

STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program

FFY 2026-2029

DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The purpose of this draft Implementation Plan is for potential applicants to use as a resource for the 2027-2030 competitive criminal justice applications.

This is NOT the final plan.

The final plan will be edited and approved by the IP committee then submitted to OVW. This document is a representation of the comments, feedback, suggestions, and concerns from the IP committee.

I. Introduction

A. Date of Final Approval

This Implementation Plan received final approval by the State on _____

B. Covered Time Period

This Implementation Plan covers the fiscal years of 2026 – 2029.

The Victim Assistance Section of the Iowa Department of Justice serves as the state administrator for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) STOP funds. The goal of Iowa’s STOP Violence Against Women grant program mirrors the national focus of OVW’s purposes: to decrease incidents of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking by supporting agencies and projects that provide trauma-informed, victim-centered services and responses to these crimes that promote offender accountability and improve victim safety.

II. Needs and Context

A. Demographic Information – Iowa

Situated in the northern Midwest of the country, Iowa is a rural state consisting of 99 counties, with nine metropolitan statistical areas. Even in the counties where these nine cities are located, there are still pockets of rural areas made up of small towns and farmland. Only eight of Iowa’s 99 counties have populations greater than 100,000, while most counties have fewer than 20,000 total residents within their borders. With its extensive rural nature, much of Iowa’s population is considered underserved due to the geographic and economic barriers victims face.

Iowa’s population has grown slowly over the years, with an overall 0.4% increase between 2010 and 2022, reaching a total of 3,238,387 in 2025.¹ During this same period, Iowa has experienced significant changes in its racial and ethnic populations. While it remains a predominantly “white” state, Iowa’s Black/African American, Asian, and Hispanic populations have grown substantially.

The Sac and Fox Tribe of the Meskwaki Nation (The Settlement) is the only federally recognized tribe in Iowa. The Social Vulnerability Index of 2022² groups 16 census-derived factors into four themes: 1) socioeconomic status; 2) household characteristics; 3) housing type and transportation and 4) racial and ethnic status. On the Social Vulnerability Scale, The Settlement scored between the 0.80 and 0.90 percentile, indicating a higher level of social vulnerability than many other communities. This score reflects conditions that can significantly affect The Settlement, often translating into broader household instability and increased engagement with Family Services. A breakdown of each of the themes is below:

- Socioeconomic status indicates income below 150% of poverty level and high levels of unemployment.
- Household characteristics indicate population aged 65 and older and younger than 17 and includes multigenerational households, people with disabilities and single parent households.
- Housing and transportation indicate crowding and families with no vehicles.
- Racial and ethnic status includes Native American.

<u>Race/Ethnic Population Breakdown – Iowa</u> <u>2023³</u>	<u>Iowa</u>	<u>2023</u> <u>Percentages</u>	<u>2010</u> <u>Percentages</u>
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¹ <https://www.iowadatacenter.org/index.php>

² <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/php/svi/svi-data-documentation-download.html>

³ <https://www.iowadatacenter.org/index.php/quick-facts/iowa-quick-facts>.

White alone	2,701,313	84.2%	91.31%
Black or African American alone	128,881	4.0%	2.83%
Asian alone	75,806	2.4%	1.74%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4,425	0.1%	0.07%
American Indian and Alaska Native	12,715	0.5%	0.36%
Some other race alone	74,956	2.3%	1.84%
Two or more races	208,908	6.5%	1.75%
Hispanic or Latino origin*	234,148	7.3%	4.97%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino*	2,641,989	82.4%	Not reported
Total:	3,207,004	100%	

*These two numbers are not included in the total since Hispanic or Latino is ethnicity and not a race.

The diversity of Iowa, however, is both more compelling and more complex than the above chart indicates. For example, through data provided by Iowa’s culturally specific victim service organizations, Iowa’s “Asian” populations include a variety of communities, such as: Bhutanese of Nepali ethnicity, ethnic Burmese, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Laotian, Middle Eastern/West Asian, Vietnamese and other Pacific Islander communities, including Marshallese, Micronesians, and Palauns. From 2000 to 2021, Iowa’s immigrant population grew by 90%.⁴ Today, foreign-born residents make up 5.4% of the state’s population.⁵ Official census data may also undercount some groups, as the available race categories do not always accurately reflect how individuals identify. One such population is Arab Americans, many of whom select the “Caucasian” designation because the U.S. Census does not include a specific Middle Eastern or North African category.⁶ According to one source focused on accurately identifying Arab American populations in the United States, more than 17,700 Arab Americans live in Iowa,

⁴ https://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/wp-content/uploads/Demographics_Iowa-updated-10.4.2023.pdf

⁵ Id.

residing in 73 of the state’s 99 counties.⁷ The largest groups of new Arab immigrants to Iowa come from Sudan, Iraq, Jordan, and Somalia.⁸ Additionally, the Migration Policy Institute reports that Iowa’s total foreign-born population exceeds 177,700.

Like most states, Iowa has become increasingly diverse over the past several decades. From 1980 to 2022, Iowa’s African-American population increased by 238.6%, and is projected to make up 10.7% of Iowa’s total population by 2060.⁹ The Asian population increased by 142% between 2000 and 2022, and is projected to represent 5.6% of the state’s population by 2060.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Iowa’s Latino population in Iowa grew by 57.4% between 2010 and 2023, and is projected to account for 15.0% of the state’s residents by 2060.¹¹

Data also shows that Iowa’s younger population reflects greater diversity than demonstrated by the table below. For example, during the 2017-2018 school year, Iowa’s public schools enrolled more than 19,600 students who were Spanish-speaking English language learners, an increase of 217.7% compared with the 1990-2000 school year. In fact, as of 2018, more than 7% of Iowa’s population reported speaking English “less than very well,” over fourteen non-English languages were identified as being spoken in their homes.¹² Additional

⁶ <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/09/1085355634/arab-americans-say-census-and-other-forms-dont-consider-their-roots>

⁷ <https://yallacountmenain.org/states/iowa-mltg/>

⁸ Id.

⁹ <https://www.iowadatacenter.org/application/files/4617/0800/6314/AfricanAmericanStatus2024.pdf>
(Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. (2023))

¹⁰ <https://www.iowadatacenter.org/application/files/4517/1639/8256/AsianPacificIslander2024.pdf>
(Woods & Poole Economics, Inc (2023))

¹¹ <https://www.iowadatacenter.org/application/files/8717/2771/0187/Latinos2024.pdf>
(Woods & Poole Economics, Inc (2023))

¹² https://www.iowacourts.gov/static/media/cms/iowa_Courts_Language_Access_Plan_CC2871A1F73E8.pdf

data sources indicated that more than 177 different languages are spoken in homes across Iowa.¹³ The racial/ethnic breakdown of Iowa’s public school students is shown below.¹⁴

<u>K-12 Grade Iowa Public School Students for 2023-2024</u> ¹⁵		<u>Percentages</u>
White alone	342,108	71.5%
Black or African American	33,501	7.0%
Asian	11,921	2.5%
Native American	1,512	0.3%
Pacific Islander	3,232	0.7%
Two or more races*	24,003	5.0%
Hispanic or Latino origin	62,415	13.0%
Total:	478,692	

Of Iowa’s total population, there are over 402,615 residents who identify with a recognizable disability, which is 12.8% of the state’s civilian, non-institutionalized population.¹⁶ Of those 402,615 people, over 29.9% are aged 65 and older and 4.7% are children under the age of 18.¹⁷ Strikingly, 22% of those residents with a disability also identify as

¹³ <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/community-and-economic-development-data-team-creates-%E2%80%98languages-spoken-iowa-website>

¹⁴ https://www.iowacourts.gov/static/media/cms/iowa_Courts_Language_Access_Plan_CC2871A1F73E8.pdf

¹⁵ Id.

¹⁶ <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/community-and-economic-development-data-team-creates-%E2%80%98languages-spoken-iowa-website>

¹⁷ Id.

Native American and/or Alaska Native, which is the highest percentage of disability by race in the state.¹⁸

B. Methods to Identify Underserved Populations and Results

Underserved populations are those populations who face barriers in accessing and using victim services, including those impacted due to geographic location, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, racial and ethnic identities, and those with special needs including language barriers, disabilities, or age. The information provided from the Census data and other sources demonstrates the current and growing breakdown of those Iowa residents who constitute underserved populations. In addition to research of traditional data sources such as census data and demographic information provided by the state's Data Center, The Victim Assistance Section staff used a variety of ways to identify underserved populations or to anecdotally support and expand the information about these populations. Several of the participants in our Implementation Planning Committee work directly with or come from underserved populations and our committee conversations identified issues about language access to victim services and other public services found during work in specific underserved communities or through other statewide projects. Our committee also held listening sessions with representatives of culturally specific organizations. From these meetings we heard from those on the front lines describe the underserved populations from their points of view/work perspective.

In May 2025, we asked the IP committee to consider underserved victims as they see them in the work they do. The following are excerpts from the meeting:

¹⁸ <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/community-and-economic-development-data-team-creates-%E2%80%98languages-spoken-iowa-website>

- The loss of a bilingual resource organization in southwest Iowa magnified the need to provide bilingual advocacy, services, and outreach especially to small pockets of Hispanic folks in rural Iowa where few to no resources or services are available.
- Underserved can be described as degrees of who gets served and who has access to services. People whose first language is not English tend to have higher barriers and greater difficulty getting access. Those who are undocumented do not know who to trust or what information victim services programs have to report.
- In rural communities, there are multiple pockets of populations, who despite programs' best efforts don't know we exist and don't know how the criminal justice system and victim services work together.
- In general, Iowa's rural victims lack resources and are isolated, which heightens danger to those victims.
- People in certain socio economic are often stigmatized, face barriers and do not have accessible community support. Communities are pushing to remove homeless encampments and seeming to make homelessness a crime, formerly incarcerated victims and substance abuse users struggle with finding housing and employment.
- People without support networks – especially those from other countries or those who do not speak English. Their abuser is the only family member they have and when children are involved, they rely on the abuser to help take care of their children.
- ***“If a victim leaves her abuser, she often risks losing her job and her housing because she has no daycare. “My client violated the NCO multiple times because he was taking care of the kids so she could go to work. Yeah, they're not supposed to be together. So it's a struggle.” – IP member***

- A committee member from a mainstream organization said from community forums and listening sessions they identified three primary underserved communities: LGBTQ, older Iowans and immigrants.
 - A county attorney discussed the concern she has for victims of sexual assault on military bases. Iowa hosts groups from other states at the National Guard Training Center in Des Moines. When assaults happen on the base the military has different degrees of reporting. The military says they want to protect their people and they offer services. Victims of sexual assault can go to any hospital for a sexual assault exam, but the military moves slow in its sanctions against the offender, especially if they made admissions. Often the victim must go through state court proceedings first and services seem duplicative with both the military and the state, each having victim services persons.

From the perspective of our culturally specific programs, including Thrive Together Today, which serves Deaf and Hard of Hearing people, all the people they serve are considered underserved from a demographic standpoint; however, there are levels of underserved. Those considered most vulnerable are victims with few resources and lack of access to services. Language access – there are not enough interpreters, and for those with disabilities, the many systems, including the courts, lack of understanding accommodation requirements of the American with Disabilities Act. Fear, challenges of seeking services, and distrust are prevalent with refugees. The economy, the difficulty obtaining jobs, transportation, housing, technology and lack of a support system inhibit survivors' chances of becoming sufficient and stable.

Within cultures there is diversity. There are class and identity issues to be considered. People from diverse backgrounds are not just seeking services from their respective culturally specific program (CSP) but will go to other CSPs to seek services. This includes an increase of white-non-Hispanic survivors, Caribbean and other island natives seeking services from CSPs. Immigrants new to Iowa often work in rural settings. They are isolated and unaware of services and often forgotten. Youth delinquency, requests from schools for assistance and crisis calls on the weekends have increased.

CSPs contribute an increase in sex and labor trafficking to the scarcity of housing, the increase of homelessness and poverty. People are being trafficked when they cannot afford to pay their rent or other bills and the requests for assistance often fall on the CSPs.

Overall, there is an increase in requests for assistance for new cases. For CSPs the work is getting broader. Because of the outreach within communities, more people are seeking services and CSPs often support the entire family, who support the victim.

III. Description of Planning Process

A. Brief Description of Planning Process

The Victim Assistance Section (Section) staff met in February 2025 to review the prior Implementation Plan, its process and former participants and identify steps for completing this Plan. Section staff reviewed the list of those who had participated in the past and the currently

funded STOP grantees. In 2023 and 2024, the Section hosted statewide sexual assault and domestic violence conferences. Presenters from those conferences were considered for their topical expertise and several were invited to participate on the planning committee. Additionally, the Section invited others who were known for their expertise to participate. The Section cast a wide net to ensure all required committee categories were filled with both former and new participants. To ensure proper protocol regarding tribal participation, staff contacted members of the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi prior to the beginning of the IP meetings and obtained documentation regarding the proper protocol their participation in this plan.

Section staff invited participants via email and included a description of the STOP planning process with an estimated time commitment. To ensure participants had access to relevant IP documents they were given access to shared online files using Microsoft's OneDrive.

The planning committee was invited to participate in monthly virtual planning meetings. At the beginning of the process, staff provided the dates and times of each scheduled meeting and sent online calendar invitations to ensure all meetings with the Teams link was available. Staff also emailed monthly reminders and agendas. Meetings were held from 9 am to 10 am on Wednesdays with each meeting being allowed to run longer (or shorter) if needed. The meetings were held from April 2025 through December 2025, except in June 2025, when participants were asked to complete a survey on domestic violence homicides rather than meet in person. The meeting topics followed the Plan template and worked to identify the most pressing issues across the state regarding the response to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence and how the STOP funds could be directed to best address these challenges.

Several planning committee participants gave presentations as part of the monthly committee meetings. These presentations were about the work done in Iowa regarding domestic violence homicides, research on lethality assessments and housing.

Staff held three online meetings with directors of culturally specific programs to learn about the strengths, challenges, and needs of the communities they serve. From these meetings we obtained a clearer understanding of Iowa's underserved populations and the barriers they face. Staff consulted housing experts to discuss Iowa's sheltering concerns, lack of affordable housing, barriers and potential solutions.

The planning committee was provided with drafts of the plan and given the opportunity to provide feedback and changes. They were also given the final report prior to submission to OVW.

B. Planning Committee Member Documentation



C. Consultation and Coordination with Other Partners

Victim Services staff hosted meetings with our funded culturally specific organizations, even though culturally specific organizations are represented on the planning committee. We decided hosting meetings to give our grant funded CSPs space to speak would yield information about victim services that likely would not be shared during the committee planning meetings.

We consulted with housing experts to discuss Iowa's housing and emergency shelter needs and considerations for funding sheltering programs for the upcoming competitive grants.

While not specifically designed as part of the STOP process, the Section staff issued a statewide survey to gather feedback on suggestions on improving training and technical assistance being provided by grant funded organizations. Improved training was one of our goals from the last plan.

The Section has an advisory board that shepherds the grant award program, including approving final awards and deciding appeals. Appointed by the Attorney General, the board members include representatives from law enforcement, victim services, emergency medicine, prosecution and public defense, corrections, and crime survivors. In addition to the statutory duties, members often share their insights and experience to promote effective and inclusive grant award decisions.

D. Consultation and Coordination with Tribes

The Section supports the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa through grant funding and through invitations to participate in sponsored activities, such as the statewide domestic violence conference, roundtable listening sessions, and culturally specific meetings. The Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa, also known as the Meskwaki Nation, is located in east central Iowa on nearly 8,000 acres of land, the majority of which is in Tama County and held in trust for the Tribe by the United States. The Meskwaki Nation is unique: first, they are the only federally recognized Tribe headquartered in Iowa; and second, they are the first Tribe to purchase and own land in Iowa. Seven elected Tribal Council members are responsible to perpetuate tribal affairs, transact tribal business, and promote the tribe's social, economic, educational, and general welfare. The Council, with the assistance of the Tribal Attorney General, ensures Tribal resolutions, laws and policies are enacted and upholds the Tribe's

Constitution and other governing documents. The Tribe serves approximately 1,456 enrolled members, in addition to 1,350 descendants, and an estimated 1,000 other American Indians.

In 2010, the Meskwaki Tribe began serving victims/survivors of dating violence, domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual abuse, sexual assault, and stalking through its victim services program, RISE (Resources for Indigenous Survivors & Empowerment) RISE serves the needs of Native American and Alaska Native victims and survivors within both the Meskwaki Settlement and Iowa's 99 counties. Client services include crisis intervention, counseling, emergency hotel stays, transportation, transitional housing, as well as economic, medical, and legal advocacy.

Section staff worked with representatives from the Tribe to establish protocol for inviting Tribal members to the planning committee and for offering Tribal leadership the opportunity to review and comment on the Implementation Plan. Vern Jefferson, Tribal Council Chairman sent a letter dated February 1, 2023, delegating the Tribe's Family Services Director as the Tribe's participant in the STOP VAWA Implementation Planning process. In March 2025, Lori Miller, grant administrator, notified Tribal members we were beginning to organize and plan for the next STOP Implementation Plan. Miller also verified with Tribal staff the participation delegation as described in the February 2023 letter is still valid. As such, Mylene Wanatee, the Family Services Director is a member of the planning committee.

Tribal leadership and Mylene Wanatee were given the opportunity to review and provide input on the final plan.

In addition to the Meskwaki Nation, the Winnebago Reservation of Nebraska includes a small portion of land within the state of Iowa, however there are no residents in this

area and the Reservation receives domestic violence and sexual assault services in its Nebraska area.

Summary of Major Concerns Identified

Throughout the planning meetings, committee members identified the following predominant issues facing victims of crime in the state, including victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.

Language access and culturally specific responses

Several members raised concern for Iowa's refugee and immigrant populations receiving appropriate supportive responses, especially with language access and language access in the court room. A member stated the court system does not offer enough languages and the advocacy groups are starting to create their own to help. CSP directors also stated the lack of interpreters is concerning for them as well, this includes interpreters for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people and the lack of understanding accommodation requirements of the American with Disabilities Act. Another committee member emphasized comprehensive language access is important. Meaning, survivors should have access throughout the criminal justice process, not just when they are testifying.

Several members mentioned **overall better communication, information sharing and outreach** would improve victim services, including better written police reports for investigation and prosecution. One member questioned if law enforcement officers are trained to listen to victims and help them through the process and help get them connected to resources. Several other committee members stated victims, especially those in rural areas and new to Iowa do not know where and how to access victim services, which prompts the need for more outreach; however, our CSP directors state many refugees and immigrants are afraid and distrustful.

Outreach for CSPs has shifted from posting on social media to less public outreach including making phone calls. A committee member, who is a law enforcement officer said knowing and understanding shelter rules and when shelters are full is important and wondered how this information could be shared.

How was this concern addressed or why it was not addressed: While not specifically addressed in the IP meetings, increased training opportunities and information sharing and training coordination from the Section's training and outreach team, training from state and national technical assistance providers, and regional victim services meetings can help grantees, law enforcement and prosecutors be better informed, increase communication and improve victim centered services.

The best way to implement lethality assessments

The committee had several conversations about lethality assessments, their value and if the state could implement a standard or statewide lethality assessment. In one of the first meetings, a couple of committee members provided a summary of the Ontario Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (ODARA), what it focuses on, their feedback on the tool and how they use it.

How was this concern addressed or why it was not addressed: In the July 2025 IP meeting, Jackie White, training coordinator on the Section's training and outreach team, presented the results from Iowa's multi-disciplinary team formed to research and report out on various lethality assessments. The IP committee discussed the implementation of a standardized assessment. Because Iowa is a home rule state, counties and cities cannot be mandated to adopt an assessment. This prompted three key points of additional conversation: 1) standardized forms would benefit law enforcement who see a lot of turnover and movement within law enforcement offices, 2) training law enforcement to use forms properly, having more formalized

checklists/forms and writing better police reports will allow the criminal justice system to more accurately determine whether an offender is likely to re-offend (potentially leading to a DV homicide); and 3) because many departments and sheriff's offices are small and extremely busy, having materials and training provided to them would likely increase their buy-in. Members of the committee offered to provide training on lethality assessments. Two members cautioned there must be connections to services and interventions which will be impactful and helpful to the victims.

Training officers to listen to victims, be accessible and connect them to resources

Where victims go for help is where we need to focus, for example when victims go to the police, we want the police to be accessible and listen to the victim. A law enforcement representative from the committee agreed this is a concern and explained why. With the high rate of turnover there are new officers constantly joining the forces or moving from one community to another. In rural areas there are only a few officers who handle all crimes. Some are not properly trained in trauma informed techniques and interviewing, many do not have mentors and while most want to learn, they often do not know where to start.

How was this concern addressed or why it was not addressed: Increased training opportunities and connections with local resources, and mentorships can improve officers' responses to victims. Encouraging victim services advocates to connect and communicate with new law enforcement officers to help them understand their communities, and resources could be the first step to helping officers become better informed. Other ideas include centralizing post-academy training for law enforcement and making such training available in communities across the state, working more within Iowa's police academies and increasing training and support to Iowa's DART and SART teams.

Providing safe, affordable and accessible housing and shelters

The costs of running shelters and providing either short term or long-term housing options for survivors has grown astronomically while the requests for housing and sheltering have also increased. The Section held several meetings on housing and sheltering, both with the IP committee and separately with other key stakeholders. The following themes/conditions emerged: 1) Victim shelters often view services through a traditional domestic violence lens and are not always resourced to provide specialized services for other victim types such those referred from culturally specific organizations, sexual assault victims and human trafficking victims. Additionally, the rules/policies/procedures with victim shelters are different from general population shelters, which has caused confusion and conflict with funding requirements and understanding from outsiders. 2) Reduced state resources, such as access to mental health services, and factors such as substance abuse, economic hardships, and financial instability have increased the length of stays in victim shelters. Shelter directors state they used to see people fleeing domestic violence who need a place to stay. Now they see homeless people who have been victimized needing shelter and services, prompting some to question what emergency shelter means. 3) Iowa needs better policies, procedures and priorities to increase victims' safety. In previous years, legislation which would have allowed victims of domestic violence to break their leases did not pass. Victims trying to flee their abusers want to move somewhere safe and unknown to their abusers. They get push back from their landlords and often return to their abusers. No contact orders where abusers are required to pay housing costs are often ignored, and not enforced, resulting in victims' inability to maintain stable housing. Increasing units of truly affordable housing has not kept pace with the need and has not been prioritized statewide.

Funding for housing and homeless programs (such as those at Iowa Finance Authority) at the state level is not prioritized.

How was this concern addressed or why it was not addressed: Conversations about housing and sheltering concerns are ongoing. While more problems than solutions were presented, the Section will continue conversations, increase education and outreach about housing. They will coordinate with other state stakeholders such as the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence, The Iowa Finance Authority's Housing Program and the States Continuum of Care boards. Hopefully, these increased efforts will address the issues presented above and result in increased safety, security and stability for all victims.

Reducing domestic violence homicides

When the committee discussed how Iowa can reduce domestic violence homicides, two major concerns emerged. 1) Iowa needs a reliable system to track and report domestic violence homicides. 2) The best way to reduce domestic violence homicides is with primary prevention practices and intervention. The committee suggested the implementation of primary prevention programming, such as one highly regarding program on teen dating violence. The Iowa Domestic Death Review board also cited primary prevention as the most important factor to lessen domestic violence homicides, followed by proper intervention practices. Unfortunately, only a small amount of victim services funding can be used for prevention.

How was this concern addressed or why it was not addressed: In the July 2025 meeting, staff from the Section's training and outreach team explained the cessation of the collection and publication of the state's domestic violence homicide statistics was due to the lack of a system to accurately capture and report on all domestic violence homicides in Iowa. Fearing they were publishing incomplete data, the Section is strategizing how to collaborate with other Iowa

stakeholders to improve the collection and dissemination of domestic homicide deaths ensuring the state receives complete and accurate information from death reporting sources.

Regarding the use of primary prevention, the Section acknowledges it can prioritize using the allowed prevention percentages from the STOP VAWA grant and the FVPSA grants.

Purpose area 20 of STOP VAWA allows states to use no more than 5 percent of their annual allocation for developing, enhancing, or strengthening prevention and educational programming to address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or female genital mutilation or cutting.

Prevention is defined in 28 CFR 90.2(d) as: The term “prevention” includes both primary and secondary prevention efforts. “Primary prevention” means strategies, programming, and activities to stop both first-time perpetration and first-time victimization. Primary prevention is stopping domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking before they occur. “Secondary prevention” is identifying risk factors or problems that may lead to future domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking and taking the necessary actions to eliminate the risk factors and the potential problem. “Prevention” is distinguished from “outreach,” which has the goal of informing victims and potential victims about available services.

FVPSA requires 25 percent of a state’s annual grant to be used for supportive services and prevention services such as training, technical assistance, and outreach to increase awareness of family violence, domestic violence, and dating violence and increase the accessibility of family violence, domestic violence, and dating violence services, including prevention and outreach to underserved populations from 42 USC Ch. 110).

IP members discussed the importance of prevention programs such as the Teen Dating Violence curriculum which is being implemented in some Iowa schools. This program as well as

several others are offered from the CDC. A representative from the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services said there are some other primary prevention activities happening in the state, such as their agency's work to determine how shared risk and protective factors, those which cause harm in a relationship, are linked to the same risk factors which cause harm to children and others in our communities. Additionally, advocates with help from the anti-violence coalitions provide localized prevention services or activities.

The bigger picture to be addressed is who is focused on addressing social factors, such as economic hardships within communities, which contribute to higher rates of developing problematic behaviors which contribute to higher violence exposure and problematic behaviors in relationships and communities.

E. Coordination of Implementation Plan with FVPSA and VOCA Programs and Rape Prevention Education under section 393A of the Public Health Service Act

As the state administrative agency for STOP, VOCA, FVPSA and SASP, the Iowa Department of Justice (Attorney General's Office) through the Victim Assistance Section (Section) coordinates funding from these sources to best serve victims and to promote the priorities set forth in its VAWA Implementation Plan. The overall goal is to support direct services to victims of crime, including victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. Through our partnerships with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and the former state victim sexual assault coalition, grantees partner their limited RPE funds with these other grant sources to support direct service efforts that arise from

the RPE primary prevention work. Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault ceased operations in early 2026 with operations and services being transitioned to the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

IV. Documentation – letters to be added later

V. Plan for Implementation Period

A. Goals and Objectives

Advocacy Based Goals and Objectives:

Goal: Increase and strengthen the administrative and organizational capacities of Iowa’s culturally specific victim serving programs.

Objective: Assign one Section grant coordinator to manage the culturally specific programs who will also work in partnership with the state coalition. Through this partnership, the Section and Coalition will assist CSP administrators build skills in development, grant writing, fund diversification, among others, in an effort to bolster programming and in turn serve more victims.

Objective: Determine the best practices to help communities better understand culturally appropriate responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. This could include hosting online or in-person community training and posting resource materials on our website.

Goal: Explore ways to improve survivor accessibility and experiences throughout the criminal justice process.

Objective: Work collaboratively with advocacy organizations to ensure they know where to locate resources for language interpretation and ensure it is understood who is responsible for securing interpreters throughout the court process.

Objective: In partnership with the CSPs, and disability serving organizations provide training and resource materials regarding responsibilities and requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Objective: Provide training and outreach on culturally responsive services to law enforcement, prosecutors and court personnel especially as it relates to clashes between cultural beliefs and state law.

Objective: Work collaboratively with the statewide coalitions/training organizations to standardize co-advocacy focusing on roles and responsibilities of the parties involved in the court process and beyond.

Goal: Improve outcomes for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking by offering resources in addition to advocacy.

Objective: Explore feasible options for ways victim service organizations can implement pieces of the trauma recovery center model while also endeavoring to increase the number of trauma recovery centers in Iowa by one per decade. <https://nationalallianceoftraumarecoverycenters.org/>

Objective: Explore options for ways victim service organizations can engage with the Office of Victim and Restorative Justice Services (OVRJP) <https://doc.iowa.gov/victim-services> as an additional route to justice. OVRJP offers post-conviction support, information, and services for

victims of crime based on the principles of Restorative Justice, recognizing that there must be prioritization for the needs, well-being, and rights of victims of crime.

Goal: In partnership with the state coalition, explore how victim services agencies in Iowa can design and/or promote options for victims who do not choose to report their victimization to law enforcement.

Objective: Increase choices for victims by promoting community and culturally specific supportive services. These services could include lethality assessments, safety planning, civil no contact orders, access to counseling and therapy, housing and relocation support, and other services determined by victim advocates.

Goal: Implement a multi-part plan to reduce domestic violence homicides.

Objective: The Victim Assistance Section will work in collaboration with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Violence Prevention Data Steering Committee by attending quarterly meetings to develop priority data resources for communicating domestic abuse homicide information to the public. Additionally, we will work together to develop a multi-year data sharing agreement between Iowa HHS – Violence Prevention Program, the Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review team, the Iowa Violent Death Reporting System and Iowa Attorney General’s Victim Assistance Section for the purposes of disseminating consistent and accurate statistics to funded programs, criminal justice agencies and other community partners.

Objective: Improve the economic well-being of victims/survivors by assisting them with strengthening interviewing skills, financial literacy, access to transportation, etc. Additionally, the Section will work in collaboration with the coalition, advocacy programs, and HHS to create

guides to help STOP funded programs better communicate available state assistance programs to victims and survivors.

Objective: Continue to promote and fund the provision of housing-first, rapid-rehousing and scattered site emergency shelter/housing models by victim service programs throughout the state as a means of improving safety and reducing risk of homicide.

Goal: Improve understanding of sexual assault by members of the military in Iowa.

Objective: The Section will collaborate with JAG officers, VA hospitals, military victim services as well as committee members from the Polk County Attorney's Office to determine the scope and reach of the issue of sexual assaults by members of the military either on an Iowa base or committed within the community.

Goal: Assist programs in better understanding the difference between primary prevention education and community education.

Objective: Section staff will work with funded programs to help them better understand the fund sources that make up their grant award. The Section will clarify what percentage of each fund source can be used for prevention activities so grantees can better utilize staff time on primary prevention in conjunction with advocacy.

Objective: Work with programs to clearly define community education versus primary prevention and allowable activities under each federal fund source. In collaboration with the Violence Prevention Coordinator at the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, the Section will create a short resource guide on examples of primary prevention activities and community education activities.

Law Enforcement and Prosecution Goals and Objectives

Goal: Promote and support an effective, victim-centered response by law enforcement and prosecution for crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking by continuing to provide STOP funding to departments throughout the state.

Objective: Prioritize grant support for specific personnel dedicated to investigating and prosecuting the STOP VAWA crime areas.

Objective: Prioritize meeting with law enforcement and prosecutors throughout each grant year to learn about other ways in which STOP funding can be helpful.

Objective: Encourage law enforcement and prosecutors to practice victim-centered interview techniques, when possible, such as allowing breaks, letting victim-survivors choose interview locations, allowing the presence of advocates or other support persons, honoring their preferred gender interviewer, and creating trauma-sensitive spaces within police departments with private, comfortable interview rooms, etc.

Court Goals and Objectives:

Goal: Improve court and criminal justice experience for victims and offenders of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking, with a particular focus on the needs of non-native English speakers and Deaf/Hard-of-hearing individuals.

Objective: Work in collaboration with state court administration and local courts to improve victim access to court-provided interpreter services at all stages of a case.

Objective: In coordination with our statewide partners, work with national TA providers to provide best practices training for judges and court personnel when handling cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.

Training Goals and Objectives:

Goal: The Section grant team will collaborate with the Section training and outreach team to promote the use of lethality assessment(s) among law enforcement and victim advocates as an additional tool to reduce revictimization and domestic violence related homicides.

Objective: Educate law enforcement and victim advocates on the benefits of using lethality assessments as a part of investigations and safety planning. Each entity will be introduced to an assessment specific to their field and the timeframe in which they would be used.

Goal: Develop and/or facilitate training(s) for justice-related entities in Iowa regarding no contact orders.

Objective: Work with statewide partners to explore way to work within the judicial system to ensure consistency in protective order documents consistent explanation of the language within the orders to both the defendant and the victim.

Goal: Improve coordination, collaboration and communication between victim services advocates and law enforcement.

Objective: Create and disseminate training materials for victim services agencies and law enforcement agencies for the purpose of helping each other understand their roles.

Objective: Collaborate with the statewide coalition to create materials that include best practices, role expectations, communication skills, etc. so expectations are clear and realistic.

Objective: Bring in at least one national presenter each year to present on a topic related to domestic violence sexual assault dating violence or stalking.

Administrative Goals and Objectives:

Goal: Provide updated application processes and priorities that reflect those identified by OVW and the Implementation Plan Planning Committee, in preparation for the upcoming competitive grant cycle.

Objective: Using the input and report for the Implementation Plan, create and/or refine priority purpose areas in the STOP grant application to address identified needs of underserved and rural victims.

Goal: Obtain an updated assessment of the specific needs facing victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking in the state.

Objective: Conduct a statewide assessment to identify service challenges and needs and develop recommendations for future possible solutions.

Statutory Priority Areas

Sexual Assault Set-Aside

Through Iowa's established funding distribution formula, one third of regional victim services funding is allocated to victim service organizations to provide sexual assault services. We meet the required sexual assault set aside by allocating approximately 20% of our total STOP funds to dedicated sexual assault victim service organizations (victim services allocation). Iowa's victim assistance training and outreach team use portions of the law enforcement and prosecution allocations to provide training to law enforcement and prosecutors on trauma informed responses to sexual assault. For the grant cycle effective October 1, 2026, Iowa will seek and prioritize funding for projects from the law enforcement and prosecution categories specific to providing sexual assault services, such as SANE or SART programs or for law enforcement officers who are training to respond to IPV. For many years, funding from the STOP discretionary category supports training and outreach from the Iowa Department of Public Health to public health and community service providers to identify, support and refer adult victims of sexual assault and intimate sexual violence.

Reducing DV Homicide

Statistics on DV homicides: Until March 2024, the Victim Assistance Section (formerly Crime Victim Assistance Division) collected data on domestic violence homicides and published twice a year *The Chronicle of Domestic Violence Fatalities*. The most recent publication on our website is from March 2023. Due to internal concerns the publication excluded deaths which were not publicly identified as domestic violence homicides, management halted the publication while seeking a better way to capture and report on DV homicides.

In 2025, The Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review Team published their findings and recommendations regarding domestic violence homicides in Iowa after reviewing case studies

from 2019 to 2022. The purpose of the Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review Team is to make recommendations for reducing domestic violence homicides in Iowa by identifying the cause and manner of domestic violence deaths. Case findings from this report about DV homicides in Iowa:

- The number of women aged 18 to 55 murdered by a former or current spouse increases every year, with a 61.2% increase from 2016 to 2022.
- Of the cases reviewed, men committed 96% of the homicides with 96% of those killed were women.
- Intimate partner violence is the leading cause of homicides for Iowa women.
- More than 80% of the women killed were white; more than 70% of DV homicides were committed by white men and 17.4% by Black or American men.
- The age group most represented for both victims and perpetrators was 26-35.
- Where homicides take place is significant – population (smaller, not larger), unemployment rates, poverty rates and lack of access to a domestic violence provider contribute to increased risks of domestic violence homicides.
- Firearms are the primary method of domestic abuse homicides, followed by stabbing, blunt force trauma and strangulation.

The report identified several key factors which increase the risk of harm and can contribute to domestic violence deaths. Social and economic factors which increase the risk of harm include communities with barriers to educational and economic opportunities neighborhoods with high crime rates, families experiencing stressful situations without coping mechanisms, people who themselves have a history of violence or physical discipline as child, relationship instability, or ending an abusive relationship, access to firearms, substance abuse,

involvement with the criminal justice system, isolation and suicidal comments or attempts by either party.

The report identified primary prevention and intervention as two key factors to reducing domestic violence homicides. Primary prevention prevents intimate partner violence before it escalates into a domestic abuse situation. Examples of primary prevention are teaching safe and healthy relationship skills, strengthening economic well-being for families, and promoting firearm safety. Interventions can improve responses to domestic violence and can potentially prevent violence from becoming homicide. Interventions specific to risk factors include local programming from community leaders, intervention and referrals from friends and family, employers who implement policies and procedures, the criminal justice system, by using risk assessments, and healthcare workers who provide support, referrals and resources.

Through conversations and an online survey, members of the IP committee contributed what they believe to be contributing factors for domestic violence homicides. Similar to the domestic abuse death review report, the committee members stated:

- Contributing factors for domestic violence homicides in Iowa include a combination of systemic, social, and individual issues. These often include a **lack of access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services** (especially for marginalized communities such as Deaf or hard of hearing individuals), **limited availability of safe and affordable housing, gaps in early intervention and prevention services, firearm access by abusers, insufficient mental health and substance abuse support, and inadequate enforcement of protective orders. Rural isolation and stigma** also play a role in preventing victims from seeking or receiving help in time.
- I feel **lack of reporting** intimate partner violence
- **not doing lethality assessments** consistently, **not upholding NCO's**, no real **tracking for firearms** with no contact orders.
- **Victim blaming**, not enough resources that focus on **helping the abuser** stop abusing, **law enforcement** not taking matters seriously enough, **protection orders** not being granted.

- Lack of **affordable childcare** for the victims. **and living wage** that might offer a victim options to leave the abusive relationship. Lack of **therapy programs** to ensure **victims and offenders receive services**.
- Prior **criminal history**, prior **offender and victim experience in the criminal justice system**, strength of **community connections** outside of the domestic relationship.
- Domestic violence homicides in Iowa are most often linked to access to **firearms, escalating patterns of abuse like strangulation and coercive control, substance misuse, and high-risk periods such as separation or pregnancy, with rural isolation and limited services** further increasing the danger.
- Lack of access to **support services**, support services are **primarily crisis based**.

What can be done in Iowa to reduce domestic violence homicides?

- **Educating the public** on the importance of reporting as well as the assistance that is available to help the survivors who are brave enough to report the abuse. **Conducting follow up / check in calls** with survivors can also help in realizing when a situation might be escalating and some sort of intervention might be needed to keep people safe.
- Reducing domestic violence homicides in Iowa requires a **coordinated, statewide** approach that **prioritizes prevention, early intervention, and accountability**. This includes expanding access to emergency and transitional **housing**, strengthening community-based responses between **law enforcement, advocacy agencies, and the courts**, and **enforcing firearm restrictions** for individuals with protective orders or convictions. **Education and prevention programs in schools and communities**, increased **training for first responders**, and sustainable **funding** for victim services are also critical. Ensuring **culturally responsive and trauma-informed support** for all individuals, especially underserved populations, will help address risk factors and save lives.
- **Lethality assessments**, better control of **firearms** for those charged with DV or NCO's, **more money** for victim service programs, **affordable housing**.
- Focus on **help for the person doing harm** - how do we change their behavior? Fully **fund victim service programs** to ensure victims have the support they need.
- Use goals and prevention **recommendations from DV death review team**.
- Lobbying to **approve the bill allowing victims to break their lease**. Additionally, temporary **housing and or childcare** for victims of DV.
- Eliminate depositions in criminal proceedings (ie **eliminating the requirement that the victim must sit in a room with the abuser** and be subjected to a broad range of questioning by the defense attorney) to ensure **more accountability for offenders** in convictions, conducting a **lethality assessment** upon arrest for a DV offense to identify earlier those victims most in need of **crime victim services and community supports**.

- Strengthen **firearm restrictions** for abusers, **expand training** for law enforcement and courts on lethality risk factors like strangulation and separation, increase **funding and access to victim services**, support **early intervention programs** that focus on changing battering behavior and target batterers, **and ensure consistent enforcement of protective orders and safety planning** through coordinated community response teams.
- Domestic violence **services should be more comprehensively supported**, more access to **mental health support in rural areas**, work more closely with **suicide hotlines**, saturation of **information about domestic violence and how to access support**

B. Addressing the Needs of Underserved Victims

1. **Recognizing and responding to needs of underserved populations**

For multiple decades, the Victim Assistance Section has funded and supported culturally specific organizations (CSP), including Thrive Together Today, a Deaf and Hard of Hearing organization. Currently, the Section funds seven CSPs. Through their competitive grant process, a portion of victim services funding is set aside for CSPs, which includes programs that operate both statewide and in local communities. For example, Amani Community Services (Black/African-American population); EMBARC/Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center (refugee communities); LUNA/Latinas Unidos por un Nuevo Amanecer (Latino/a community); Monsoon Asians and Pacific Islanders in Solidarity (API population); Nisaa African Family Service (African immigrants and refugees); RISE – Meskwaki Family Services (Native American, Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi).

Through this IP process, we learned there is diversity in and underserved populations within the communities the CSPs serve, namely those with low language skills and recent immigrants and refugees. Additionally, in rural Iowa communities, those with barriers such as substance abuse or mental health issues, elder Iowans, youth and those who identify as LGBTQ

are also determined to be underserved. Lastly, though the IP process and with input from prosecutors on the planning committee, people sexually assaulted on military bases or by active members of the military were identified as underserved in that they often slip through the cracks in the system or aren't provided timely or quality services.

2. State's set-aside requirements for culturally specific community-based organizations.

Iowa sets aside a minimum of 10% of all victim service funding for awards to culturally specific, community-based organizations (CSPs). For several years, Victim Assistance Section has supported seven CSPs. When competitive grants are released, the Section solicits grant applications from community-based and grassroots organizations that target services to specific populations, including black/African American, Hispanic and Latino/a, Africans, Asians, and Native Americans. The Section also funds a Deaf/Hard of Hearing organization.

C. Grant-making Strategy

The Section will partner the STOP funds with the other federal grant awards to meet the goals and objectives set forth previously in this report. For the grant cycle beginning October 1, 2027, the Section issued three notices for funding; 1) victim services for victim services organizations to provide advocacy and direct services to victims, 2) training, outreach and technical assistance to organizations to provide trauma informed and victim centered training and outreach; and 3) criminal justice to meet the goals and objectives set forth in this plan.

The victim services and training grants are three-year awards, while the criminal justice awards are four-year awards. The Section made the change to the period of performance for the criminal justice grants, so they align with the period of this implementation plan.

STOP funds will continue to be distributed in accordance with statutory percentages as follows:

- 5% to courts
- 25% to law enforcement or projects which benefit law enforcement
- 25% to prosecution or projects which benefit prosecution
- 30% to victim services
- 15% at state's discretion
- 5% allowed for administrative costs

The 15% discretionary funds to support victim service programs as well as specific projects such as the public health training initiative with the Department of Public Health, which focuses on sexual abuse and intimate sexual violence response and referrals.

1. Ensuring eligible entities' awareness of funding availability

Grant opportunities and announcements are made public and shared in a variety of ways. All funding announcements are posted in the grants management system and posted on the Attorney General's website. Press release announcements and email notifications are distributed through the Attorney General's extensive networks of state agencies, nonprofit organizations and media outlets. The Section hosts online informational webinars about our funding opportunities. Additionally, through the implementation process, we discussed the upcoming funding opportunities often and with a variety of audiences.

2. Ensuring consultation with victim service programs in application process

Every application for STOP funding must include a partnership or consultation agreement with the local or statewide victim service program (dependent upon the applicant's service area). Each partnership agreement must specify how the applicant will meaningfully work and consult with victim service providers in the development and implementation of their grant application plans.

3. Funding selection process

The Section awards STOP and other federal funding through a competitive grant process, with the next competitive cycle beginning October 1, 2026. At the start of the competitive cycle, applicants are selected for a multi-year period of performance. In noncompetitive grant years, applicants submit continuing applications.

All applicants for STOP funding must follow the application requirements set forth in state administrative rules, which detail the eligibility criteria and activities as well as the grant review and selection process. All grant requests are submitted through the Iowa Department of Justice's online grant management database. Once submitted, grant staff conduct a preliminary review of each application to ensure eligibility, completeness and consistency with the Department's mission and funding purposes. Staff then convene a grant review committee, comprised of staff, board members and subject matter experts. Members of the review committee are assigned grants to review and score and provide feedback and funding recommendations. The Section recruits grant reviewers with from across the state and with the expertise to provide honest and professional feedback and funding recommendations. The Section uses generally accepted methods of application review including checklists, quality scales, points-based systems, written

comment by applicant reviewers, formulas based on past funding, population, clients served, region or area served, and available funds. Additional evaluation criteria include the prioritization of victim safety in all proposed activities, history of collaboration and partnership with victim service agencies, prohibition of practices that endanger victims (such as forced testimony or arrest for failing to comply with a subpoena or inappropriate restrictions on shelter access).

4. Population and geographic distribution of grant awards

The distribution of grant awards is obviously dependent upon the applications received. As described above, the Section engages in extensive efforts to share funding notices throughout the state. The implementation of a regional service model for victim service grantees ensures grant funding is awarded and accessible to communities throughout Iowa regardless of population size or geographic location.

5. Addressing need and geographic size of service areas

Iowa's victim services regionalization model ensures advocacy services are funded and accessible across the state. This includes the provision of direct victim services for domestic abuse, sexual assault, sheltering, human trafficking, homicide and other violent crimes. The regionalization model also includes a funding formula, (explained in greater detail below) that accounts for population variances, while ensuring access to services.

6. Grant award time periods

All STOP funds will be awarded on a multi-year basis. Grants for direct services and victim advocacy operate on a three-year funding cycle. Grants for criminal justice system organizations

(law enforcement, victim witness coordinators, prosecutors, courts, etc.) are on a four-year funding cycle.

7. Plan to equitably distribute funds on geographic basis

For all victim services funding, including the designated STOP funds, the Section uses a funding formula developed with input from victim service programs, the state coalitions and culturally specific service programs.

Prior to the competitive grant cycle, the Section prepares a funding distribution spreadsheet which includes the total amount of funding to be released, broken down by funding sources, along with the required funding distribution formulas. This includes Iowa's self-imposed funding formula whereas at least 10% of all victim services funding is set aside for culturally specific programs. From the remaining victim services dollars, 60% is a base amount distributed equally to Iowa's victim services regions with 40% distributed based on population. Iowa's victim services funding formula also requires equitable allocation of funding to serve victim types and to provide support for sheltering victims.

For the prosecution and law enforcement grants, applicants are from lower resourced offices and departments who use grant funding to supplement smaller budgets. We also receive applications from larger and more populated counties who use grant funding to hire staff to address an increased workload.

8. Other funding plans, if known

The State of Iowa has no plans to implement the “Crystal Judson” purpose area to provide required training.

VI. Conclusion

Throughout the implementation process it was clear people are passionate about the work they do, the people they serve and their desire for justice. We discussed the importance of prevention and intervention – two key principles to reducing domestic violence homicides and stopping the cycle of crime. While only a small portion of victim services funding can be used for prevention, we must seek out other ways to provide better outcomes for victims. This might be through additional training, resources and outreach. It might be through bold changes to traditional victim service advocacy, like incorporating trauma recovery center practices or post-conviction wrap around services.

With fewer resources in the state to help victims, our victim services organizations are called upon to do more with less – not necessarily from us, but from others in the community who look to them to absorb the work left behind. There is a culture of scarcity.

The Victim Assistance Section continues to use its STOP funds to enhance the capacity of local practitioners – advocates, law enforcement and prosecutors – to implement and augment victim-centered strategies to respond to crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that promote victim safety and seek effective offender accountability.