

Improving Sexual Assault Services

One State's Approach to Success

The History Behind the Change

In 2009, Iowa's state funding body for crime victim services noted that of an estimated 55,340 Iowans who experienced a sexual assault, only 8% were being served by the existing system. Shelters, on the other hand, had an average 42% vacancy rate. These facts, and the need to more efficiently use shrinking funds, led the state to revamp the way they funded both sexual assault and domestic violence programs.

"I think three years ago if we were honest about the level of competency and actual service numbers – you know, whenever we would talk we would say we served domestic violence and sexual assault... 'and sexual assault' should have been a smaller font because of the time and energy we put into sexual assault was probably half of what we put into domestic violence."

~ Executive Director of a former dual-service provider

Iowa's Approach



The funder divided the state into 6 regions and service providers could apply for funds to offer sexual assault comprehensive, domestic violence comprehensive, domestic violence shelter services, or a combination of the three. Only 1-2 programs per region would be funded for each grant type.

Results	2012	2015
Number of stand-alone SA programs	3	10
Number of dual DV/ SA programs	24	0
Sexual assault survivors sheltered	105	253
Total SA survivors served	4,149	6,221

Changes at a Glance

Number of SA standalone programs increased from

★ 3 to 10 ★

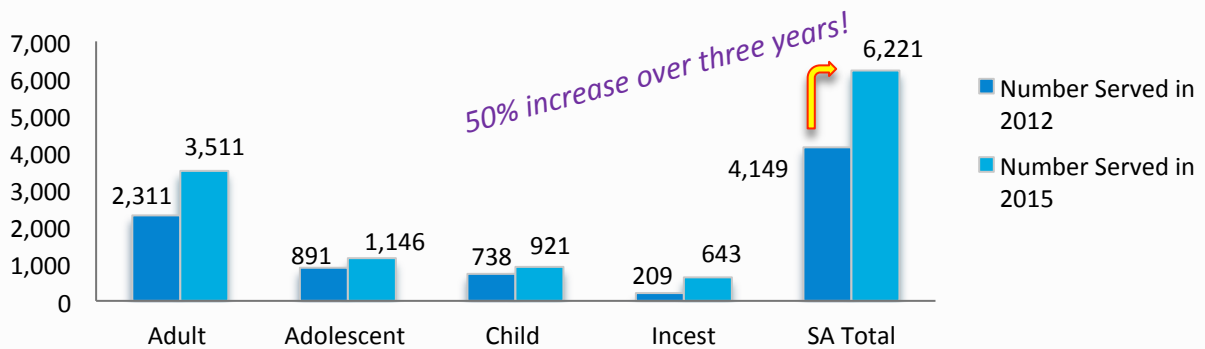
The number of sexual assault survivors served overall increased by

★ >50% ★

Top Factors in Growing Iowa's Sexual Assault Services

- Staff exclusively focused on SA; not pulled away by the grinding daily pace of DV work.
- Emphasis on mobile services; going to survivors' homes, meeting them in the community.
- New partners – greater engagement with universities, prisons and the National Guard due to recent legislation/focus. Building relationships beyond the criminal justice system; working with employers, therapists, substance abuse/mental health programs .
- New approaches – art therapy, running groups, co-facilitating groups with other types of service providers. Creating programs & services for under-served populations – the elderly, men and dependent adults with cognitive disabilities.

Sexual Assault Survivors Served in 2012 and 2015



Outcomes:

Expected & Unexpected

- Better positioned to deal with new legislation/programs, like Title 9, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) and the National Guard's Sexual Assault Prevention & Response program
- More accurate assessment of child incest cases in shelters – greater awareness

"In communities that we have done events for years and we see the same people year after year, when we started to offer [arts-focused groups/ programs] as an opportunity – we're seeing a whole new group of people that we've never connected with before. ... Part of it is just putting ourselves out there in as many different places as possible."

--Executive Director

Factors that Make Iowa Unique

- Close and supportive relationship between SA and DV state coalitions; DV coalition backed separation of dual-services 100%
- Stable Attorney General, with political clout to withstand criticism where programs closed