



# DISTRICT ADVOCACY TOOLKIT 2019

A GUIDE TO PREPARING  
FOR CONGRESSIONAL  
MEETINGS



# ADVOCACY

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TO CHANGE “WHAT IS”  
INTO “WHAT SHOULD BE”



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## ADVOCACY 101

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the legislative process, which can be both complex and impersonal. Most people do not know who their elected representatives are and have not engaged in direct advocacy of any kind, let alone federal advocacy directed at their senators and representatives in Congress. However, as a constituent and a voter, your voice is important and powerful at all levels of government.

The first job of an elected official is to get elected, and starting their first day in office, they are always running for reelection. Subsequently, members of Congress are very responsive to individuals who live in their district and have the ability to vote either for or against them. While they may not always agree with a constituent, the opinion of the people they represent is very important for them to know. The voice of a constituent, and even better, an organized group of constituents, is very powerful.

### WHY ENGAGE IN ADVOCACY?

- Engaging with members of Congress and their staff allows you to influence the development and implementation of effective public policy.
- As a direct service provider or someone working in the field, you have community-specific expertise to bear on policy decisions.
- Advocacy and storytelling encourages movement beyond a “one-size-fits-all” approach to developing policy solutions and helps members take into account the unique needs in their own state and communities.

### WHAT CONSTITUTES EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY?

- Advocacy is not a one time activity; ideally you want to establish yourself and your organization as a resource to members of Congress and their staff for timely and accurate information.
- It is about building a trusted relationship with elected officials, administrators, and their staff over time.
- Effective advocacy is rooted in mutual respect and trust. Even if you and a member disagree, you want them to trust your facts and your sources; ultimately this is the best foundation for educating and persuading policymakers.



## REQUESTING YOUR MEETING

To meet with your representative or senator during an in-district work period (when they are at home and not in D.C.), initiate your request through the scheduler in the district office where you would like to meet. You can find their website information at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) or [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).

Each member's website will list their office locations including their D.C. office and their district or state offices; these can typically be found at the bottom of their website or under "Contact" information. Most representatives and senators have two or more offices in the state or district; you can visit the location that is most convenient to you.

To identify the scheduler, call the district office where you'd like to meet and ask who you should direct your request to and how they prefer receiving meeting requests (email, fax, phone request, or on-line forms are all options used by congressional offices). We have provided you with a template email request which you can customize as appropriate.

Within three to five days of initiating your request, call the district scheduler to confirm that it was received; offices receive numerous requests and it is easy for an email to be overlooked. Following up is key to securing a meeting.

For member level meetings, initiate your request as soon as possible; member's days are often scheduled weeks in advance. Some offices may ask that you coordinate with their D.C.-based scheduler and will connect you with that office. Scheduling a meeting can be a bureaucratic process; allow sufficient time for the scheduler to process your request.

If the member is unavailable, the scheduler will likely connect you with a staffer who handles issues related to sexual violence; it is perfectly acceptable to meet with staff. If the scheduler does not offer an alternative contact and you do not know the staffer who handles these issues, you can call the district office and ask who they recommend. It is often easier to get on a staffer's calendar and in most cases, they schedule their own meetings.





## PREPARING FOR ADVOCACY MEETINGS

One of the most important things you can do to prepare for advocacy meetings is to know who you are meeting with and where that member of Congress stands on the issues important to you and your organization. The House and Senate websites can help you identify your representative ([House.gov](http://House.gov)) and senators ([Senate.gov](http://Senate.gov)).

Another critical element in successful advocacy is to keep your message consistent with your organization's policy priorities. In preparation for your in-district meetings, The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence has provided policy one-pagers and key talking points that offer guidance on how to talk about key policy issues. Get to know the priorities well before your advocacy meetings and practice the talking points.

### **NORMAL THINGS TO EXPECT:**

- Even if you are scheduled to meet with the member in-person, you might have to meet with staff instead because of unforeseen commitments. Similarly you may end up meeting with a different staffer than expected.
- A meeting with the member or a staffer could be very brief and last less than 15 minutes depending on their schedule, how familiar they are with your organization, and how aligned they are with your policies and your ask.
- You may need to meet in an unplanned location if office space is full.
- Staff that you meet with may be young. That does not mean they aren't knowledgeable or that they are the wrong person to be meeting with.



# GOING ON

## YOUR VISIT

Be on time. Dress appropriately; usually that means business or business casual attire. Be sure everyone in your group is introduced and knows which issues they will cover in the meeting. Always start on a positive note. Find something to thank the office for, some supportive statement or vote in the past. If nothing else, thank them for their time.

### PLANNING YOUR MEETING:



Know your audience. What committees does the member serve on? If you are meeting with a staffer, what is their policy portfolio (i.e. what issues do they cover for their boss)? Check recent news coverage of the member and read up on their website.



In addition to rape crisis center leadership and staff, consider inviting a survivor activist, a well-connected board member, and/or a community leader who has benefited from your prevention programs to join you to further reflect your important work.



Once you know who is participating in your meeting, determine each participant's role including who will speak about which issue and when.



Designate a team-lead who can introduce the group and frame the purpose of your meeting.



Identify in advance who is taking notes including the tenor of the meeting, any questions asked by the member or their staff, and any meeting follow-up.



Prepare your talking points and your "ask."



Be aware of high profile cases or other issues in the news and how, if at all, you want to address or respond to those.



It is very common to meet with a member's staff and not with the member directly. Staff exercise significant influence on how a member will vote and are often responsible for understanding the details; do not view a meeting with a staff as a waste of time. Often these are the people who inform their bosses decisions and votes.

If you are asked a question you do not know the answer to, it is okay to tell the staffer you do not know. DO NOT make something up, guess, or hedge. This opening actually provides an opportunity for you to follow-up with the office. Remember that advocacy is about a relationship. You want the official and staff to trust you and see you as a credible resource. If you give incorrect information you will severely undermine your credibility; instead offer to try to find the information as part of your meeting follow up.

## CONDUCTING YOUR MEETING

### DO:

- Be concise with key points ready and plan on meeting for no more than 25 minutes; most members and their staff are scheduled every half-hour.
- Leave time for the official to respond and to ask you questions.
- Know the bill number and name if you are talking about specific legislation. Do not expect that the member or their staff will necessarily be familiar with the legislation.
- Speak from your area of expertise and share personal stories. Storytelling puts real life faces and with facts and data.
- Find out where the official stands on the issue.
- Ask specific questions and try to get specific commitments.
- Be sure to mention if you are a constituent.
- Be passionate, but make sure to stay calm and in control of your words, body language and emotions.
- Make sure to include specific "asks."

### DON'T

- Do most of the talking! This is a conversation; leave time and space for other participants and the member or their staff to engage.
- Issue explicit or veiled threats or bring "politics" into the meeting.
- Guess the answer to a question. Misleading an official is far worse than seeming uninformed. If you do not have an answer, let them know how and when you will follow up with the information they have asked for.
- Leave without making your ask and clarity on next steps.

Finally, end on a positive note. Even if you have not found anything you agree on, you can agree to keep talking. Never threaten to defeat the official in their next election. It will destroy your relationship with the official, and you can almost never deliver on that threat. Again, if nothing else, thank them for their time. You never know when the issue will be reframed and find that all of a sudden the two of you agree again. Voila, politics.

## CONCLUDING YOUR MEETING

- Ask if there are any questions.
- End on a positive note and express thanks, even if the meeting was not ideal.
- If you have been asked a question you did not know the answer to reiterate that you will follow up with an answer.
- Remind the official that you want to act as a resource.
- Invite the member or their staff to attend an upcoming event or to tour your program.





# TIMELINE

## LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

MARCH 5

**PARTICIPATE IN PREP WEBINAR WITH NAESV**

WEEK OF APRIL 8

**GATHER MATERIALS, HOLD PREP MEETING  
FOR ATTENDEES, PRACTICE TALKING POINTS**

WEEKS OF APRIL 15 & APRIL 22

**HOLD MEETINGS**

WEEK OF MAY 7

**THANK YOU NOTES, FOLLOW UP WITH ANY  
INFORMATION REQUESTED AT MEETINGS AND  
INVITATION FOR AUGUST RECESS TOUR OR EVENT**

AUGUST 2019 RECESS

**TOUR/EVENT WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS**

# TALKING POINTS

## SETTING THE STAGE

- If multiple people are participating in the meeting, designate a meeting “captain” who will facilitate the flow of conversation and a note-taker who will make record any questions asked by a member (or their staff) and any required follow-up.
- Each participant should introduce themselves including name; the name and location of their program or role; and a brief description.
- Thank the person with whom you are meeting for the appointment and the congressperson’s work [include a tailored thank you based on the member’s record on issues related to sexual violence if possible].

## FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

- Give the representative, senator, or staff member any supporting materials.
- Your story is the most important message you can share with a member of Congress. Personalize the issue by talking about the needs in your state or district and the people you serve.
- By sharing the needs in your community and the difficulties you face meeting those needs, you paint a picture of the critical need for funding that relates directly to the member’s constituents.

## THE NEED: TALK ABOUT THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL FUNDING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Programs aimed at preventing and responding to sexual violence such as VAWA, VOCA, RPE, and PHHS Block Grant have been extremely successful in our community and across the nation.
- However, many victims still have unmet needs and we must continue to improve our responses to address and prevent the crisis of violence in many communities.
- The demand for safety and services increases with high profile cases, national commentary (such as the #MeToo movement), better outreach, improved response and increased awareness.
- According to a 2018 survey by NAESV, 80% of programs experienced an increased demand for services last year. Current funding in most states cannot meet existing demand, let alone the increase in demand rape crisis centers across the country are experiencing.
- Sexual assault services and prevention are critically underfunded, creating a dangerous gap between desperate need and adequate resources.
- In the past few years, demand for programs funded by the Rape Prevention & Education Program have skyrocketed, the evidence base has progressed significantly, the current appropriation is very nearly the authorized level, and further investment in the program is desperately needed.
- According to a 2018 survey by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, at current funding levels half of rape crisis centers have a waiting list for counseling services.



## SERVICES & PREVENTION: HOW WE ACHIEVE CHANGE

- Federal funding plays an important role in helping fill the gap and meet local needs. According to the Office on Violence Against Women Report to Congress for the most recent 2-year reporting period, 49,000 survivors were served with funding from the Sexual Assault Services Program.
- VOCA, a non-taxpayer fund, supports over 4 million victims across the nation each year.
- Tailor talking points to your specific program and the needs of your community and your program.
  - How many survivors do you serve?
  - Do you have a waiting list and if so, how long is it?
  - Have you experienced an increase in the number of people requesting services; and if so, what does that increase look like?
  - Local data points (Example: survivors served, waiting list, increased demand).
  - What portions of your state have access to prevention? Are you able to meet the demand for prevention? What prevention successes are you seeing?

## THE SPECIFIC ASK

- Is Representative/Senator\_\_\_\_\_ willing to support:
- Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act with key enhancements and no rollbacks.
- SASP: \$50 million for the Sexual Assault Services Program at the Office on Violence Against Women.
- VOCA: A steady release of funds based on a 3-year average of deposits for the Crime Victims Fund at DOJ.
- RPE: Increased appropriations for Rape Prevention & Education Program at the CDC to \$75 million and increasing the authorization of RPE to \$150 million in the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

## CONCLUDING THE MEETING

- Thank the member/staffer for their time.
- Ask if the member/staffer has any additional questions.
- Make sure that you get the business card of the staffer(s) you meet. They are typically also at the receptionist's desk.
- Invite the member/staffer to visit and tour your program and/or to speak at an upcoming event during Sexual Assault Awareness Month or the August recess.
- Ask if the member/staffer would like any follow-up information.
- If you met with a member, send a handwritten thank you note as follow up; an email is fine for staff.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

- Be sure to share your visit on social media!
- You can use twitter to thank your member or post a photo to Facebook (with their permission). For example: Thank you @SenatorABC for meeting with (insert program name) to talk about critical funding for survivors of sexual assault #endSA #BeAVoice.

# TEMPLATE: MEETING REQUEST

Dear [scheduler's name],

My name is [name] and I am a constituent of Representative/Senator [name]; I am contacting you to request a meeting with the member during the April in-district work period on behalf of the [insert organization/state coalition].

My colleagues and I are interested in speaking with the member about the importance of funding rape crisis centers, supportive services for survivors of rape and sexual assault, and rape prevention in our community. These services have historically been underfunded, resulting in waiting lists, including [number] centers in [State]. The prominence of public conversations about sexual harassment, assault, and rape have resulted in an increased demand for services and prevention programs that most centers are unable to meet, forcing them to either turn away survivors in need or try to stretch their already limited funding even further.

The federal government plays a critical role in supporting rape crisis centers through programs including the Violence Against Women Act, Victims of Crime Act, Sexual Assault Services Program, Rape Prevention & Education Program, and the Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grant. As direct service providers, we are eager to meet with Representative/Senator [name] and share what we are seeing in the community and the consequence of failing to fund these necessary and life-saving services.

I can be reached at [number] or [email] to schedule a meeting; I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

[Your Name]



## RESOURCE TIP:

Work smart, not hard! You can download the editable version of this template to your computer. Find the word document template at <http://www.raliance.org/tools>

# TEMPLATE: THANK YOU EMAIL

Dear Representative/Senator [name],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with members of the [state coalition/program] on [date] to discuss the importance of funding rape crisis centers in [state] and across the country.

Federal funding plays a vital role in ensuring that rape crisis centers in [state] can meet the needs of your constituents for sexual assault services and prevention programs. While the national conversation about rape and assault has opened many people's eyes to both the prevalence of assault and its impact on survivors, it has also drawn attention to the growing gap between the demand for, and availability of, services and prevention programs in our state. By fully funding programs including VAWA, VOCA, SASP, RPE, and PHHSBG, you help to ensure that no survivor is turned away. You also make [community name] safer for us all.

As we discussed during our meeting...[summarize any commitment made by the member; answer any question asked during the meeting that you did not have an answer for at the time; and/or reference any materials you offered to send as follow up].

Lastly, we would like to invite you to visit a rape crisis center during your August recess. We would be happy to help schedule and facilitate a tour so that you and your staff can see first hand the importance of the services you make possible through federal funding.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your office to ensure we are meeting the needs of the residents of [state/district].

Best,

[Your Name]



## RESOURCE TIP:

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# NAESV DISTRICT ADVOCACY VISIT REPORT

This form should be used to report on district meetings with Members of Congress or their staff.

**DATE OF VISIT**

Your answer

**YOUR NAME**

Your answer

**YOUR PROGRAM/COALITION NAME**

Your answer

**YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS**

Your answer

**NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE OR SENATOR**

Your answer

**WHO DID YOU MEET WITH AT THIS MEETING?**

(PLEASE LIST STAFF NAMES AND TITLES AND OR INDICATE IF THE MEMBER WAS PRESENT)

Your answer

**EMAIL OF HIGHEST RANKING STAFF MEMBER AT THE MEETING**

Your answer

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

Your answer

**QUESTIONS ASKED:**

Your answer

**THE TONE OF THE MEETING:**

Your answer

**FOLLOW UP NEEDED:**

Your answer

**RESOURCE TIP:**

Save time by submitting this report online! Use the following link to access the NAESV District Advocacy Visit Report:

<https://tinyurl.com/ycxko3sx>



# CONGRESSIONAL CALENDAR

## January

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
		<b>1</b> New Year's Day	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> MLK Day	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>		

## February

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> Presidents Day	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>		

## March

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b>						

## April

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Budget resolution deadline	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Good Fri. / Passover (begins)	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> Easter Sunday	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> Orthodox Easter	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>				

## May

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Ramadan (begins)	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Memorial Day	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	

## June

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
						<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Eid al-Fitr	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b>						

## July

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
		<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Independence Day	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>			

## August

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
				<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b> Eid al-Adha	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>

## September

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> Labor Day	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> Rosh Hashana (begins)	<b>30</b>					

## October

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
		<b>1</b> FY '20 (begins)	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Yom Kippur (begins)	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Columbus Day	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b> Diwali	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>		

## November

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Veterans Day	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Thanksgiving Day	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>

## December

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> Hanukkah (begins)	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Christmas Day	<b>26</b> Kwanzaa (begins)	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>				



- Both chambers in session
- Senate only in session
- House only in session

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

White House Switchboard

(202) 456-1414

U.S. Capitol Switchboard

(202) 224-3121

Senate Republican Cloakroom

(202) 224-6191

Senate Democratic Cloakroom

(202) 224-4691

House Republican Cloakroom

(202) 225-7350

House Democratic Cloakroom

(202) 225-7330



National Alliance to  
End Sexual Violence

## Sexual Assault Services Program

Funding authorized: \$40 million

FY 2018: \$35 million

FY 2019 Conference: \$37.5 million

FY 2020 Request: \$50 million

***“The #MeToo movement caused an explosion of phone calls to our hotline...”*** 2018 Rape Crisis Center Survey Respondent

### **Sexual Assault Victims Deserve Recovery Services.**

The Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP), administered by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) in the U.S. Department of Justice, was authorized in 2005 through the Violence Against Women Act as the first federal funding stream dedicated to the provision of direct services to victims of sexual violence. According to OVW’s most recent report on the SASP program:

- **Over 55,000 individuals received services annually through SASP;**
- Over 300 advocates and counselors were funded at local programs; and
- Almost 30,000 survivors received medical or legal advocacy.

*“Rape Victim Advocates literally saved my life. I will forever be grateful to this amazing organization, and I will work my whole life to pay forward what RVA gave to me.”* An Illinois survivor

*Across the country, SASP funds support the critical services victims need most.*

**SASP funds support services in every state.** Formula grants are awarded to states, territories and tribes to support efforts to provide services to adult and minor sexual assault victims and their families. Grants can be used for critically important intervention and advocacy services, especially accompaniment through medical and criminal justice systems.

**SASP funds support underserved communities.** Grants to culturally specific organizations help support intervention and related assistance for underserved victims and communities of color like *United Somali Women of Maine* and the *Hmong American Women’s Association* in Milwaukee.

### **SASP funds ensure quality services.**

Through support of coalitions which provide training and technical assistance, SASP helps ensure that victims receive high quality services and improved responses from the justice system. *Research shows these services increase prosecution and help victims recover.*

**Advocates help the criminal justice system respond better.** Research shows that when victims receive advocate-assisted services following assaults, they receive more helpful information, referrals and services and experience less secondary trauma or re-victimization by medical and legal systems.

**Rape survivors supported by advocates were 59% more likely to have police reports taken than survivors without advocates, whose reports were only taken 41% of the time.**

**Advocates help victims heal.** When advocates are present in the legal and medical proceedings following rape, victims fare better in both the short- and long-term recovery, experiencing less psychological distress, physical health struggles, sexual risk-taking behaviors, self-blame, guilt, and depression.

*“SASP allowed us to finally open a comprehensive service rape crisis center in Dallas.”* Jana Barker, Executive Director, Dallas Area Rape Crisis Center

### **The Need is great.**

According to 2010 data from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (CDC, December 2011):

- Nearly 1 in 5 women have been the victim of rape or attempted rape;

- Nearly 1 in 2 women have experienced some form of sexual violence;
- 1.3 million women were raped in the United States in the last 12 months;
- 1 in 5 men have experienced a form of sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime.

**Victims of sexual assault suffer.** They are more likely to struggle professionally, academically and from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and to contemplate suicide.

**Current funding levels are inadequate.** At FY 2018 levels, the entire state of Alabama received \$411,000 in SASP formula grant funds while **Texas, with the second largest grant award, received less than \$1 million in SASP formula funding.**

**Rape crisis centers struggle.** The nation’s 1,315 sexual assault programs often lack the resources to meet victims’ most basic needs. Attention to campus and military sexual assault as well as high profile cases has meant more victims have come forward needing recovery services. According to a 2017 survey by NAESV:

- **Over half of rape crisis centers have a waiting list for counseling services.**
- 44% of programs have a waiting list for trauma-informed therapy.

*“We have several clients who have been on the waiting list for therapy for several months. Sometimes they are able to receive help elsewhere, but we are the only low/no cost organizations that exclusively services sexual assault/abuse survivors.”* 2018 Rape Crisis Center Survey respondent

**HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?** Contact Terri Poore, Policy Director at [terri@endsexualviolence.org](mailto:terri@endsexualviolence.org).



National Alliance to  
End Sexual Violence

## Rape Prevention & Education Program (RPE)

Funding authorized: \$50 million

FY 19 Appropriation: \$49.4 million

FY 20 Appropriations Request: \$75 million

In VAWA reauthorization legislation: Increase authorization to \$150 million

RPE formula grants, administered by the CDC Injury Center, provide essential funding to states and territories to support rape prevention and education programs conducted by rape crisis centers, state sexual assault coalitions, and other public and private nonprofit entities.

Those who have been victimized by sexual violence are more likely to be re-victimized AND those who have perpetrated are more likely to reoffend, pointing to the increased need to stop the violence before it ever happens.

*If our children are to face a future free from sexual violence, RPE must be fully funded.*

***The RPE program prepares everyday people to become heroes, getting involved in the fight against sexual violence and creating safer communities by:***

- Engaging boys and men as partners;
- Supporting multidisciplinary research collaborations;
- Fostering cross-cultural approaches to prevention; and
- Promoting healthy, non-violent social norms, attitudes, beliefs, policies, and practices.

***"Before these classes, I didn't really understand what consent was."*** A student to a prevention educator in Oklahoma.

### **We know RPE is working.**

A 2016 study conducted in 26 Kentucky high schools over 5 years and published in *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that an RPE-funded bystander intervention program decreased not only sexual violence perpetration but also other forms of interpersonal violence and victimization.

***"The idea that, due to the effectiveness of Green Dot, ... there will be many fewer young people suffering the pain and devastation of sexual violence: This is priceless."*** Eileen Recktenwald, Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs

**Across the country, states and communities are engaged in cutting-edge prevention projects. A 2018 survey respondent told us:**

***"We met with staff at a local high school to set up a one-time presentation and walked out agreeing to run several groups!"***



**Alaska's Talk Now Talk Often** campaign is a statewide effort developed in collaboration with Alaskan parents, using conversation cards, to help increase conversations with teens about the importance of having healthy relationships.

**Connecticut's Women & Families Center** developed a multi-session curriculum addressing issues of violence and injury targeting middle school.

**Kansas** is looking closely at the links between sexual violence and chronic disease to prevent both.

**Maryland's Gate Keepers for Kids** program provides training to youth-serving organizations to safeguard against child sexual abuse.

**Missouri** is implementing "**Green Dot**" bystander education statewide to reduce the rates of sexual violence victimization and perpetration.

**North Carolina** was able to ensure sustainability of its consent-based curriculum by partnering with the school system to implement their sexual violence prevention curriculum in **every** 8<sup>th</sup> grade class.

**Oklahoma** is working with domestic violence and sexual violence service agencies, public and private schools, colleges and other community-based organizations **to prevent sexual violence**.

## Why increase funding for RPE?

The societal costs of sexual violence are incredibly high including medical & mental health care, law enforcement response, & lost productivity. 2017 research sets the lifetime economic burden of rape at \$122 thousand per victim and reveals a strong link between sexual violence and chronic disease.

According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (CDC, 2011):

- Nearly 1 in 5 women have been the victim of rape or attempted rape.
- Most female victims of completed rape (79.6%) experienced their first rape before the age of 25; 42.2% experienced their first completed rape before the age of 18 years.
- More than one-quarter of male victims of completed rape (27.8%) experienced their first rape when they were 10 years of age or younger.

The #MeToo movement; national focus on campus, military, and faith community sexual assault; and high-profile cases of sexual violence in the media have led to increased interest in comprehensive community responses to sexual violence but have also increased the demand for prevention programs beyond providers' capacity.

**A 2018 survey by the NAESV revealed that almost 40% of programs had a waiting list of a month or more for prevention programming. According to one respondent:**

*"The #MeToo movement, the Cosby trial, the Catholic Church grand jury report and the Kavanaugh hearings are all things that program participants have told us have prompted them to call."*

**A Massachusetts program reported:** *"With Title IX in the news, requests for prevention education have increased...We are saying no to many requests for education because of capacity issues. We are unable to build and sustain relationships with other underserved communities because of a lack of capacity."*

**A Nebraska program reported:** *"I am hugely dismayed at the lack of funding for prevention...It's noble to provide direct services to victims of sexual violence, but if we don't provide prevention monies, then we are just a band-aid. It's terribly frustrating."*

**NAESV additionally recommends the following report language to ensure adequate funding for states:**

*At least 80% of the funds appropriated for the Rape Prevention & Education Program must go to states for the purpose of local and state rape prevention activities.*

Currently, states and territories receive approximately 72% of RPE funds.

### HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Contact Terri Poore, Policy Director at [terri@endsexualviolence.org](mailto:terri@endsexualviolence.org)



National Alliance to  
End Sexual Violence

## Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund

**FY 20 Request:** Steady funding from the Crime Victims Fund that reflects deposits and fund levels. Fund tribal services. No additional transfers.

The Crime Victims Fund was created by Congress in 1984 to provide grants to state and local programs that assist victims of crime. The Fund is derived entirely from fines and penalties paid by federal criminal offenders, *not taxpayer revenues*.

From FY 2010 through FY 2014, the Crime Victims Fund collected an average of \$2 billion each year, but disbursed only an average of \$700 million per year. Congress raised the cap to \$3.04 billion for FY16. After transfers, \$2.6 billion was available for the states.

**Congress should provide steady funding in FY 2020.** Programs need sufficient funds released at a reliable pace that considers deposits and the health of the fund.

**NAESV fully supports funding tribal victim services from the Crime Victims Fund, but we oppose any other earmarks or transfers from the fund.**

**Rape crisis centers rely on VOCA funds to provide direct services like crisis intervention, counseling, and court accompaniment to victims of sexual assault.** Over 4,000 agencies, including over 1000 rape crisis centers, rely on VOCA assistance grants to provide critical direct services for over 3.4 million victims a year.

**A 2018 NAESV survey of rape crisis centers revealed that over half have a waiting list for counseling services.**

### VOCA is making a difference.

As a result of the increase in the VOCA cap, many programs have now received an increase in VOCA funds. Programs have:

- Hired new advocates & increased wages to improve retention;
- Hired forensic nurses;
- Served more trafficking survivors;
- Opened satellite offices in rural areas;
- Reached more children; and
- Started support groups for youth & elders.

### Responses from our 2018 Rape Crisis Center Survey on the impact of VOCA funds:

*"The increase allowed us to place service locations in areas that would have previously required at least 2 hours of travel for services."*

*"For us, just our ability to increase staff wages has been the biggest benefit. We need to be able to stop the revolving door and be able to retain the qualified people we have."*

*"As a brand-new rape crisis center, it had been truly a boom to create opportunities in our local community. Our area has been economically depressed for some time, and in a small way our new center is helping to provide opportunities."*

**Distributing steady funding to states from the VOCA fund in FY 20 will allow rape crisis centers to eliminate waiting lists, improve trauma-informed responses, and assist more survivors to heal and thrive.**

HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS? Contact Terri Poore,  
[terri@endsexualviolence.org](mailto:terri@endsexualviolence.org).



National Alliance to  
End Sexual Violence

## Sex Offense Set-Aside in PHHSBG

**FY 2020 Request:** Fund the Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grant at \$160 million. Preserve the \$7 million set-aside for rape victim services & prevention (level funding).

**Flexible funding for community needs.** The Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHSBG) administered by the CDC allows states, territories and tribes to address their own unique public health needs and challenges with innovative and community driven methods.

**\$7 million set-aside to address sexual assault.** The Public Health Service Act of 2010 included a guaranteed \$7 million minimum set-aside to support direct services to victims of sexual assault and to prevent rape.

**Preserve the set-aside.** President Trump's FY 2019 budget proposed elimination of the PHHSBG, but Congress preserved the block grant guaranteeing at least \$7 million to respond to rape.

*"The Rape Set-Aside component of the Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grant is the foundation of rape crisis and rape prevention in our state. First awarded to all states and the District of Columbia in 1981, the funds continue to connect rape survivors with support and treatment for the most devastating crime short of murder. The funds reach into all geographical areas of the state of Illinois providing crisis intervention and education services."* Polly Poskin, retired director of the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault and founder of the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence

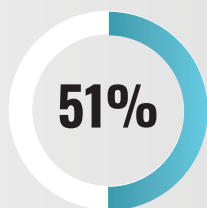
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**HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?** Contact Terri Poore, Policy Director at (850) 228-3428 or [terri@endsexualviolence.org](mailto:terri@endsexualviolence.org).

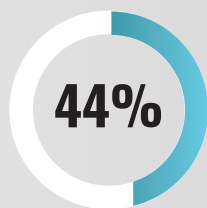
# 87% OF SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTERS EXPERIENCED AN INCREASE IN DEMAND FOR SERVICES IN 2018.

For those programs experiencing increased demand, the average increased demand was 10% although many programs saw an increase of 30%.

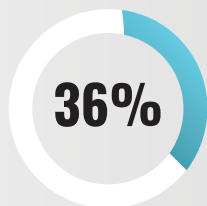
## LOCAL SERVICES WAITING LIST DATA



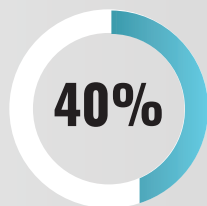
COUNSELING



TRAUMA-INFORMED THERAPY



SUPPORT GROUPS



PREVENTION SERVICES

## BIGGEST GAPS FOR PROGRAMS

TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE



PREVENTION EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS



MALE SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUPS



DIGITAL CRISIS SERVICES



**ALMOST HALF OF PROGRAMS (45%) DO NOT HAVE A THERAPIST ON STAFF.**

*"We have several clients who have been on the waiting list for therapy for several months. Sometimes they are able to receive help elsewhere, but we are the only no cost organization that exclusively serves sexual assault & sexual abuse survivors."*



**"Jon Doe's father, Mr. Doe, was confused and overwhelmed** when he reached out to MGI on the hotline. **He shared that his 15-year-old son had just disclosed sexual abuse by a neighbor from the age of 8-10 years old...** He said that **his primary goal in disclosing the abuse was to get justice.** He wanted the help of a legal advocate to do just that... Soon, Jon Doe had a whole team supporting him, including his father, an advocate, a counselor, local law enforcement and eventually the State's Attorney's Office. Over the course of 18 months, the perpetrator was located out of state, arrested and extradited back to Illinois, and tried and convicted of multiple counts of child sexual abuse. **Jon Doe's team stood by him, providing advocacy and support throughout the entire process.** Once the trial and sentencing were complete, Jon Doe was ready to terminate counseling. **He had achieved his goal - justice was served."**





"As a brand-new rape crisis center, it had been truly a boom to create opportunities in our local community. **Our area had been economically depressed for some time, and in a small way our new center is helping to provide opportunities.** However, it will only be sustainable if we continue to receive these funds and remain good stewards of these dollars."

## HEALING LIVES & SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

"The increase allowed us to place service locations in areas that would have previously required at least 2 hours of travel for services."

### RELIABLE SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS & STABLE FUTURES FOR COMMUNITIES



STAFF  
RETENTION



INCREASED  
WAGES



RETIREMENT  
BENEFITS

### FEDERAL FUNDS SUPPORT JOB GROWTH BY ENABLING SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTERS TO HIRE



ADVOCATES



THERAPISTS



LAWYERS



SART TEAM

*"Our ability to increase staff wages has been the biggest benefit. We need to be able to stop the revolving door and be able to retain the qualified people we have. We spend a lot of money in training them, so being able to retain them is incredibly important. They work so deeply with survivors. The funding will hopefully enable us to retain staff so that we can concentrate on the services that we are trained to provide."*

## THE RIPPLE EFFECT

The harm caused by sexual violence is not isolated to the survivor. The emotional and financial burden impacts every level of our society.



#### SURVIVORS:

Short and long-term health concerns (physical & mental health) negatively impact a survivor's ability to support themselves.

The lifetime cost of rape per victim is approximately \$122,461.

#### LOVED ONES:

As they try to make sense of what happened, loved ones may experience similar reactions and may need counseling services. They also may face costs related to the survivors' medical or therapeutic services as a result of the sexual assault.

#### LOCAL COMMUNITIES:

The financial costs to local communities include medical services, criminal justice expenses, crisis and mental health service fees, and the lost contributions of individuals affected by sexual violence.

#### SOCIETAL:

**Cost of rape to the nation \$3.1 trillion.** It is estimated that government sources pay approximately \$1 trillion of the lifetime economic burden.





National Task Force to End  
Sexual & Domestic Violence

**THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT**

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), enacted in 1994, recognizes the insidious and pervasive nature of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking and supports *comprehensive, effective, and cost-saving* responses. VAWA programs, administered by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) at the Department of Justice, give law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and community organizations the tools they need to support victims, hold offenders accountable, and keep communities safe.

VAWA includes many essential grant programs designed to provide both a systemic and community based services response, including the following:

- The Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors (STOP) formula grant program funds each state and territory to improve the services and criminal justice response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. In its most recent report to Congress on the STOP Program, OVW noted that STOP grant-funded programs helped 362,172 victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, and stalking; funded 2,226 staff members, including victim advocates, law enforcement officers, counselors, and attorneys; and trained 252,795 individuals from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016.<sup>1</sup>
- Victim services, law enforcement, prosecution staff, and court personnel funded through STOP Grants helped victims of domestic/dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking obtain a combined total of 151,870 protection orders.<sup>1</sup>
- The Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP) funds each state and territory to provide services to sexual assault survivors. In its most recent report to Congress on services provided, OVW noted that 49,068 survivors of sexual assault had been served, and 113,697 hotline calls answered, by SASP-funded advocates from January 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016.<sup>2</sup>
- Over the 2013-2015 grant period, VAWA grantees provided over 1.9 million bed nights in emergency or transitional housing to victims and their children.<sup>3</sup>
- In addition to formula grants, VAWA is also comprised of various discretionary grant programs. The Legal Assistance for Victims Program (LAV Program) is the primary VAWA-funded vehicle for delivering legal assistance to victims of domestic/sexual violence. From 2014 – 2016, during each 6-month reporting period LAV Program grantees provided services to an average of 28,553 victims.<sup>4</sup>
- VAWA grants helped ensure that victims from historically underserved populations were able to access life-saving services. During each 6-month grant period, VAWA-funded organizations served an average of 29,581 victims living in rural areas; 10,185 victims identifying as American Indian or Alaska Natives; 8,436 victims with disabilities; and 17,812 victims who were immigrants, asylum-seekers, or refugees.<sup>3</sup>
- More than 1.3 million individuals participated in VAWA-funded education, awareness, or prevention activities.<sup>3</sup>
- From 2014 – 2016, during each 6-month reporting period, VAWA-funded grantees provided services to an average of 124,916 victims, children, youth, and other dependents.<sup>3</sup>
- VAWA grants can be used for training professionals who work directly with survivors to improve survivor services. Overall, VAWA-funded grantees trained 11,519 sexual assault nurse examiners/sexual assault forensic examiners (SANEs/SAFEs); 89,937 law enforcement officers; 15,680 prosecutors; 18,404 court personnel; and used funds to support an average of 38 specialized courts.<sup>3</sup>
- Law enforcement officers in agencies funded through discretionary grants focused on improving the criminal justice system responded to 229,619 calls for assistance, made more than 66,095 arrests, investigated 169,546 cases, and referred 76,146 cases to prosecutors.<sup>3</sup>
- Across the 2-year reporting period, VAWA-funded grantees responded to 591,788 hotline calls.<sup>3</sup>

- In total, VAWA discretionary program grantees provided over 1 million services to victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or child or elder abuse during the 2-year grant period.<sup>3</sup>
- National training and technical assistance projects funded through VAWA help to support service providers, develop training resources, identify promising practices, and conduct research that is beneficial to improving efforts at the local, state, and national level to ending domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

### VAWA SAVES LIVES AND SAVES MONEY

VAWA-funded programs have unquestionably improved the national response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. It's estimated that as many as 45 million adults experience physical violence, rape, and/or stalking by an intimate partner at some point in their lives<sup>3</sup>. Thanks to VAWA, more victims are coming forward and receiving lifesaving services to help them move from crisis to stability, and the criminal justice system has improved victim safety and efforts to hold perpetrators accountable. Since VAWA was first passed in 1994:

- Between VAWA's implementation in 1994 and 2011, serious victimization by an intimate partner declined by 72% for women and 64% for men.<sup>5</sup>
- A 2010 study demonstrated that an increase in the availability of legal services is associated with a decrease in intimate partner homicide.<sup>6</sup>
- A 2009 Department of Justice-funded study found that Kentucky saved \$85 million in one year alone through the issuance of protection orders and the reduction in violence that resulted.<sup>7</sup>
- Nationally, VAWA saved as much as \$14.8 billion in its first 6 years alone.<sup>8</sup>
- Referring a victim to an advocate has been linked to an increased willingness to file a police report – survivors with an advocate filed a report with law enforcement 59% of the time, versus 41% for individuals not referred to a victim advocate.<sup>9</sup>
- Sexual assault victims who have the support of an advocate in the aftermath of an assault also receive more helpful information, referrals and services, experience less secondary trauma or re-victimization by medical and legal systems, and fare better in both long- and short-term outcomes than those without such support.<sup>9</sup>
- A 2016 study conducted in 26 Kentucky high schools over 5 years found that a bystander intervention program, funded through the Rape Prevention Education (RPE) grants, decreased not only sexual violence perpetration but also other forms of interpersonal violence and victimization.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup>“STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program.” (2016). VAWA Measuring Effectiveness Initiative. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine. [http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/attachments/All%20State%20Profiles/STOP/ALLStateProfile\\_2016\\_Final.pdf](http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/attachments/All%20State%20Profiles/STOP/ALLStateProfile_2016_Final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>“SASP Formula Grant Program.” (2016). VAWA Measuring Effectiveness Initiative. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine. [http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/attachments/All%20State%20Profiles/SASP/2016\\_SASP\\_%20AllStateProfile.pdf](http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/attachments/All%20State%20Profiles/SASP/2016_SASP_%20AllStateProfile.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> 2016 Biennial Report: *The 2016 Biennial Report to Congress on the Effectiveness of Grant Programs Under the Violence Against Women Act.* (2016). United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women. [http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/attachments/congressreports/2016RTC\\_MASTER\\_12.19.16.pdf](http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/attachments/congressreports/2016RTC_MASTER_12.19.16.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Muskie School of Public Service. (2016). Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program: July – December 2016. Muskie School of Public service. [http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/attachments/graphicreports/lav/LAV\\_SR\\_JD16.pdf](http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/attachments/graphicreports/lav/LAV_SR_JD16.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> FY 2017: *Congressional Justification.* (2016). United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women. <https://www.justice.gov/jmd/file/821736/download>

<sup>6</sup> Reckdenwald, A., & Parker, K.K. (2010). Understanding gender-specific intimate partner homicide: A theoretical and domestic service-oriented approach. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38, 951-958.

<sup>7</sup> Logan, T.K., Walker, R., Hoyt, W., & Faragher, T. (2009). *The Kentucky Civil Protective Order Study: A Rural and Urban Multiple Perspective Study of Protective Order Violation Consequences, Responses, & Costs.* (2009). U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/228350.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Clark, K.A., Biddle, A.K., & Martin, S.L. (2002). A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994., *Violence Against Women*, 8, 4: 417-428.

<sup>9</sup> Campbell, R. (2006). Rape survivors' experiences with the legal and medical system: Do rape victim advocates make a difference? *Violence Against Women*, 12: 30-45.

<sup>10</sup> Coker, A.L., Bush, H.M., Cook-Craig, P.G., DeGue, S.A., Clear, E.R., Brancato, C.J., Fischer, B.S., & Recktenwald, E.A. (2017). RCT testing bystander effectiveness to reduce violence. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 52, 5: 566-578, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2017.01.020>



National Task Force to End  
Sexual & Domestic Violence

## Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Key Recommendations from Advocates for Reauthorization

April 2018

The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence ("NTF") is focused on the development, passage and implementation of effective public policy to address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. The full membership of the NTF is comprised of a large and diverse group of national, tribal, state, territorial and local organizations, as well as individuals, committed to securing an end to violence against women.

The NTF is supporting a limited number of key enhancements to the Violence Against Women Act based on our process of broadly surveying thousands for advocates and allied professionals about the needs of survivors and communities. This extensive feedback from the field informed the work of subject matter workgroups that developed specific recommendations to improve VAWA in critical areas. ***Any bill that erodes current protections is unacceptable.***

### INVEST IN PREVENTION:

- Increase the authorization of the Rape Prevention & Education Program (RPE) to \$150 million (current authorization \$50 million) and specifically include sexual harassment to its authorized use. Demand for programs funded by RPE have skyrocketed with the #MeToo movement and the national focus on campus sexual assault, and a corresponding increase is critically necessary to meet the need of communities.
- Increase funding for VAWA Consolidated Youth grants. Prevention education that engages men and boys as allies and promotes healthy relationships is key to reducing gender-based violence. Increased funding will provide programs with the resources they need to increase the depth and reach of these critical programs.

### EXPAND ACCESS:

- Promote safety for victims of violence on tribal lands by: clarifying that tribal courts can hold domestic violence offenders who assault tribal police officers or other justice officials accountable; ensuring non-Indian perpetrators who commit sexual assault, stalking, child abuse, and trafficking on tribal lands are held accountable; creating a permanent authorization for DOJ's Tribal Access to National Crime Information Program; improving the response to cases of missing and murdered women in tribal communities; and addressing the unique barriers to safety for Alaska Native women.
- Expressly add sexual harassment to the allowable uses of the Workplaces Respond to Domestic and Sexual Violence: A National Resource Center, which provides tools, resources, and training to private employers and federal agencies.
- Promote economic security for survivors and assist with supports for leaving abusers with targeted enhancements to existing law including allowing domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking victims to be eligible for unemployment insurance; protections from discrimination in employment based on one's status as a victim; research into the economic impacts of victimization on college students, and public education related to economic abuse and economic security for victims.
- Train healthcare providers to better recognize and respond to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking across the lifespan, particularly through HRSA programs such as the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program.

### REMOVE BARRIERS:

- Ensure compliance with VAWA non-discrimination requirements and guarantee equal access to VAWA protections for all victims regardless of gender, especially those from marginalized communities.

- Enforce housing rights for survivors/victims, create a position at HUD specifically tasked with this work, increase survivors' options to maintain housing or break their leases, and strengthen the emergency transfer protections in federal housing programs to assist survivors needing to flee their homes due to safety concerns.
- Add a new purpose to the Improving Criminal Justice Response grant program to implement alternative justice responses that are focused on victim autonomy, agency and safety to provide resolution and restitution for the victim.
- Strengthen privacy protections across state line, online with digital records, and preserve confidentiality upon survivor's death in accordance with their wishes.
- Remove the use of bench warrants and other body attachments to compel victim cooperation and testimony, as this has been found to be traumatizing for the victim and counterproductive in encouraging victims to cooperate.
- Acknowledge the trauma of incarceration on women and their family members, especially their children, and improve health care services and trauma informed responses to better prepare incarcerated women to return to their communities.
- Improve enforcement of current domestic violence-related firearms laws and equally protect all victims.

**DEFINITIONS:**

Revise a few definitions to clarify language, match state laws, address new technological concerns, and provide technical corrections.

- New definitions include: Abuse in Later Life (in lieu of elder abuse); Alternative Justice Response; Digital Services; Forced Marriage; Economic Abuse; and Technological Abuse.
- Amended definitions include:
  - Domestic Violence – the original definition is outdated and does not sync with most state laws; correct unintended 2013 deletion of "Court-based and court-related personnel."
  - Legal Services (to include vacatur and expungement).

**NEW GRANT CONDITIONS:**

- Allow grantees to use technology to protect victim privacy.
- Extend advocate confidentiality beyond the death of the victim so victims feel free to communicate fully with their advocates without concern for reputation, civil liability, or possible harm to friends or family.

**AMENDED GRANT CONDITIONS:**

- Clarify that VAWA confidentiality applies to federal and state agencies seeking information from grantees.
- Urge DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to make training widely available.
- Permit grantees to serve victims of forced marriage who are also victims of a VAWA crime.
- Increase the cap on expenditures requiring Deputy Attorney General approval to allow DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women to more easily provide oversight and support for VAWA multi-day training events.

**For more information, email [NTF4VAWA@gmail.com](mailto:NTF4VAWA@gmail.com)**





TOGETHER

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WE CAN  
END SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE





For more information about this toolkit, please contact:

Terri Poore, MSW  
[tpoore@raliance.org](mailto:tpoore@raliance.org)

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visit: [RALIANCE.org/tools](http://RALIANCE.org/tools)

