



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATEMENT

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Emergency Contraception to Support Rape Victims

We urge Attorney General Bird to continue allowing state victim compensation funds to cover contraception and abortion care for rape victims. Plan B works to prevent unintended pregnancy by preventing ovulation and is a highly effective contraceptive method to help rape victims avoid unintended pregnancy.

Every state, including Iowa, established a state victim compensation fund as one way to hold offenders accountable. State victim compensation funds collect fines, fees, and penalty payments paid by offenders resulting from prosecutions and use these *non-taxpayer funds* to compensate crime victims for the costs incurred because of a crime. No general taxpayer dollars go into the state victim compensation fund, i.e., these non-taxpayer offender accountability funds are separate from taxpayer funds appropriated by legislators each year in the state budget process.

The Iowa Sexual Abuse Examination Payment Program (SAE) covers the cost of forensic examinations provided to victims of rape and sexual abuse and is funded from the victim compensation fund. Forensic exams are essential to prosecution of sexual abuse crimes, to collecting evidence that can help identify offenders and prevent them from harming multiple victims, and to improving access to medical care for victims. Ensuring victims are not responsible for the cost of a forensic exam or for medications required due to the assault is key to encouraging victims to undergo this extremely invasive medical exam as soon as possible after a violent assault. The majority of forensic exam costs paid for by Iowa's state victim compensation funds are for juvenile victims of sexual abuse. ([CVAD Annual Report](#), pp.6-7)

Victims of rape and child abuse have an acute need for timely access to health services, including contraception to prevent unintended pregnancy and abortion care. Cost should never be a barrier for rape victims seeking medical care. Using offender accountability victim compensation funds to cover the cost of forensic exams, incentivizes victims to undergo an invasive exam that can help prevent offenders from victimizing others and enhance access to medical care for crime victims. This is a good public policy and consistent with medical ethics and standards of care. We always urge policymakers to help support crime victims by eliminating barriers to accessing support services and to avoid policies creating new ones. And in this instance, we urge AG Bird to enhance access to services and healing for rape victims.

The Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (IowaCASA) and Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) support 26 local agencies across Iowa providing direct services to victims of rape, domestic and sexual abuse, homicide, and human trafficking. We strive to support local agencies in their efforts to enhance access to effective, comprehensive support services requested and needed by crime victims.