

RESOLUTION # R - 3 - 24
RESOLUTION TO ENDORSE 2023 WISCONSIN SENATE BILL 877
AND 2023 WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY BILL 940

WHEREAS, on January 5, 2024, Senate Bill 877 was introduced into the Wisconsin State Legislature; and

WHEREAS, on January 12, 2024, Assembly Bill 940 was introduced into the Wisconsin State Legislature; and

WHEREAS, each of the bills seek to amend various sections of Wisconsin Statutes relating to the funding of victim services and domestic abuse services, training for grant recipients, grants to child advocacy centers, and makes respective appropriations to ensure adequate funding for these activities in light of impending federal government funding cuts; and

WHEREAS, under current federal law, the funding provided for local victim services and domestic abuse services, training for grant recipients, and grants to child advocacy centers in connection with the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is anticipated to be reduced substantially; and

WHEREAS, it is anticipated that the Women’s Community funding via VOCA will be reduced in excess of \$234,000 in October of 2024, and the funding for the Child Advocacy Center of North Central Wisconsin anticipates funding to be reduced by approximately 50% in connection with the VOCA reductions in 2023-2025; and

WHEREAS, in July of 2021, the federal government has adopted the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021, which is intended to enhance the collection of revenue necessary to sustain VOCA activities across the county; however, the collection of revenue and the subsequent allocation of funding will not mitigate the cuts anticipated through fiscal year 2024-25; and

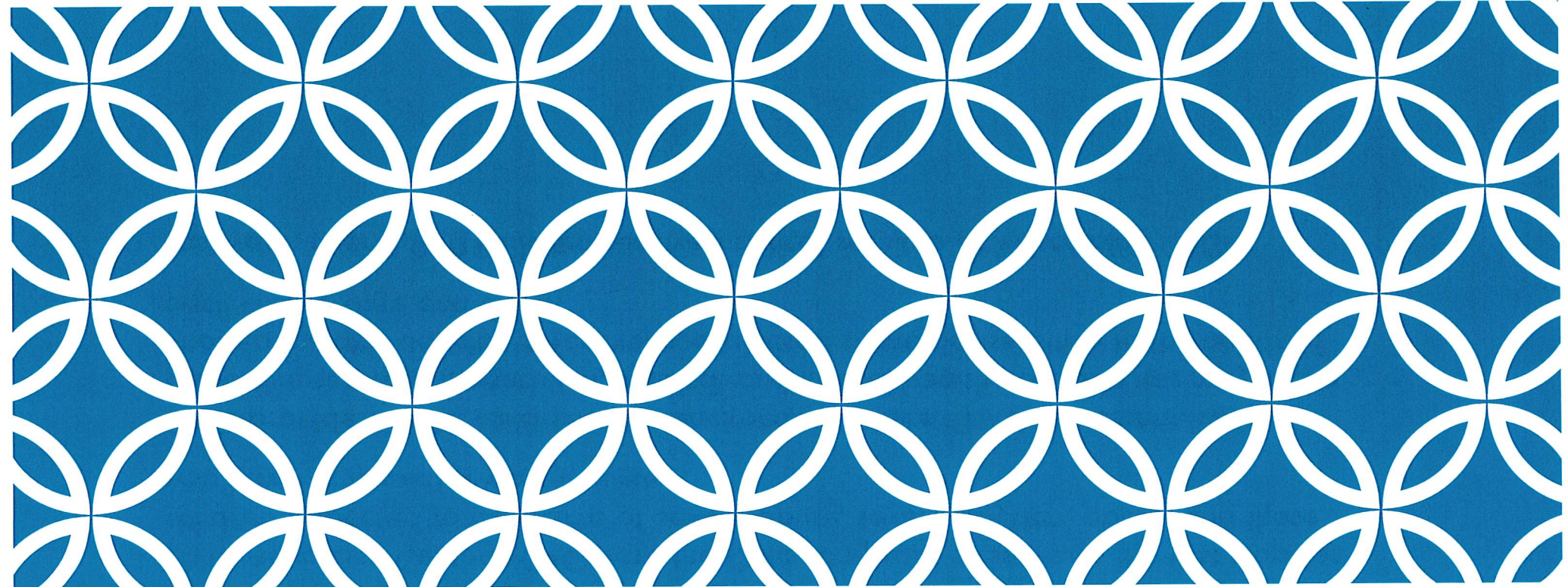
WHEREAS, the services provided by the Women’s Community and the Child Advocacy Center of North Central Wisconsin through their respective VOCA allocations are critical to our communities, particularly victims of domestic violence and child victims of crime.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marathon does hereby endorse 2023 Senate Bill 877 and 2023 Assembly Bill 94 and instructs the Marathon County Administrator to submit a statement in favor of the legislation on behalf of Marathon County to Marathon County legislators, the Governor of the State of Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Counties Association.

Dated the 23rd day of January, 2024.

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Fiscal Impact: None.



**CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER
OF
NORTH CENTRAL
WISCONSIN**

**Federal, State
& Local Funding**

January 2024

WHAT IS A CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER?

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are the **ONE** non-profit to serve as the first stop for children suspected to be victims of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, and those who have witnessed a violent crime.

CACs provide a safe, child-friendly environment where law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medical and mental health professionals may share information and develop effective, coordinated strategies sensitive to the needs of each unique case and child.

Last year, over **7,000 children** received critical services at Wisconsin's CACs.

FUNDING SOURCES:

Federal Funding – VOCA (Victims of Crime Act)

- Funds created by Congress in 1984 to provide federal support to state and local programs that assist victims of crime; uses non-taxpayer money from the Crime Victims Fund for programs that serve victims of crime. Funds are generated by fines paid by federal criminals to support services for over 6 million victims of all types of crime.
- Between 2015-18, Congress released substantially larger sums from this fund. This enabled our CAC to add a mental health therapist to provide trauma-focused therapy to children alleged to be victims of abuse and neglect, at no cost to the family.
- Since 2019, the VOCA funds released annually had steadily decreased. This is largely due to shrinking deposits due to prosecutorial strategies that changed over the last decade.
- In summary, when deposits into the Crime Victims Funds are reduced the amount allocated to states for victims is also reduced.
- Wisconsin is currently awarded \$44.5 million in VOCA funds ending September 30th.
- Wisconsin's anticipated VOCA funding for 2024-25 is between \$13-15 million; an approximate \$30 million reduction

• Source: National Network to End Domestic Violence

VOCA FUNDING FIX:

VOCA Fix Act

- Legislation amended the law to deposit penalties and fines from non-prosecution and deferred prosecution agreements into the Crime Victims Fund.

VOCA Legislative Fix

- In July 2021, President Biden signed the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021 into law. This was the 1st step needed to sustain funding for victims.

▪ Source: *National Network to End Domestic Violence*

CURRENT VOCA FUNDING

VOCA Fix Act was critical first step

Legislative changes will take time and new cases to replenish funds to 2018 levels.

Local funded programs face substantial funding reductions of 50% or greater over the next few years; Wisconsin anticipates a \$30 million reduction for 2024-25.

VOCA funding is currently used to support personnel essential to the daily operations of the CAC. This includes:

- 2 part time Forensic Interviewers
- 1 full time Advocate Case Manager
- 1 Licensed Mental Health Therapist (Behavioral Health Consultant)

STATE FUNDING OF CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS

Wisconsin currently allocates \$17,000 per year to each of the 15 CACs across the state = annual state allocation of \$255,000

This amount pales in comparison to neighboring states and annual allocations:

- Illinois - \$11 million
- North Dakota - \$ 6.75 million
- Indiana \$ 1.5 million
- Michigan - \$ 1.3 million
- Iowa - \$ 1.07 million

SENATE BILL 877

Now is a critical time for Wisconsin to invest in its most vulnerable children and families. CACs provide healing, trust, and justice to child victims of maltreatment. Wisconsin CACs need funding to provide direct services to child victims, including forensic interviewing, mental health services, victim advocacy, medical evaluations, and more

Local Rep. Patrick Snyder, R-Schofield, co-sponsored a stand-alone bill requesting \$250,000 be allocated for each of Wisconsin's CACs, as well as an additional \$250,000 for the State Chapter.

This funding request is to enhance the multidisciplinary response to suspected child maltreatment and will need to be revisited every 2 years during budget discussions.

MARATHON COUNTY MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM (MDT)

The Marathon County MDT is an active team utilizing the CAC on a regular basis to aid in the investigation of child maltreatment, as well as potential prosecution of criminal acts.

The MDT is comprised of several stakeholders:

- Marathon County District Attorney's Office – Prosecution
- Marathon County Department of Social Services – Child Protective Services
- All Law Enforcement agencies in Marathon County - Law Enforcement.
- Marshfield Medical Center/Dr. Carolyn Nash & SANE Program – Medical
- The Women's Community - Advocacy
- Probation & Parole
- Wausau & DC Everest School Districts

MARATHON COUNTY MDT (CONTINUED):

Children suspected of child maltreatment are referred to the Child Advocacy Center by law enforcement, child protective services and the district attorney's office.

Children seen at the CAC are interviewed by a specially trained forensic interviewer and all interviews are recorded and shared with investigators.

In addition, children and families are provided advocacy services and support through a Co-Advocacy model consisting of our on-site Advocate Case Manager and a community advocate from The Women's Community.

Behavioral Health Consultants are also on hand to provide consultation and interventions as needed, as well as ongoing individual therapy.

The MDT meets monthly to review cases, provide agency updates, as well as training and technical assistance.

FUNDING ESSENTIAL TO THE CAC AND MDT MODEL

CACs currently utilize \$2.3 million in VOCA funds for direct service. *This means that CACs are at risk of losing essential personnel.* This includes forensic interviewers, victim advocates, mental health professionals, support and administrative staff, and more

An increase in state funding is essential to sustain CACs and their personnel. Potential cuts to these services are likely to have an impact on the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases in our county.

In addition, many children are at risk of losing access to free mental health services to assist in the healing and recovery process.

CAC EFFORTS TO ADDRESS FUNDING CONCERNS

Nearly half of the 15 CACs in the state also receive local funds (city/county) to help support their centers. The level of funding ranges from less than \$10,000 to nearly \$130,000 per year.

Children's Wisconsin (7 CACs throughout the state) is currently working with the state chapter in providing legislative advocacy in hopes of increasing state funding. Several CAC Directors are participating in Advocacy Day at the Capitol on January 18th.

Children's Wisconsin Foundation is currently exploring private funding sources, including donations from individual donors, foundations, and corporate donations.

CONCLUSION

NEXT STEPS

- Local leaders can reach out to legislators asking them to support Bill 877
- Continued discussions on importance of CACs and the MDT model in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases

Questions:

Thank You on Behalf of Children's Wisconsin and the CAC of North Central Wisconsin