

Working Toward a Violence Free Future

By Dr. Maria Corona, CEO, Violence Free Iowa

Sexual assault and domestic violence coalitions evolved across every U.S. state and territory from community rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters to create a collective political voice.

For over forty years, the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (IowaCASA) and the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) stood as pillars in our state's response to sexual and domestic violence. For forty years, we worked in close partnership with a shared membership of local victim service providers serving all 99 counties in Iowa.

Last year alone, this network served [52,113 survivors](#). More than 17,000 were victims of sexual assault, which includes child sexual abuse and trafficking. These are not just numbers; they are our neighbors, friends, and colleagues who needed support and care – and victim services were there.

Earlier this year, we shared with the public that the coalitions made the collaborative decision to centralize statewide sexual and domestic violence coalition responsibilities at ICADV. Now, we share the name that carries that work forward: Violence Free Iowa.

This transition is not just a structural change; it represents a profound evolution in how we strengthen trauma-informed and healing-centered care in Iowa. But we must be clear about what this means: the dissolving of a forty-year-old institution (IowaCASA) that has been instrumental in shaping state and national sexual assault advocacy standards. That is a heavy thing to do. It requires immense care to ensure nothing falls through the cracks, and it demands a specific kind of leadership that honors the past while relentlessly focusing on the future.

For many who have been part of this work, there may also be grief in this moment. Many built careers, friendships, and professional identities within these coalitions. I recognize the weight of that history. I stand on the shoulders of many brilliant women who led each coalition at one point or another during the last four decades, and I don't take that responsibility lightly.

What grounds us moving forward is our shared commitment to survivors, victim service providers, and the movement we have built together. I am committed to moving sexual and domestic violence victim advocacy forward.

Violence Free Iowa is not about leaving that history behind. It is about carrying the strongest parts of that history forward while building the statewide coalition Iowa needs for the future. Sexual assault and domestic violence remain distinct and equally central priorities of our work.

Centralizing our resources is already helping us respond faster to a shifting national funding landscape. But our commitment goes beyond financial stability. We are committed to ensuring sexual assault victim service providers are taken care of. We have hired dedicated advocates with deep experience in both local sexual assault victim services and national training and technical assistance. As a membership-based coalition, our goal remains simple: listen to the [25 victim service provider organizations](#) across Iowa and ensure their voices guide our strategy.

This new chapter is built on the foundation of IowaCASA's and ICADV's past work, the support of our state and national partners, and our commitment to local sexual and domestic violence victim service providers. While we have solidified a wonderful team, we ask for your patience as we grow into this chapter. Our name is our promise: We are working toward a future where every Iowan feels safe, and our communities truly thrive free from violence.

With gratitude

Maria B. Corona

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