



Josh Kaul
Wisconsin Attorney General

P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG Kaul Defends Critical Services for Crime Victims

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul today announced that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has stated that it will not apply alarming restrictions to critical Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) services supporting survivors of domestic violence and other crimes. Last month, [Attorney General Kaul and a coalition of 20 other attorneys general sued DOJ](#) over unlawful new conditions that threatened to cut off critical legal services for survivors who could not immediately prove their immigration status. As a result of the lawsuit, DOJ reversed course and indicated that the federal government will not apply the restrictions to states' VOCA Victim Assistance and VAWA funds, ensuring that survivors can continue to rely on these crucial supports, regardless of immigration status.

“Victim services can help keep people safe, and they are often essential in addressing the damage caused by crime,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “The Trump administration should stop taking actions that could disrupt access to victim services.”

For decades, the VAWA and VOCA programs have enabled states to support survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other violent crimes. These grants fund services such as legal representation for protective orders, custody and visitation matters, child support, housing and relocation assistance, and victims' rights assistance that helps survivors escape abuse and rebuild their lives. VAWA and VOCA also fund rape crisis centers that provide urgent support to victims of sexual assault. Congress deliberately designed these programs to reach every eligible survivor, regardless of immigration status, because public safety depends on

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ensuring that all victims can seek help, report crimes, and rebuild their lives without fear.

In October, the coalition filed a lawsuit after DOJ informed states that they could no longer use VAWA or VOCA funding to provide legal services to undocumented immigrants. The new “Legal Services Condition” applied not only to future awards, but also to grants that had already been issued, some dating back years. The attorneys general warned that the restriction would impose severe burdens on service providers, who do not collect or verify immigration status, and that forcing survivors to produce proof of status before receiving help would be dangerous and potentially impossible.

As a result of the attorneys general’s lawsuit, DOJ has taken the position that the challenged restriction cannot and will not be applied to any current VOCA Victim Assistance or VAWA grant awards.