

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Justice Department Awards \$500,000 to Initiate Video-Based Services for Deaf Victims

Today the Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) announced an award of \$500,000 to the Vera Institute of Justice's Center on Victimization and Safety to create a plan for establishing a National Deaf Service Line that will enable Deaf victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence and stalking to speak directly with a Deaf advocate or an individual who is fluent in their preferred mode of communication via video phone 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

For many Deaf individuals, the most effective form of communication is in-person, using sign language or an assistive communication device. Services that are most responsive to the needs of Deaf victims are firmly rooted in Deaf culture and provided by individuals who use the same mode of communication, but such services are often not available because of the limited number of culturally Deaf-specific domestic violence and sexual assault programs.

"Clear communication is essential to helping victims find and receive the services they need," said OVW's Principal Deputy Director Bea Hanson. "The National Deaf Service Line will give Deaf victims an enhanced means of accessing safe, culturally appropriate services." While in-person services remain the best option, remote services, provided by a Deaf advocate, via video phone are the next best option.

The Vera Institute of Justice has worked extensively to end domestic and sexual violence in the lives of individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals through trainings, technical assistance, conferences and a number of key Deaf-specific initiatives.

With this award, OVW is entering the first of a two-phase project; phase two will be the implementation of the plan the Vera Institute of Justice will develop. The plan will include description of how the National Deaf Service Line will complement the services currently offered to the Deaf community by the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

OVW provides leadership in developing the nation's capacity to reduce violence against women through the implementation of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and subsequent legislation. Created in 1995, OVW administers financial and technical assistance to communities across the country that are developing programs, policies and practices aimed at ending domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. In addition to overseeing 21 federal grant programs, OVW often undertakes initiatives in response to special needs identified by communities facing acute challenges. For more information on OVW, please visit www.justice.gov/ovw.