projects should collaborate to develop a county-specific model for the court orientation process that includes: written materials, courtroom orientation, and logistics of the court (i.e., transportation, safety/security issues, parking, etc.). This court orientation process shall also provide accommodations for individuals having special needs, the age of the victim, and any urban/rural issues.

Crime Victim Grievances

Core Standard:

Crime victims have rights according to Iowa Code 915. VOCA funded projects shall have a process in place for crime victims to file a grievance if they believe their rights have been violated according to Iowa Code 915.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall provide information about their grievance policy to crime victims during the initial intake/assessment meeting. Information shall be provided in a language requested by the crime victim.

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to Victim Counselors about the Program's grievance policy and procedure.

VOCA funded projects shall have relationships with other Victim Counselors in the community to whom they can refer crime victims if they choose to discontinue services with the VOCA Funded Program as a result of a grievance.

VOCA funded projects shall maintain records of grievances, investigative procedures and outcomes.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects shall provide information to crime victims who want to file a grievance about the Iowa Attorney General Crime Victim Assistance Division (CVAD) as an option for reporting a grievance.

Crisis Intervention

Core Standard:

Crisis intervention provides the person in crisis with the tools to manage the crisis and to facilitate movement toward stability. VOCA funded projects shall provide a range of services, including safety planning, to a victim during any crisis that may result in the aftermath of a crime.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to Victim Counselors about crisis intervention, including assessing the situation with the crime victim and making appropriate referrals to outside agencies when the crime victim's needs exceed that which can be offered by the agency.

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to Victim Counselors about safety planning, both immediate and long-term safety concerns. Safety planning should include physical and emotional safety.

Best Practices:

Crisis can be rooted in emotional, physical, safety and financial insecurities. VOCA funded projects should be prepared to assist and intervene with crime victims when they experience any number of crisis situations.

Crisis responses may be impacted by the individual's cultural background. VOCA funded projects should provide training to Victim Counselors that includes cultural humility and the relationship between victimization and cultural influences.

[Cultural Humility](#)**Core Standard:**

Cultural humility is (commonly defined as) the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the individual. It includes self-reflection and personal critique practiced by professionals from all backgrounds.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to Victim Counselors about the cultural practices and beliefs of those living in the communities they serve.

VOCA funded projects shall provide information about their services to all communities and groups whom they serve in their region. Information shall be provided in a language that best serves community needs.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should maintain relationships with leaders and/or gatekeepers to communities and groups within their service area.

VOCA funded projects should engage local communities and groups to provide training to their staff.

[Information and Referral](#)**Core Standard:**

Crime Victims and their families benefit when they have information about the criminal justice process and the agencies and services available to offer assistance throughout the process. Victim Service Professionals therefore have an obligation to provide information and make referrals so that crime victims and their families can make well informed decisions as they navigate the criminal justice system and their own healing.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects receive training about the criminal justice process and be able to offer information to crime victims about the process. This includes victims rights information, how victim notifications are processed and from what office, and Victims Compensation eligibility and claims processes.

VOCA funded projects shall provide information about other victim services providers, both community-based and systems-based offices, as well as other community-based services regardless of their location. (Victims who live somewhere other than where the crime occurred deserve the same consideration and Victim Counselors have an obligation to know or acquire that information to make an appropriate referral.) This information should be provided both orally and in writing. Information shall be provided in a language requested by the crime victim.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should network regionally and across disciplines or specific populations served.

Individual Advocacy

Core Standard:

Individual advocacy is an intervention provided by Victim Counselors as a way to collaboratively serve the crime victim – obtaining information to better assess their individual needs and then providing support and information through all phases of the criminal and civil justice systems and processes. Victim Counselors walk alongside crime victims as they navigate these systems, assuring options and resources are presented to the crime victim as directed by Iowa Code 915 and as would be commonly accepted best practices within local communities. Victim Counselors can and should empower crime victims to speak and act on their own behalf.

Program Requirements:

Victim Counselors need to develop an expert level understanding of the criminal justice system and local practices to assure all services are offered and provided to the crime victim.

Victim Counselors may provide personal accompaniment to crime victims to criminal and civil justice proceedings. Victim Counselors should attend criminal and civil justice proceedings as part of their orientation to the VOCA Funded Agency so that they can explain procedures to crime victims and help them predict and prepare for such activities as they may be required or requested to attend.

It is important to learn about a victim's culture in an effort to provide holistic services.

Best Practices:

Victim Counselors should develop professional working relationships with law enforcement, prosecutors, court personnel and other Victim Counselors to create and assure pathways for crime victims navigating the criminal justice system.

VOCA funded projects should network with community agencies outside of the criminal justice system to be able to advocate for crime victims on a broad range of needs that may arise from the crime victimization. Partnerships should be developed with agencies and community groups who support people from all cultural backgrounds.

Outreach

Core Standard:

VOCA Funded Programs have an obligation to make the community at large aware of their services. Outreach, in its many forms, makes the community and potential crime victims aware of the Agency and the specialized services it provides to crime victims.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects should provide information about its services and the need for services for crime victims generally. This information should be provided both orally and in writing. Information shall be provided in languages commonly spoken with their community. Programs should consider a variety of methods and platforms for disseminating information.

VOCA funded projects should meet with diverse groups to determine their needs, how to best meet those needs collaboratively and also how they and the Program can proactively collaborate to prevent future crime victimization.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should provide information and brochures to law enforcement and other criminal justice professionals to provide to crime victims who may not immediately contact their agency. These professionals may also learn about needs that go beyond the criminal justice system but may be that which the VOCA funded projects can assist.

VOCA funded projects should network with community agencies outside of the criminal justice system to be

able to collaborate on community education and outreach opportunities. Partnerships should be developed with agencies and community groups who support people from all cultural backgrounds.

[Release, Transfer, Escape](#)

Core Standard:

Crime victims have the right to be notified when the perpetrator of their crime is transferred within or released or escapes from custody as per Iowa Code 915.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to Victim Counselors about the automated victim notification system.

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to Victim Counselors about how crime victims can register with the automated victim notification system.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects shall maintain relationships with Victim Counselors who can assist crime victims with notification registration in an effort to make referrals to streamline services for crime victims.

[Restitution](#)

Core Standard:

Restitution may be provided to crime victims to pay for specific reimbursement or replacement items as per Iowa Code 915.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall maintain training for all victim service staff about the eligible reimbursement and replacement items paid for by court ordered restitution as per Iowa Code 915.

VOCA funded projects shall provide information about requesting restitution as part of the criminal justice proceedings in which they are involved. Information shall be provided in a language requested by the crime victim.

Best Practices:

Victims service providers should work collaboratively with the appropriate court or prosecutorial staff to ensure submitted claims are complete and expedited appropriately.

[Restorative Justice](#)

Core Standard:

Restorative justice opportunities are typically provided to crime victims outside of the traditional criminal justice system and often after the criminal justice system has officially disposed of the criminal charges. Restorative opportunities can often meet the needs of the crime victim/survivor beyond the scope of the criminal justice system to create victim defined justice.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall maintain training for all victim service staff about restorative justice practices and opportunities available in the community.

VOCA funded projects shall provide information about restorative justice opportunities provided by community partners. Agencies shall maintain procedures for referring crime victims/survivors to restorative services provided by their community partners. Partnering agencies should be culturally competent and fully accessible for all crime victims.

Best Practices:

Victim Counselors can use restorative practices when working with crime victims and should be trained to do so.

[Safety Planning](#)

Core Standard:

Safety planning is any formal or informal, written or oral, conversation or process with the crime victim through which the Victim Counselor works with the victim to identify and address risks as a result of the crime victimization.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall provide training to staff to develop safety planning skills.

Safety planning, both immediate and long-term safety concerns, should include physical and emotional safety.

Safety planning should include the individual's cultural background.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should build relationships with other VOCA funded projects and community-based agencies, including from diverse communities, to address the needs identified as part of the safety plan.

VOCA funded projects should provide training to Victim Counselors that includes cultural humility and the relationship between victimization and cultural influences.

[Self-Care for Victim Counselors](#)

Core Standard:

Self-care is an ethical obligation Victim Counselors have to the crime victims they serve. VOCA funded projects have an obligation to support the professional self-care needs of their staff so that they can provide exemplary services to crime victims and the community at large.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall develop a written policy that includes the ethical obligation Victim Counselors have to maintain good self-care. This policy should include supervision practices that will support self-care practices for VOCA funded staff. This policy should include the Program's commitment to supporting VOCA funded in ongoing self-care practices.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should provide formal and informal opportunities for victim service staff to engage with one another and maintain good self-care. Good self-care practices are ongoing and supported by co-workers and agency leaders.

VOCA funded projects should explore trauma-informed agency assessments and updating/implementing trauma informed policies and procedures that benefit all agency staff.

[Systems Advocacy](#)

Core Standard:

VOCA funded projects should engage in activities that improve system-wide responses to crime victims. Opportunities for systems advocacy are found within the criminal and juvenile justice systems as well as within healthcare networks, educational systems and community based human service networks.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall identify networks and systems within their communities within which crime victims may interact or engage. Agencies should build professional working relationships within such systems on behalf of crime victims.

VOCA funded projects should think broadly about the needs of the crime victims they serve and go beyond the professional networks to also build relationships within diverse communities where crime victims are and could be supported or served (formally or informally). Partnering agencies should be culturally competent and fully accessible for all crime victims.

Best Practices:

Victim Counselors should be visible within the communities they serve. This means that VOCA funded staff should attend community events as well as systems related meetings and networking opportunities.

Partnerships should be developed with agencies and community groups who support people from all cultural backgrounds.

Technology Use**Core Standard:**

VOCA funded projects may use technology in providing and expanding services to crime victims when there is a lack of transportation or other events (weather disasters, pandemic, other emergency lock down situations) that prevent them from meeting in person. Agencies are also likely to use electronic databases to track, monitor and report services provided to crime victims. Agencies are encouraged to consider the logistical needs and ethical considerations that need to be addressed in these circumstances.

Technology used with crime victims may include: tele-counseling via telephone and/or web-based programs, text lines, chat rooms, etc. Technology used in collecting and managing client information and reporting aggregate client information for reporting purposes may include web-based software and the transmission of information through secure online venues.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded projects shall determine the most appropriate technology to use for service delivery after exploring some of the following considerations:

- Technology that is user-friendly and accessible for both the crime victim and agency staff;
- Technology that most effectively achieves the desired outcome for clients;
- Risk-benefit analysis of the technology system or agency;
- Confidentiality protections;
- Data back-up, both maintaining data back-up when technology fails and deleting unnecessary and unprotected data.

VOCA funded projects should have policies in place to provide direction for staff to:

- Protect confidentiality with every client communication and data entry into client records;
- Protect confidentiality if staff must use personal devices when the agency is unable to issue devices to staff; and
- Maintain network security when transmitting data via wifi, especially in the absence of an encrypted connection to client records and databases.

VOCA funded projects should consider how they might conduct intakes, assessments and the full spectrum of program services using technology. Additionally, agencies should consider how paperwork will be signed electronically by crime victims.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded projects should secure technology that provides interpreter access.

VOCA funded projects staff should use only technology and devices provided by the Program to maintain

security and confidentiality standards.

VOCA funded projects should have policies providing direction to Program Staff about social media usage on Program issued devices.

VOCA funded projects should include technology use and abuse as part of safety plans with crime victims.

Training

Core Standard:

Specialized training is required to ensure optimum delivery of support services to crime victims. Training provides Victim Counselors with the knowledge and skills to provide solid information to crime victims and make professional judgments when working with crime victims. Training is an ongoing process.

Program Requirements:

VOCA funded staff will acquire the Victim Counselor training as provided by IOVA, IowaCASA or ICADV. This foundational training is required to ensure baseline knowledge and skills necessary to provide trauma-informed care to crime victims and survivors. This orientation will be acquired by Victim Counselors interacting with crime victims and funded under VOCA.

The **Victim Counselor training** includes the following topics:

- Criminal Justice System Response to Crime Victims
- Confidentiality
- Ethical Issues / Boundaries
- Advocacy Skills (systems and community based)
- Safety Planning
- Diversity: delivering culturally relevant services consistent with community assessment
- Self-Care
- Outreach & Systems Advocacy
- Social Change: prevention & collaboration

VOCA funded Victim Counselors will have 8 hours of annual ongoing training after participating in the Victim Counselor training within the first six months of hire. Trainings organized and sponsored by ICCV, ICADV, IowaCASA, Crime Victim Assistance Division (CVAD), the Iowa Organization for Victim Assistance (IOVA), Iowa's US Attorney's Office, National Resource Sharing Project (RSP), National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), OVW Technical Assistance Providers, National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC), National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), and the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) Training and Technical Assistance Providers are pre-approved. Trainings sponsored by other organizations can be submitted for approval to CVAD. [**Please note:** Only direct hours spent in approved trainings can be applied toward the continued education requirement. Lunch, breaks and travel time do not count towards continued education hours.]

VOCA funded projects shall have written training policies to assure proper documentation of annual training hours for all VOCA funded staff.

Best Practices:

VOCA funded agencies should work with diverse communities in their local areas to collaboratively train professionals and community members to better serve crime victims. Diversity training, cultural competency and cultural humility trainings should be part of the annual training hours for a VOCA Funded Programs.

[Victim Impact Statements](#)**Core Standard:**

Crime victims have rights as per Iowa Code 915. It is critical that all crime victims know about these rights regardless of their level of engagement in the criminal justice system. All Victim Counselors have an obligation to know about victims' rights and provide that information to the crime victims whom they serve.

Program Requirements:

VOCA Funded Programs shall maintain training for all victim service staff about the Victims' Rights.

VOCA Funded Programs shall provide information about Victims' Rights both orally and in writing. Information shall be provided in a language requested by the crime victim.

Best Practices:

Victims Service Providers should work collaboratively with the CVAD when there are questions or concerns about the possible violation of victims' rights.

[Victim/Witness Intimidation](#)**Core Standard:**

Crime victims have the right to petition the Court for protection when they are intimidated or harassed by the perpetrator of their crime or an associate as per Iowa Code 915.

Program Requirements:

VOCA Funded Programs shall provide training to Victim Counselors about victim intimidation as outlined in Iowa Code 915.

VOCA Funded Programs shall provide training to Victim Counselors about the process of applying for protection from intimidation or harassment as per Iowa Code 915.

Best Practices:

VOCA Funded Programs shall maintain relationships with Victim Counselors who provide support services to crime victims who file claims of intimidation or harassment in an effort to make referrals to streamline services for crime victims.

Partnering agencies should be culturally competent and fully accessible for all crime victims.

[Victims Compensation Assistance](#)**Core Standard:**

Victims Compensation Assistance is provided to crime victims to pay for specific services as per Iowa Code 915.

Program Requirements:

VOCA Funded Programs shall maintain training for all victim service staff about the Victims Compensation Assistance Program and eligible services and replacements items.

VOCA Funded Programs shall provide information about available Compensation services and replacement items both orally and in writing. Information shall be provided in a language requested by the crime victim.

VOCA Funded Programs shall provide information about making a Compensation Claim.

Best Practices:

Victim Counselors should provide assistance to crime victims who want to file a Compensation Claim. This

can include helping them complete the paperwork and acquiring or collecting supporting documentation for the Claim.

Victims Service Providers should work collaboratively with the CVAD Compensation staff to ensure submitted claims are complete and expedited appropriately.

Victims' Rights Notification

Core Standard:

Crime victims have rights as per Iowa Code 915. It is critical that all crime victims know about these rights regardless of their level of engagement in the criminal justice system. All Victim Counselors have an obligation to know about victims' rights and provide that information to the crime victims whom they serve.

Program Requirements:

VOCA Funded Programs shall maintain training for all victim service staff about the Victims' Rights.

VOCA Funded Programs shall provide information about Victims' Rights both orally and in writing. Information shall be provided in a language requested by the crime victim.

Best Practices:

Victims Service Providers should work collaboratively with the CVAD when there are questions or concerns about the possible violation of victims' rights.

