

Press Release: Disability Rights Wisconsin Celebrates Signing of Act 241; More Is Needed

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Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) joins organizations and advocates across Wisconsin in celebrating the signing of Act 241, a bipartisan measure which appropriates \$10 million in fiscal year 2023-24 for grants for sexual assault victim services, domestic abuse services, and child advocacy centers. This funding will help support critical services for survivors across the state and will help ensure continuity of these services in the face of a significant cut in federal funding through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

Unfortunately, this funding will not cover the entirety of the gap in VOCA funding, including the grant program which funds [DRW's Victim Advocacy Program](#). The Wisconsin Department of Justice Office of Crime Victim Services' "[VOCA: Victims of Crime Act 2024-2025 Competitive Grant](#)" announcement states, "The current funding available through OCVS for this grant cycle is \$13 million for one year, which is approximately \$31 million less than what OCVS has currently awarded to all VOCA subgrants for the 2019-2024 VOCA grant cycle. Agencies may not apply for more than \$250,000 and those agencies who request the maximum amount may not receive it." DRW's current VOCA grant amount is \$872,000 annually, meaning even a grant at the maximum amount possible for the 2024-2025 grant cycle would be a **more than 70 percent decrease in funding to support the state's only victim advocacy program specifically providing services to individuals with disabilities who have experienced crime.**

People with disabilities are impacted by crime at a significantly higher rate than people without disabilities. According to recent U.S. Census data, people with disabilities account for approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population, but between 2009-2019 the rate of violent crime against people with disabilities was twice that of people without disabilities, and from 2010-2014 the rate of serious violent crime, including sexual assault, against people with disabilities was more

than three times higher than the age-adjusted rate for people without disabilities.¹ In addition, people with disabilities are more likely to “experience more severe victimization, experience it for a longer duration, suffer multiple episodes of abuse, and have a larger number of perpetrators.”² DRW has been proud to offer our Victim Advocacy Program since 2016 to people with disabilities who are victims of crime and will continue our work with state and federal legislators and other decision-makers to work toward additional funding to fill the gap in federal VOCA funding to ensure the continuity of these crucial services.

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is a private non-profit organization that protects the rights of people with disabilities statewide, with a mission to advance the dignity, equality, and self-determination of people with disabilities. Disability Rights Wisconsin serves as the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy system for the State of Wisconsin, charged with protecting the rights of children and adults with disabilities and keeping them free from abuse and neglect.

¹ “How Safe are Americans with Disabilities”, Nancy Smith, Sandra Harrell, and Amy Judy, Center on Victimization and Safety;
www.endabusepwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/How-safe-are-americans-with-disabilities-web.pdf

² Ibid.