

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FEDERAL FUNDING CUTS IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES WHILE NEEDS ARE ON THE RISE

Domestic violence and sexual assault services bracing for a 34% reduction in VOCA funds.

STATEWIDE, NC – Today, domestic violence and sexual assault agencies across the state brace themselves for the impact of a 34% reduction in Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, a vital source of funding for victim services across the country. North Carolina will receive 34,437,828 for victim assistance grants in FY 2021 (down from 52,368,267 in FY 2020). During peak VOCA funding in FY 2018, North Carolina received \$103,435,763. VOCA funds are used to support life-saving services in domestic violence and sexual assault services, such as the maintenance of crisis hotlines, emergency shelter, safety planning, and court and hospital accompaniment.

Without intervention from the federal government, programs are expecting additional VOCA cuts in years to come. VOCA funding cuts are caused by shrinking deposits in the Crime Victim Fund (CVF). The CVF is fed by fees from federal criminal prosecutions. As prosecution strategies have shifted in recent years to favor more non-prosecution and deferred prosecution agreements, federal law has not been updated to allow the penalties and fines from these agreements to be deposited into the CVF. The U.S. House of Representatives passed the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act (H.R. 1652, S. 611) on March 17, 2021, but the Senate has failed to advance this bill.

Diane Barber-Whitaker, Interim Executive Director, NC Governor’s Crime Commission: “The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) federal program is not funded with appropriated (tax) dollars. Instead, this program is funded with fines and forfeiture monies received by the federal government and then allocated to states. Due to the volatility in how funds are collected and made available to states, program funds provided to NC have decreased from approximately \$103.4M in FY2018, to \$70.4M in FY2019, to \$34.4M in FY2021. As a result of this decrease, the funds that the state has available to award to organizations that provide services to victims of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse and others through this program have also decreased. For example, the average award made to a DV shelter or rape crisis center to provide basic services in FY2019 was \$416,412, while the average basic services award in FY2021 was \$275,761 (34% decrease).”

Tom Campbell, President and Chief Executive Officer, Family Service of the Piedmont: “We experienced a 46% reduction in funding for our Children’s Advocacy Centers as a result of VOCA cuts. This drastic reduction will directly impact the capacity of our CACs. The grant period for our DV/SA basic services will be up for renewal in the coming year and a similar reduction to these funds would have a dramatic impact on our service delivery throughout Guilford County. COVID-19 and CARES Act funding helped support our programs during the pandemic, however these funds are now gone. This situation has resulted in a “perfect storm” in terms of reduced funding at a time when we are seeing an increase in demand that we project will continue to grow.”

MEDIA INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE

Carianne Fisher, Executive Director of the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, can discuss the impact of VOCA cuts on domestic violence service providers.

“VOCA funding was critical before the pandemic. During the past year and a half, we have been reminded of how much work is still to be done in preventing and responding to domestic violence. It is devastating to be losing funding for these services that are so essential to the health and safety of all North Carolinians just when we need that financial support the most.”

Monika Johnson-Hostler, Executive Director at the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault, can discuss the impact of VOCA cuts on sexual assault service providers.

“It is imperative we preserve and strengthen the Victims of Crime Fund. The drastic decrease in funding directly impacts the ability to support survivors’ healing and safety. These cuts diminish the capacity of rape crisis programs as they prepare to lay off staff who respond to hospitals, answer the hotline, and provide therapy to survivors. We need Congress to act now.”

ABOUT NCCADV

For more than 30 years, the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCCADV) has worked to confront the public health issue that is interpersonal violence. Staffed by experts, NCCADV is dedicated to eradicating violence in the home by way of supporting all survivors, regardless of race, age, SES, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, belief system, or immigration status. Staff simultaneously practice advocacy as well as enhancement of prevention and education measures. Through the organization’s partnerships with state and local government bodies, agencies providing critical services to survivors, and a growing membership base, NCCADV has positioned itself to be an informed leader in the effort to end domestic violence. Information on where to find local resources by county can be found at <https://nccadv.org/get-help>.

ABOUT NCCASA

The NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA) is the sole statewide organization working to end sexual violence through education, advocacy, and legislation. NCCASA provides training to rape crisis centers and other allied professionals to build local level intervention and prevention capacity to support all survivors and to build the anti-violence movement across NC.

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