



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Attorney General Tom Miller

## 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 the Iowa Coalition for Collective Change; 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. SOH Advocates must also complete the Iowa Coalition for Collective Change's certification training. Certification must be renewed every two years. For more information, contact the Iowa Coalition for Collective Change, view their certification manual or [visit their website](#).

