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Grant cuts hurt service agencies

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By Mike Belt

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At a news conference last week, state and local advocates for victims of domestic and sexual abuse celebrated the 2007 Kansas Legislature's decision to increase funding for services.

At the same time, those agencies were searching for money to make up for a cut in federal grants.

"The key to this is that the funding picture always fluctuates," said Sarah Jane Russell, executive director of GaDuGi SafeCenter in Lawrence.

The Legislature approved an extra \$2 million for statewide outreach programs provided by victim service agencies such as GaDuGi and Women's Transitional Care Services based in Lawrence.

But a separate income source — the state's annual grant through the Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) — was cut. The grant is funneled to agencies in Kansas through the governor's office. GaDuGi, WTCS and other similar nonprofit agencies across the state are looking for ways to make up those lost dollars.

WTCS is receiving a \$110,000 VOCA grant, down about \$7,000 from last year. WTCS provides safe shelter, peer counseling, advocacy and other services to survivors of domestic violence.

GaDuGi's VOCA grant is \$42,317, about 12 percent less than last year. GaDuGi provides advocacy and support for survivors of sexual assault.

Kansas agencies had been told to expect the federal grant cut, Russell said.

Meanwhile, the Legislature's \$2 million statewide funding resulted in WTCS getting \$72,000, while GaDuGi's share is \$33,027, Russell said. With those funds, the agencies will increase victim outreach programs in Jefferson and Franklin counties. Those plans will continue, they said.

"We would never stop providing direct services; that is our main mission," Russell said. "All nonprofit (agencies) have to fit the pieces of the financial puzzle together each year."

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