

Gov. Evers: Announces \$45 million investment in safer communities, violence prevention efforts

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, joined by Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul, violence prevention advocates, and community leaders, today announced a \$45 million investment in ensuring safer communities through violence prevention and support for crime victims. Under the plan announced today, Gov. Evers is investing \$25 million into violence prevention efforts and \$20 million to support victim services in Wisconsin. The violence prevention funds will help bolster both statewide research initiatives and community-based solutions, and the funding for victim services will support providers in meeting the recent increase in demand for these services.

“We’re working to build the future we want for our kids and our state, and that means working to address the cycle of violence and crime to ensure safe schools, safe streets, and safe communities,” said Gov. Evers. “This is another public health crisis that needs our attention and action, and like any public health issue, it starts with prevention. Violence and its effects on kids, families, and communities are not inevitable. We have to focus on the root causes and invest in interventions and community-based solutions, and we have to make sure the trusted folks and organizations who are already doing this work are at the center of this process.”

Funded through the state’s American Rescue Plan Act funds, these allocations build upon the governor’s previous investments in economic recovery, in mental and physical healthcare, in education, and in the well-being of kids and families across our state—all of which help create strong communities and prevent violence. \$6.6 million of the \$25 million allotted to violence prevention efforts will be allocated to the Medical College of Wisconsin’s (MCW) Violence Prevention Project, housed in their Comprehensive Injury

Center. These funds will be used to support research, data collection, education, and community engagement efforts around violence prevention as a public health issue. MCW's Violence Prevention Project will also receive \$10.4 million of these funds to administer a competitive grant process to support violence project efforts statewide.

"The American Rescue Plan has provided an unprecedented opportunity for local and state leaders to invest in comprehensive approaches to violence prevention that are rooted in public health and smart on public safety," said Reggie Moore, Director of Violence Prevention Policy and Engagement for the Comprehensive Injury Center. "I am pleased to see state and city leaders prioritizing investment in addressing this very serious public health crisis."

Additionally, the \$25 million investment in violence prevention also includes \$8 million that will go directly to the City of Milwaukee's Office of Violence Prevention to respond to the pandemic-related uptick in violence and trauma with projects that take a public health approach to violence prevention. The Office of Violence Prevention is dedicated to reducing violence in Milwaukee through partnerships with government, non-profit, neighborhood, and faith organizations.

"I am grateful for this timely and necessary investment by Governor Evers in violence prevention in Milwaukee," said Arnitta Holliman, Director of the Office of Violence Prevention. "We have clearly seen the impact that the pandemic has had on gun violence in Milwaukee and throughout the country. These resources will be critical for increasing our capacity to prevent, intervene, and respond to the historic levels of violence we are seeing in our city."

Finally, \$20 million will help support victim services in Wisconsin through a grant administered by the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ). Programs across Wisconsin have reported increased demand for services due to the pandemic, while at the same time, federal funding for these services under the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) has been declining. The funds announced today will help VOCA fund recipients meet the increase in demand while ensuring culturally-

specific programming remains available.

“The investments that Governor Evers is announcing today will provide major support to efforts to stop crime before it happens and to ensure that services are available to crime victims despite the multimillion-dollar shortfall in federal funding under the Victims of Crime Act,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “Thank you, Governor Evers, for this substantial investment in public safety.”

Of the \$20 million, \$100,000 will go toward the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA), which is the only statewide membership, training, and technical assistance agency for sexual assault service providers in Wisconsin. This funding was included in the governor’s 2021-23 biennial budget proposal, but language authorizing WCASA to access the funds was removed by the Legislature.”

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