



## FEDERAL FUNDING TO ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a pervasive and life-threatening crime that impacts millions of victims each year. Federal policies have helped to significantly reduce these crimes and increase safety for victims. Federal funding helps to build upon these successes toward ending domestic violence. Investments in these programs save victims' lives, hold perpetrators accountable, and work to end domestic violence.

☑**The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act and related key programs at HHS:** The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) funds emergency shelters, crisis lines, counseling, victim assistance, and other vital services for over 1.3 million domestic violence victims and their children each year.

Related programs at HHS work to address and prevent domestic violence and sexual assault, such as the DELTA prevention grants, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, the Rape Prevention and Education program, and the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant.

☑**The Victims of Crime Act Fund (VOCA):** VOCA is a fund for victim services created out of fines and penalties paid by federal criminals, rather than taxpayer dollars. Over 4,000 agencies rely on VOCA to provide services to nearly 4 million crime victims annually.

☑**The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA):** U.S. Department of Justice VAWA programs are at the heart of our nation's response to domestic violence. Each of these programs is critical to ensuring that victims are safe, that offenders are held accountable, and that our communities are more secure. Key programs within VAWA include:

- The **Services, Training, Officers and Prosecutors (STOP)** state formula grant program supports coordinated community responses to domestic and sexual violence, and is the foundation of our nation's work to end domestic and sexual violence.
- The **Civil Legal Assistance for Victims** program helps to meet the civil legal needs of victims. This program provides practical solutions and long-term stability for victims and their children, and helps to lower incidents of domestic violence.
- The **Services for Rural Victims** grant program enables communities to develop services to meet the unique needs facing victims in rural areas.
- The **Transitional Housing** grant program provides an essential continuum between emergency shelter and permanent safe housing for survivors fleeing violence.
- The **Grants to Encourage Arrest** program increases offender accountability and reduces homicide.
- The **Sexual Assault Services Program** state formula grant program funds rape crisis centers.

Additionally, VAWA supports services survivors on campuses, in rural areas, on Tribal lands and to those who are elderly, disabled or underserved. VAWA's programs work together to address the continued epidemic of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

**OVERVIEW OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES –**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS**

**Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)**

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) program supports life-saving services including emergency shelters, crisis hotlines, counseling, and programs for underserved communities throughout the United States and territories. A formula grant administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, FVPSA is the only federal funding source dedicated to domestic violence shelters and programs. FVPSA is the cornerstone of our nation's efforts to address domestic violence. There are approximately 2,000 community-based domestic violence programs for victims and their children (approximately 1,500 of which are FVPSA-funded through state formula grants). Many programs across the country use their FVPSA funding to keep the lights on and their doors open. The importance of this funding cannot be overstated: victims in every community must have a place to which they can flee when they are escaping life-threatening violence.

A multi-state study, funded by the National Institute of Justice, shows conclusively that the nation's domestic violence shelters address both the urgent safety needs and long-term security needs of victims and are helping victims protect themselves and their children.

Despite FVPSA's great promise, community-based domestic violence programs report that they cannot meet the overwhelming demand for services. The increased attention on domestic violence through high-profile abusers, increased training for law enforcement, prosecutors and court officials, investments in homicide reduction programs, and efforts to increase screening and referrals by healthcare and social service professionals, have led to a corresponding increase in demand for emergency shelter, hotlines, and supportive services.

The *Domestic Violence Counts Census* conducted by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) found that in just one day during 2015, while more than 71,828 victims of domestic violence received services, nearly 12,197 requests for services went unmet, largely due to lack of funding. Of those unmet requests, 63% were for safe housing. In 2013, domestic violence programs funded by the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) provided shelter and non-residential services to more than 1.3 million victims. However, due to lack of capacity, an additional 186,552 requests for shelter went unmet. In 2015, domestic violence programs laid off nearly 1,235 staff positions including counselors, advocates and children's advocates (in addition to the 1,700 laid off in 2013 and 1,400 laid off in 2014), and also had to reduce or completely eliminate over 1,900 services including shelter, legal advocacy, and counseling.

For those individuals who are not able to find safety, the consequences can be extremely dire, including continued exposure to life-threatening violence or homelessness. It is unacceptable that victims cannot find safety for themselves and their children due to a lack of adequate investment in these services.

Additionally, FVPSA is due to be reauthorized. It is essential that this vital and life-saving foundation of our nation's response to domestic violence is sustained.

**Related programs at the Department of Health and Human Services (see chart)**

FVPSA and related programs work together to develop effective responses to domestic and sexual violence. Key programs within HHS include the National Domestic Violence Hotline funded through the Administration for Children Youth and Families, the DELTA domestic violence prevention grants, the Rape Prevention and Education state formula grants, and the Preventive Health and Health Services Block grant, funded through the Centers for Disease Control.

## OVERVIEW OF COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE – DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

### **Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)**

VOCA uses non-taxpayer money from the Crime Victims Fund to provide funding for several unique programs that serve victims of crime, and provides state formula victim assistance grants. The VOCA fund is generated through fines paid by federal offenders to support services to 4 million victims of all types of crimes annually through 4,400 direct service agencies such as domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and child abuse treatment programs. Additional VOCA funds need to be released to respond to the crisis caused by the dangerous lack of available services for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Via the appropriations process, Congress has recently begun to release approximately the amount that is deposited into the fund (which is an increase over previous years' releases). Communities are using their VOCA funds to develop and enhance victim services.

Currently, tribes have no direct access to federal VOCA funds and yet their need for services is great. In fact, American Indians and Alaska Natives are 2.5 times more likely to experience violent crime than other Americans. Without access to VOCA funds, victims on tribal lands will continue to lack sufficient help when fleeing domestic violence and facing other crimes.

### **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs**

#### **VAWA STOP Program**

VAWA's STOP grant program, one of the most far-reaching VAWA programs, is at the core of effective coordinated community responses to domestic violence and sexual assault. These responses help hundreds of thousands of victims find safety and receive services, while holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. As the foundational VAWA program, STOP awards funds to every state and territory through a formula-based system. States use STOP funding to train law enforcement, prosecution and courts to improve the system-wide response to domestic and sexual violence. Many states establish special units in law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices to address domestic and sexual violence. Victims benefit from services including advocacy, crisis intervention, local hotline call advocacy, counseling and support, and victim witness notification. Additionally, STOP-funded programs help survivors obtain orders of protection and promote the prosecution of domestic and sexual violence cases.

A 2014 report to Congress revealed that the STOP grant program helped 431,244 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking; funded over 2,200 staff; and provided professional training for over 200,000 individuals. Investments in STOP allow communities to expand their life-saving homicide reduction efforts, continue to improve their law enforcement and prosecution responses, and serve more victims.

#### **Civil Legal Assistance for Victims (LAV)**

Research indicates that the practical nature of legal services gives victims long-term alternatives to their abusive relationships. However, the retainers or hourly fees for private legal representation are beyond the means of most victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. Legal services are second only to medical services as the most-requested need of victims. Sadly, 64% of women who reported needing legal services received no assistance from an attorney. The LAV program is the only federally-funded program designed to meet the legal needs of victims. Investments in the LAV program are a sound investment in long-term solutions to violence.

#### **Rural Grant program**

Rural victims face unique barriers, including under-resourced law enforcement and a lack of access to services, child care and public transportation. Funding for the Rural Grant program, which supports services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault living in rural and isolated areas, has either been cut or remained stagnant for the last

several years despite the great need. A number of additional states became eligible for rural grant funding through the VAWA 2013 reauthorization, increasing the demand for funding for the Rural Grant program.

### **Transitional Housing program**

The Transitional Housing program helps communities in every state give victims a safe place to begin to rebuild their shattered lives. NNEDV's *Domestic Violence Counts Census* found that in 2015, on just one day, 5,976 adults and 8,591 children were housed in domestic violence transitional housing programs. On the same day, however, 7,728 requests for emergency shelter or transitional housing were denied due to a lack of capacity. The extreme dearth of affordable housing produces a situation where many victims of domestic violence must return to their abusers because they cannot find long-term housing, while others are forced into homelessness. Investment in the Transitional Housing program allows communities to ensure that victims have access to safe housing.

### **Grants to Encourage Arrest program (GTEAP)**

GTEAP helps communities develop and sustain a seamless and comprehensive criminal justice response to domestic violence by enhancing victims' safety and holding perpetrators accountable. GTEAP encourages governments and courts at the state, local, and tribal level to treat domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking as serious violations of criminal law.

### **Sexual Assault Services program**

The Sexual Assault Services program (SASP) is the only federal funding source dedicated to providing direct services to adult and minor victims of sexual violence, and is distributed through a state formula grant. Services include accompaniment through medical and legal systems, hotlines, crisis intervention, and advocacy. Increased funding will help hire advocates, eliminate waiting lists, and respond to the unmet needs of victims. Research shows these services increase prosecution and help victims recover. When advocates are present in the legal and medical proceedings following rape, victims fare better in both their short- and long-term recovery, in that they experience less psychological distress, physical health struggles, sexual risk-taking behaviors, self-blame, guilt, and depression. However, current funding levels are woefully inadequate to meet the need. The nation's 1,315 sexual assault programs often lack the resources to meet victims' most basic needs.

### **Remaining VAWA programs**

All VAWA programs work together to improve the system-wide response to domestic and sexual violence and to meet the unique and pressing needs of victims.