



HOVC Certification Manual

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About ICCC

The Iowa Coalition for Collective Change (ICCC) is an anti-violence coalition supporting survivor services organizations statewide. ICCC conducts training, certification, technical assistance, research, community education, and policy advocacy in order to learn about the experiences of survivors, support their healing, and improve public policy.

Vision

To improve the lived experiences of Iowans by transforming systems to create a society free from violence & oppression.

Mission

To support organizations that serve marginalized populations experiencing violence through education, research, & systems advocacy.

Pillars

The core pillars of ICCC's work are:

- Supporting culturally specific survivor services organizations
- Supporting homicide & violent crime survivor services organizations
- Supporting other organizations that serve victims of crime from marginalized communities
- Systems change through training, education and policy advocacy.

In addition to providing training and technical assistance to member agencies, ICCC conducts and disseminates research about the lived experiences of Iowans and views community education as integral to supporting the work of these agencies and the survivors they serve.



Purpose of Certification

Definitions

“Victim counselor”

A person who:

- works or volunteers for a designated victim services agency, and
- has a minimum status for providing confidential direct services to survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault, and other violent crime, based on their completion of 20 hours of training as outlined in Iowa Code §915.20A.

“Certified advocate” or “Specialist”

A person who:

- works or volunteers for a designated victim services agency, and
- has met the minimum requirements for a victim counselor, and
- has completed the advanced training, supervision, and client contact requirements outlined in the certification manual, and
- whose application has been approved by ICCC’s certification committee.

Confidentiality & Iowa Code

To provide effective services to survivors of violence, advocates must be able to offer survivors confidentiality. This means that they will keep all survivors’ information - their names, demographics, contact information, and stories - private. Without the specific and informed consent of the survivor, advocates will not and cannot disclose survivors’ information or their status as a client to any person or entity outside their agency.



[Iowa Code §915.20A](#) describes the minimum training necessary for an advocate to be covered by confidentiality, and outlines the boundaries of victim-counselor privilege:

A victim counselor shall not be examined or required to give evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding as to any confidential communication made by a victim to the counselor, nor shall a clerk, secretary, stenographer, or any other employee who types or otherwise prepares or manages the confidential reports or working papers of a victim counselor be required to produce evidence of any such confidential communication, unless the victim waives this privilege in writing or disclosure of the information is compelled by a court pursuant to subsection 7.

Advocates are encouraged to read and become familiar with this section of Iowa Code, and can read it in its entirety here:

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/2014/915.20A.pdf>.

Individual agencies should have policies in place to protect confidentiality and to respond in the event of a subpoena, and should communicate and enforce these policies with all staff.

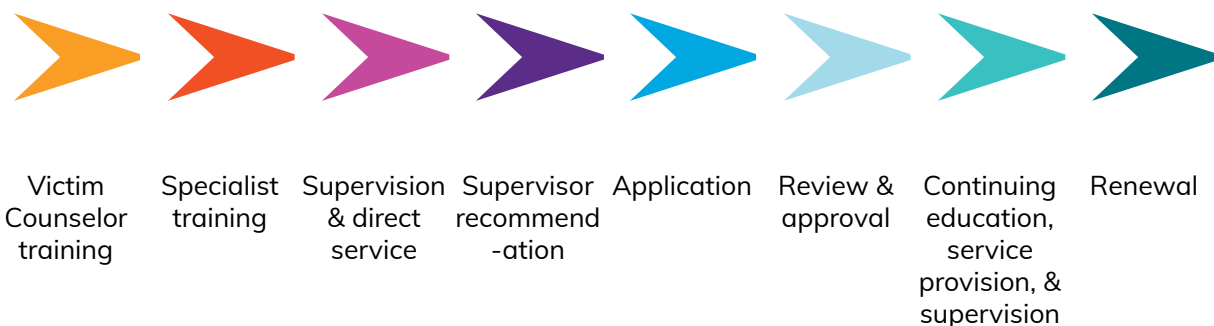
Standards & Ethics

In addition to the legal protections of confidentiality, the certification process ensures that advocates possess a shared understanding of best practices and community resources, and the skills and knowledge necessary for ethical, effective advocacy. This provides advocates, agencies, and survivors with both peace of mind and a clear path to accountability.

ICCC's *Program Administration & Direct Services Standards for Victim/Survivor-Serving Programs*, which includes an advocate code of ethics, can be found on ICCC's website at iowachange.org/advocacy-training-certification or at bit.ly/3BWeEj5.



Certification Process



Training

To be certified by ICCC, advocates must complete both a basic victim counselor training course and an advanced course which covers topics relevant to their area of specialization.

ICCC offers advanced HOVC training multiple times per year. Advocates may view and register for upcoming trainings at iowachange.org.

Victim Counselor (Basic)

In order to be covered by confidentiality, an advocate must complete at least 20 hours of training by a designated agency that includes the following topics:

- Dynamics of victimization
- Substantive laws regarding violent crime, sexual assault, & domestic violence
- Crisis intervention techniques
- Communication skills
- Working with diverse populations
- Overview of state criminal justice system
- Pertinent hospital procedures
- State & community resources for victims of crime

Advocates may receive this training from ICCC, IowaCASA, ICADV, or another designated agency as described in Iowa Code §915.20A. Advocates are advised to complete this training as soon as possible after they begin their role with a survivor services agency.



Advocates should receive from the training agency a certificate or other documentation of their completion of this training, and **keep this documentation on file**.

Specialist (Advanced)

Specialist training currently available to advocates includes Sexual Assault (IowaCASA), Domestic Violence (ICADV), Shelter (ICADV), and Homicide & Other Violent Crime (ICCC).

Homicide & Other Violent Crime (HOVC) Specialist Training includes the following topics:

- Context of violence in society
- Traumatic stress
- Serving survivors with dignity & compassion
- Traumatic bereavement
- Systems response to HOVC
- Vicarious trauma
- Cultural responsiveness
- Crime victim compensation
- Community work

Advocates should receive from the training agency a certificate or other documentation of their completion of this training, and **keep this documentation on file**.

Other Requirements

Supervision

In order to be certified as an HOVC Specialist by ICCC, advocates must engage in at least **two (2) hours per month** of ongoing consultation with a direct supervisor, licensed clinician, certified HOVC Specialist, or other ICCC-approved service provider for at least **6 months**. Consultations may be conducted in-person or electronically, individually or with a group.

Advocates and/or supervisors may be asked to provide a record of these consultations. A simple list or spreadsheet is acceptable documentation.



Direct Service

In order to be certified as an HOVC Specialist by ICCC, advocates must engage in a minimum of **forty (40) hours** of direct service work with survivors of various types of crime, including homicide and traumatic loss.

Advocates and/or supervisors may be asked to provide a record of these hours. Timesheets are acceptable documentation.

Application

Advocates who have completed the training, consultation, and direct service requirements outlined above are eligible to apply for HOVC Specialist certification. The online application can be found on ICCC's website at iowachange.org/advocacy-training-certification or at cognitofrms.com/IowaCoalitionForCollectiveChange/HOVCSpecialistCertificationApplication.

Applicants must upload documentation of their training, as well as a recommendation letter signed by their direct supervisor and program director. A template for this letter can be found in Appendix B.

Special Circumstances

Previous Training

Advocates who have received training or certification through out-of-state agencies must work with ICCC staff to determine their path toward certification in Iowa. Documentation of out-of-state training and certification, including dates and topics covered, is essential to this process. ICCC reserves the right to require that advocates with out-of-state training complete the full course of certification training in Iowa to ensure fidelity with state and ICCC requirements.

Advocates who have received training or certification from other Iowa-based agencies or coalitions must demonstrate that the content of the training aligns with the ICCC requirements for certification, and work with ICCC staff to fill any training gaps. Victim counselor training provided by IowaCASA or ICADV within the previous 2 years will be considered acceptable.



Missed Training

Advocates who miss a significant portion of any required training (one full module or more) are not eligible for certification and must work with ICCC staff to ensure that they receive the necessary content. ICCC staff will determine acceptable options for making up any missed training.

Program Directors

Program directors who provide no or limited direct services as part of their regular duties will be considered for certification. ICCC staff may reduce the direct services requirement with consideration to directors' knowledge, experience, and duties.

Directors applying for certification may submit a letter of recommendation signed by a board member in lieu of a direct supervisor.

Review & Approval

Designated ICCC staff will review all completed Specialist Certification applications and will notify applicants of their status within **one (1) month** of receiving the completed application.

Applicants will work with ICCC staff to address any gaps in training or concerns about their suitability for certification.

Approved applicants will receive an electronic copy of their Specialist Certificate, and should keep an electronic and paper copy of this certificate on file.

ICCC staff will retain electronic and paper copies of all application materials received and certificates issued. Advocates and their supervisors may view their ICCC certification file upon written request.

Renewal

Certified advocates wishing to renew their certification must do so by the renewal date issued on their certificate. The renewal date will be **two (2) years** from the date the certificate is issued.

To renew their certification, advocates must:

- Continue to be a staff or volunteer of a designated victim service agency;



- Complete at least **20 hours** of continuing education **per year (40 hours total)**, of which at least **4 hours per year (8 hours total)** must be from ICCC. See *Appendix C: Continuing Education* for details.
- Complete at least **4 hours per year** of consultation with a supervisor or other approved service provider (**8 hours total**)
- Provide at least **20 total hours** of direct service to survivors of violence over the course of 2 years
- Complete the certification renewal application (available on ICCC's website at iowachange.org/advocacy-training-certification or at cognitofrms.com/iowaCoalitionForCollectiveChange/HOVCSpecialistCertificationRenewalApplication)

Designated ICCC staff will review all completed Specialist Recertification applications and will notify applicants of their status within one (1) month of receiving the completed application.

Revocation

ICCC takes the integrity of the certifications it issues very seriously, and will hold certified advocates accountable for any actions that violate their legal or ethical obligations. ICCC staff will make every effort to thoroughly investigate complaints and work with advocates, supervisors, and directors to address any conduct or ethical concerns. ICCC reserves the right to revoke the certification of any advocate who, through action or inaction, intentionally or negligently:

- significantly jeopardizes the safety, privacy, healing, or wellbeing of a survivor;
- engages in unlawful, discriminatory, biased, or abusive conduct during the course of their work or in any way that reflects upon their ability to serve survivors; or
- is otherwise in violation of the Code of Ethics (Appendix A).

Any advocate whose certification is in jeopardy or revoked will be notified of their status in writing, as will their direct supervisor and program director. ICCC's Executive Director will approve all decisions regarding revoking certification. Advocates who wish to appeal a revocation of their certification must do so in writing within **one (1) month**. ICCC's Board of Directors will review the appeal and issue a final decision within **two (2) months**.



Appendix A: ICCC Code of Ethics for Victim Counselors & Certified Victim Advocates

- I. Victim Counselors have an ethical responsibility to adults and children who seek their assistance.
 - A. Victim Counselors will be competent.
 1. Victim Counselors will have knowledge of the field of violent crime experiences and the skills to apply the knowledge.
 2. Victim Counselors will constantly update their knowledge and skills.
 3. Victim Counselors will not operate outside the limits of their competence, but make referrals or consultations in those areas. Advocates will seek advice and counsel from colleagues and supervisors whenever such consultation is in the best interest of clients.
 4. Victim Counselors will understand how many cultural, historical, and social norms lead to and condone violence and how those norms impact the individual.
 - B. Victim Counselors will tell clients about the following:
 1. All of the services offered by the program;
 2. The qualifications of Victim Counselors;
 3. The expectations the agency may have for the client;
 4. The grievance procedure;
 5. Any obligation the agency may have to report child abuse to the Department of Human Services;
 6. The limits of confidentiality.
 - C. Victim Counselors will protect the client's confidentiality within clearly defined limits. These limits will be explained to all clients as follows:
 1. Informed, specific consent may be given to the Victim Counselors by the client to obtain services for the client from other service providers.



2. If agency policy states that advocates are mandatory reporters, the client will be informed that confidentiality cannot be maintained in the following situations:
 - a. When a dependent adult or child has been abused, exploited or neglected.
 - b. When the client's life may be endangered and they cannot give consent.
 - c. When the client makes a probable threat or is violent against another person.
 3. The client will be informed that confidentiality may not be maintained when a court issues a court order for specific information (as stated in Iowa Code 915.20A subsection 7).
 4. The Victim Counselor will consider the potential for harm to a client when releasing information even with informed consent, and consult with a Certified Advocate.
 5. A client will be given the option to remain anonymous within certain limitations, such as a crisis call or support group member.
 6. The client has the right to refuse all or part of services to protect their anonymity.
- D. Victim Counselors will have clear boundaries between work and social relationships and will be aware of the inherent privilege and power differences. The Advocate will never exploit relationships with clients for personal advantage.
1. Prior and/or present social, personal, or business relationships with clients require special consideration. When appropriate, the Advocate will refer these clients to another service provider within the agency or within another agency.
 2. Advocates making decisions about forming social, personal, or business relationships with former clients after provision of services should take into serious consideration any potential for harm or exploitation to the former client, and proceed accordingly. Advocates should strive at all times to do no harm to current and former clients.
 3. Advocates should not provide services to people to whom they are related, or people they consider family.



4. Sexual and/or romantic relationships with current or former clients are prohibited. This is also a crime under Iowa Code Chapter 709.15.
 5. Victim Counselors:
 - a. will work to increase victim safety;
 - b. will respect the authority and autonomy of the adult victim to direct their own life; and
 - c. will hold the perpetrator, not the victim, responsible for the violent behavior and for stopping the violence.
 6. Victim Counselors will treat the client with respect and honesty in both verbal and nonverbal communication.
 7. Victim Counselors will share knowledge they have with clients as it relates to the client's situation. This may include but is not limited to the dynamics of violence, lethality issues, safety planning, effects on children, and the social, historical, systemic, and political issues that contribute to violent crime.
 8. Victim Counselors will accept what a client tells them about the violence.
 9. Victim Counselors should only withdraw services suddenly under unusual circumstances, giving careful consideration to all factors in the situation and taking care to minimize possible adverse effects.
 10. Victim Counselors who anticipate that services to clients will be ended or disrupted should notify those individuals promptly. Transfer, referral, or termination of service should be done in relation to the client's needs and preferences.
- E. Victim Counselors will equitably distribute time, goods, and services among all clients. Advocates will not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of age, color, creed, disability (developmental, mental, or physical), economic or housing status, familial or marital status, gender identity, immigration status, national origin, physical appearance or size, political beliefs, preferred language, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or any characteristic protected by local, state, or federal law. Advocates will not impose their own religious, spiritual, or politically partisan belief system upon survivors or colleagues. Advocates will not retaliate against clients or colleagues for reporting concerns about discrimination in good faith.



1. Victim Counselors will practice and regularly engage in continuing education around cultural humility.
 2. Victim Counselors will be knowledgeable about and make appropriate accommodations for survivors with disabilities and/or language access needs.
 3. If one client's needs conflict with another client's needs, Victim Counselors will assist one client after promptly referring the other to another qualified service provider.
- F. Victim Counselors will assess clients to determine the nature of the violence, the extent of the violence, and the safety needs of the client. Victim Counselors will do nothing to increase the danger to or harm the client.
- II. The Victim Counselor has an Ethical Responsibility to keep records.
- A. Victim Counselors will keep records documenting services provided as mandated by funders in accordance with state and federal guidelines. Victim Counselors will obtain client consent before recording demographic data, and will not create or keep records that would result in harm to the client.
 - B. Victim Counselors will record statistical and factual information, not opinions, speculations, or conclusions.
 - C. Victim Counselors will allow clients access to their own records and explain to clients the purpose and extent of the program's data collection and recordkeeping.
- III. Victim Counselors have an ethical responsibility to themselves.
- A. Victim Counselors with education, training, and experience have the right to be called professionals and to be treated professionally.
 - B. Victim Counselors will collaborate with other professionals to promote and support recognition and fair treatment of the profession.
 - C. Victim Counselors will prioritize their own self-care to reduce burnout and proactively address the effects of vicarious trauma.
 - D. Victim Counselors will recognize when personal circumstances may compromise professional abilities, performance, or judgment, and will seek support to resolve those issues.
 - E. Victim Counselors will avoid relationships or commitments that conflict with the interests of victims/survivors.



- IV. Victim Counselors have an ethical responsibility to employers and peers.
 - A. Victim Counselors will follow the policies and procedures of their employers.
 - B. Victim Counselors will treat colleagues with respect, fairness, and courtesy.
 - C. Victim Counselors should not assume professional responsibility for the clients of another agency or a colleague without appropriate communication with that agency or colleague as required by confidentiality.
 - D. When making public statements, Victim Counselors must clearly separate their personal views from positions adopted by organizations for which they work or are members.
 - E. Victim Counselors will report any conflict of interest that prevents themselves or a colleague from being able to provide ethical services, work cooperatively with colleagues or allied professionals, or be impartial in the treatment of any client, as outlined in their agency's policy.
 - F. Victim Counselors will report violations of the Code of Ethics by fellow Victim Counselors to the certifying agency in a timely manner.
 - 1. Depending upon the extent of the violation, it may be appropriate for Victim Counselors to intervene with the colleague in question or their supervisor to prevent further harm, and escalate the matter to the certifying agency if the issue continues.



Appendix B: Letter of Recommendation Template

[AGENCY LETTERHEAD]

[SUPERVISOR NAME]
[SUPERVISOR TITLE]
[AGENCY ADDRESS]

[DATE]

Membership & Training Coordinator
Iowa Coalition for Collective Change
950 Office Park Road, Suite 127
West Des Moines, IA 50265

To whom it may concern:

I hereby recommend [ADVOCATE'S NAME] for Homicide Specialist Certification. [ADVOCATE'S NAME] is qualified and prepared for this certification, has engaged in 2 hours per month of consultation with an approved services provider, and has completed at least 40 hours of direct service work with survivors of various types of crime, including homicide and traumatic loss. Documentation of these consultation and direct service hours can be made available upon request. I can be contacted at [E-MAIL ADDRESS] or [PHONE NUMBER] to answer any questions related to this advocate's preparedness for certification.

Sincerely,

[SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE]
[SUPERVISOR NAME]
[SUPERVISOR TITLE]

[AGENCY DIRECTOR SIGNATURE]
[AGENCY DIRECTOR NAME]
[AGENCY DIRECTOR TITLE]



Appendix C: Continuing Education

Calculating hours

The number of “contact hours” (time in which the advocate is receiving the educational information) shall be the number of hours earned. Scheduled breaks are not included in this time. For example, for completing a workshop with the following schedule...

9:00 - 10:00	Introduction
10:00 - 11:30	Discussion
11:30 - 12:30	Lunch break
12:30 - 3:00	Panel
3:00 - 3:30	Break
3:30 - 5:00	Practice

...the number of continuing education hours earned would be 6.5:
 $8 \text{ hours} - 1 \text{ hour lunch} - 0.5 \text{ hour break} = 6.5 \text{ hours}$

Types of opportunities

Educational opportunities that may qualify for credit include but are not limited to:

- Workshops
- Trainings
- Film screenings
- Panels
- Webinars

Content

ICCC recognizes that advocates must be educated on a wide array of intersecting issues. Topics that may qualify for credit include but are not limited to:

- Victims' rights & compensation
- Safety, including tech safety
- Grief, loss, & bereavement
- Cultural responsiveness & cultural humility
- Marginalized populations



- Privilege & oppression
- Specific types of violent crime (e.g. human trafficking)
- Dynamics of violence
- Community accountability & other alternative justice models

ICCC will make information available to member programs about upcoming opportunities that can be used for continuing education credit. To inquire whether credit can be earned for a specific activity, contact ICCC staff.

Documentation

Advocates should receive from the training agency a certificate or other documentation of their completion of training. If no certificate is provided by the trainer, advocates should keep their own record of the training to the best of their ability (for example, registration confirmations, agendas, timesheets, travel logs, or screenshots). Advocates should **keep this documentation on file** so that they can easily access it when applying to renew their certification.

