

ACCESS Liaison Report

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1. Need for Program. Describe who the target population is and whether their numbers are increasing or decreasing. Indicate the source of this information. Also, indicate how the program/service is different and how it is similar to others and what would happen if the program/service ceased to exist. List the priorities established by ASSET Funders, which the programming addresses. The mission of ACCESS is to address the roots and impact of domestic and sexual violence through services that enhance safety, empower survivors, and promote understanding and social justice within our community. The mission of ACCESS is to address the roots and impact of domestic and sexual violence through services that enhance safety, empower survivors, and promote understanding and social justice within our community.

All services provided by ACCESS are free and confidential.

- 24-hour Crisis Lines: Listening, support, information and advocacy
- Housing: Safe, temporary emergency sheltering and housing for victims and their children.
- Children's Programs: Counseling, advocacy, outings, and play groups.
- Individual Counseling: Short-term counseling to adult survivors of child sexual abuse, sexual assault, or domestic violence or dating violence.
- Support Groups: Support groups for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and children who have experienced or witnessed family violence.
- Advocacy: Support, information and referrals for clients working with the legal, medical, or social service systems.
- Community Education: Educational programming to schools, community groups, organizations and agencies.
- Crisis Response Services
- SART (Story County Sexual Assault Response Team): Crisis support and on-going advocacy.

Sexual Assault Crisis Line: 515-292-5378 or Toll Free 800-203-3488

Domestic Abuse Crisis Line: 515-292-0519 or Toll Free 855-983-4641

Housing/Sheltering Crisis Line: 515-292-0543 or Toll Free 855-696-2980

ACCESS is one of the few entities to provide both shelter (housing) and emergency services for sexual and domestic assault. They meet the funder's requirements for crisis intervention, assistance to low and moderate income families, safety, health, and well-being to children and adults, and programs and services that promote personal safety with regards to violence and substance abuse, both in Ames and Story County.

As part of their sexual assault services, ACCESS provides FREE and CONFIDENTIAL support to victims of sexual violence. ACCESS understands that an experience of sexual violence is highly personal.

Therefore, any victim may want to take time considering all options for service, and make the choices that best meet her/his comfort level.

- Our 24-hour crisis line 1-800-203-3488; for a victim, friend, family or support to reach an advocate to discuss safety and support needs.
- Response: In-person, 24/7 response to victim in need, such as when reporting sexual violence to law enforcement or a medical provider, or to another location where a victim is seeking help.
- Criminal Justice Advocacy: support to a victim as she/he reports a crime, or is involved in later proceedings relating to the crime such as meetings with attorneys or court hearings.
- Systems Advocacy: assistance to a victim in seeking help from, or explaining needs to systems such as a workplace, to a medical or counseling provider, or to a school/ university.
- Community education and training; to help all community members engage in the fight against sexual violence and to enhance community member's and professional's skills to increase protections for victims.

Sexual Abuse Counseling:

An advocate can provide counseling to assist a survivor of sexual violence in recognizing the impact of abuse, to identify the strength that she/he had in surviving this abuse, and to recognize resources that can be utilized for long term healing. We strive to increase a survivor's own capacity to heal in whatever way she/he feels is most beneficial. Whenever possible, ACCESS strives to connect a survivor to a long-term specialized resource such as a counselor or therapist. In addition, we hope to help a survivor build informal supports in her/his own life. We can provide education and support to family members, friends, neighbors, or supports within a faith community.

All services to victims of sexual violence are voluntary. The goal of ACCESS is to help a survivor decide what course of actions she/he is ready to take, to prepare for these steps through education and support, and empowerment.

As part of their domestic abuse services, ACCESS provides FREE and CONFIDENTIAL support to victims of domestic violence. This includes:

- Our 24-hour crisis line 1-855-983-4641; for a victim, friend, family or support to reach an advocate to discuss options for immediate safety or wellbeing.
- Housing advocacy: help in assessing a victim's current living situation, and making a plan for safety relating to where that victim lives. This may mean seeking funds for rent assistance so that a victim can stay in her/his own home, assistance in relocating to a safer place, or financial counseling to help a victim organize her/his resources to increase stability.
- Response: In-person, 24/7 response to victim in need, such as when reporting domestic violence to law enforcement or a medical provider, or to another location where a victim is seeking help.
- Civil Legal Advocacy: support and education in civil legal cases such as filing an order of protection or pursuing custody for the protection children.
- Criminal Justice Advocacy: support to a victim as she/he reports a crime, or is involved in later proceedings relating to the crime such as meetings with attorneys or court hearings.
- Systems Advocacy: assistance to a victim in seeking help from, or explaining needs to, systems such as the Department of Human Services, schools, workplaces, or counseling providers.
- Community education and training; to help all community members engage in the fight against domestic violence and to enhance community member's and professional's skills to increase protections for victims.

Domestic Abuse Counseling:

An advocate can provide counseling to assist a survivor of domestic violence in recognizing the impact of abuse, in identifying the strength that she/he had in surviving this abuse, and to recognize resources that can be utilized for long term healing and growth. Whenever possible, ACCESS strives to connect a survivor to a long-term specialized resource such as a counselor or therapist. In addition, or instead, we hope to help a survivor build informal supports in her/his own life. We can provide education and support to family members, friends, neighbors, or supports in a faith community.

All services to victims of domestic abuse are voluntary. The goal of ACCESS is to help a survivor decide what course of actions she/he is ready to take, to prepare for these steps through education and support, and empowerment.

As part of their sheltering services, ACCESS operates scattered-site emergency sheltering in Ames. This shelter primarily serves Story County, with open spaces also available to any victim in need. An individual in need is encouraged to call to discuss the need for shelter. If a victim is looking for shelter from another area outside of ACCESS' service area, we encourage that person to be in touch with the shelter or domestic violence program in your area to best assess all options and coordinate services. To find your local program, visit www.iowavictimservices.org.

Our shelter is designed to alleviate the immediate housing needs associated with fleeing domestic violence, sexual assault, or other forms of violence. An individual or family entering shelter is provided with basic needs like food, clothing, personal hygiene products, and other items to help them feel comfortable. A shelter resident is offered assistance in seeking immediate and long-term safety, processing the violence, and case management centered around finding the next best stable housing option.

All services are free and confidential.

ACCESS is also in its second fiscal year having an advocate specifically for Homicide and Other Violent Crimes.

2. Program Strengths. Pick two to four factors that contribute most importantly to the program/service outcomes. Do not list everything that is satisfactory. We will assume that things not mentioned are okay. For each strength, describe some supporting evidence.

A) Scattered-site housing gives ACCESS a chance to put clients into housing that will allow them to more easily work back into a traditional living situation and provides for use of federal funding monies that prefers the scattered-site model. It also allows for more space and independence that has proven key for clients to become comfortable leaving shelter housing.

B. There is a strong relationship between ACCESS & other organizations that benefits both organizations (for example, partnering with YSS & ERP for Reggie's Sleepout).

C. There is a strong, dedicated, and experienced group of staff and volunteers that understands working w/ people in crisis. The shelter has been at or near maximum capacity and have done an excellent job staying organized and providing for as many clients as possible.

D. They have a good response team and process for those who have experienced sexual assault both in the community and university, and have a good process set up to work with all parties involved, and are focused on what is best for the client.

E. ACCESS's board has been active and involved and will continue to be until a new director is chosen and comfortable.

3. Program Weaknesses. Select factors that detract most from the program/service achieving its outcomes. Present details as described above. Recommendations for reducing these weaknesses should follow the discussion of each weakness.

A. Not having a Director. The co-directors are doing an excellent job keeping ACCESS run smoothly and work well together, however, it would be more ideal for the long-term future if they had one director.

B. While the location has been excellent, there is currently an inconvenience as cyride no longer has a route stop at ACCESS.

C. Limited housing staff. ACCESS is currently down a couple of staff members, but that is more temporary than anything.

4. Financial Outlook. Current funding concerns should be described. In addition, the assessment of the program's plan to cope with shrinking resources should be given.

The agency continues to become more financially stable and learn how to adapt to the changing resources. They have been able to work not only with ASSET funders, but have found other sources of revenue to maintain all of their programs. This includes trying to diversify funding through national, state, and local funders.

5. Internal Management Practices. Summarize your assessment of the management of the agency, and the role of the Board. If there are deficiencies, details should be provided. Conclude with recommendations when appropriate.

ACCESS has experienced Co-Directors that has a good relationship with staff, volunteers, and board. Prior to the former Director leaving this past summer, the board conducted a search that did not yield any viable options. There was a new search that has yielded 3 finalists and the hope is that there will be a new director chosen by December. Until that time, the Co-Directors and doing their best to keep ACCESS and the programs running smooth. One of the Co-Directors is trying to form a plan in case of future turnover at the Director position. The entire staff is committed to ACCESS and is demonstrated by the time commitment and effort they make towards the agency.

6. Agency Suggestions/Comments. Make note of any suggestions, comments or questions agencies may have with regard to the ASSET process, budget forms and or anything else that relates to the process.

One of the issues with the current ASSET process is that there are times when it is tough for a staff member to be able to tell what category that the staff should be counting as hours. There are times when they might initially meet with a client of domestic violence for counseling, but then the counseling could also have some system counseling or an education piece. During those times, it can be tough to distinguish what rate and what hours ACCESS should be putting down for ASSET. Since the hours and rates are different, it would just be easier if there was a fair, general category for domestic violence, sexual abuse, etc.

ACCESS seems to be doing an excellent job of meeting its core objectives through strong Board involvement; an experienced and dedicated staff, good relationships with partnering agencies, and effective processes. The staff continues to demonstrate a resilience and goodwill that enables them to move forward in identifying and meeting the needs of those they provide services and programming too. As there seems to continue to be a need, ACCESS could see further growth in the future but since they are still stabilizing with the change to scatter-site housing and currently have interim directors, ACCESS will wait on future growth.