

A close-up photograph of a person's hand typing on a silver laptop keyboard. The hand is wearing a silver-toned wristwatch with a white face and black leather strap. To the right of the laptop, an open notebook with lined pages lies on a wooden desk. The background is softly blurred, showing a desk lamp and other papers. A bright yellow banner with a diagonal split is overlaid on the top left of the image.

ADVOCATING FOR SURVIVOR SERVICES & PREVENTION WITH CONGRESS: A TOOLKIT

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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 encourage movement beyond a “one-size-fits-all” approach to developing policy solutions and help 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.



Virtual Meetings

As we feel the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in every aspect of our lives, a lot has changed about how we do our work. Local programs have had to make profound adjustments to service structures, and advocates have had to change many of their services and networking to virtual platforms. Many of us have now grown accustomed handling much of our work online. That holds true for members of Congress and their staff too. It makes sense for meetings to be virtual this spring, and while members may have their preferences and rules about which platforms they prefer and can use, advocates and activists should feel empowered to move forward setting up virtual meetings with members and their staff. We recommend both your preparation work and actual meetings take place remotely. If you choose to prepare or meet in person, proper CDC guidelines about masks, social distancing, and quarantines following exposure should be followed.

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 or 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 and ask who you should direct your request to and how they prefer receiving meeting requests (email, fax, phone request, or online 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 Your Meeting

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 member of Congress ([House.gov](https://www.house.gov)) and senators ([Senate.gov](https://www.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 (NAESV) 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, you might end up meeting with staff instead because of unforeseen schedule changes. 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.

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.





Conducting Your Meeting

Be on time. Dress appropriately; usually that means business or business casual attire even if the meeting is virtual. For online meetings, give thought to a neutral background and quiet space. 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.

- ✔ 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 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” unless you’re having a meeting to simply educate the member.

Don't:

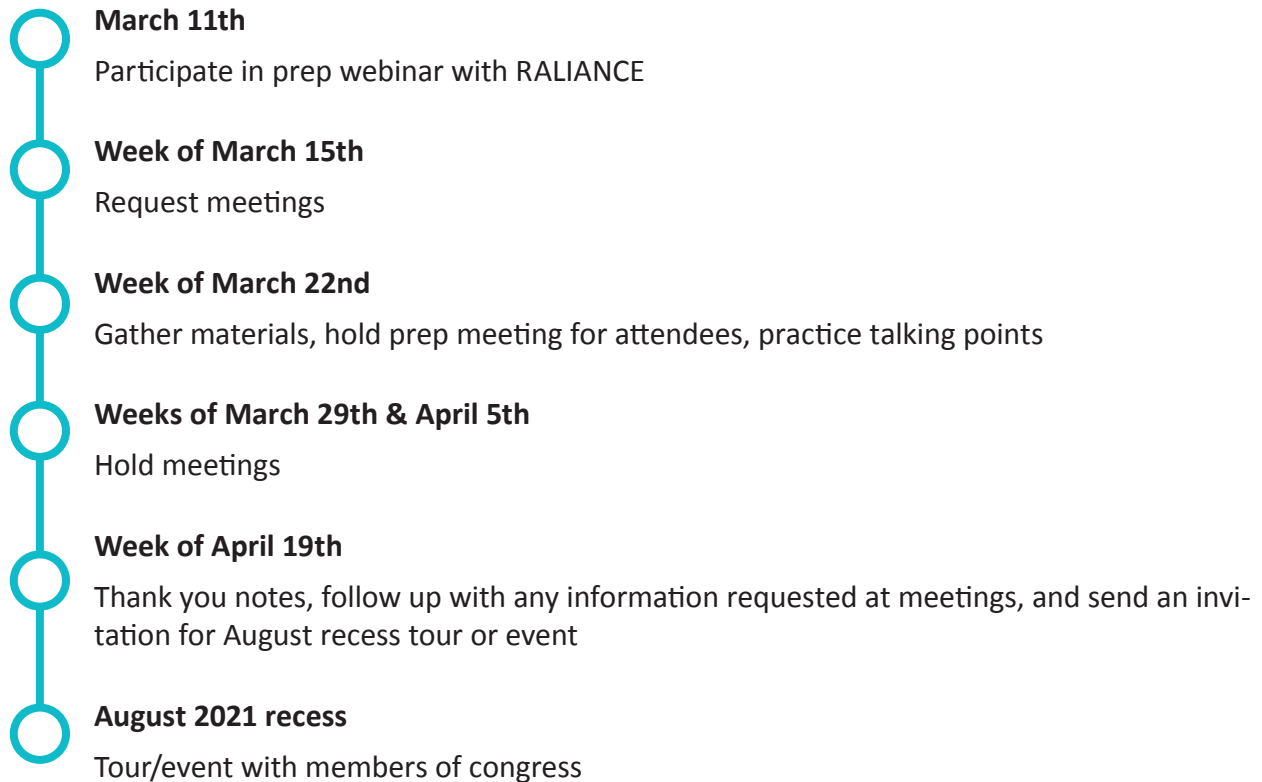
- Do most of the talking! This is a conversation; leave time and space for other participants and the member or their staff to engage.
- Issue explicit or veiled threats or bring “politics” into the meeting.
- Guess the answer to a question. Misleading an official is far worse than seeming uninformed. 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.

Concluding Your Meeting

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.

- 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.
- For online meetings, consider pasting links to resources and supporting materials in the chat or sending them in a follow up email.
- 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



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 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

- Email the representative, senator, or staff member any supporting materials in advance.
- 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 the Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP), the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), and the Rape Prevention & Education (RPE) program 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 2020 survey by NAESV, 62% 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 prevention has skyrocketed, the evidence base has progressed significantly, funding is insufficient, and further investment in the RPE program is desperately needed.
- According to a 2020 survey by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, at current funding levels, 62% of programs have a waiting list for counseling services, and 35% of programs lack a full time therapist on staff.

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 two-year reporting period, 55,000 survivors were served with funding from the SASP.
- VOCA, a non-taxpayer fund, supports over four 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:
- SASP: \$100 million for the Sexual Assault Services program at the Office on Violence Against Women.
- VOCA: The VOCA Fix to increase deposits by directing funds from deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements to the Crime Victims Fund and a steady release of funds to avoid additional cuts.
- RPE: Increase appropriations for Rape Prevention & Education Program at the CDC to \$75 million; increase the authorization of RPE to \$150 million and require collaboration with and funding for sexual assault coalitions in the reauthorization of the VAWA.
- VAWA: Reauthorization with no rollbacks that supports vulnerable survivors and communities.

Concluding the meeting

- Ask if the member/staffer has any additional questions.
- Make sure you have names and emails for all staff in attendance.
- 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 setting up a virtual meeting 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, and the Rape Prevention & Education program. 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 <https://www.raliance.org/policy/>

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, and RPE, 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:

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

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

Tone of the meeting:

your answer

RESOURCE TIP:

Save time by submitting this report online! Use the following link to access the NAESV District Advocacy Visit Report: <https://bit.ly/2NtgDXG>

Congressional Calendar

Key

 Both chambers in session
 Senate only
 House only

Important Phone Numbers

White House
Switchboard
(202) 456-1414

U.S. Capitol
Switchboard
(202) 244-3121

Senate Republican
Cloakroom
(202) 224-6191

Senate Democratic
Cloakroom
(202) 225-4691

House Republican
Cloakroom
(202) 225-7350

House Democratic
Cloakroom
(202) 225-7330

January

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House Republican
Cloakroom
(202) 225-7350

House Democratic
Cloakroom
(202) 225-7330

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National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

Sexual Assault Services Program

Funding authorized: \$40 million

FY 2020: \$38 million

FY 2021: \$41 million

FY 2022 Request: \$100 million

“Survivors...have more complex trauma that includes stress about paying bills due to loss of income from COVID, children being out of school, death...” — Florida advocate

“I don’t think I would be alive if it weren’t for this program.” — Missouri survivor

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.

“My confidential advocate is what helped me stay in school.” — campus sexual assault survivor, Colorado 2020

Rape crisis centers struggle. The nation’s 1,500 sexual assault programs often lack the resources to meet victims’ most basic needs. National attention to the problem of sexual assault has meant more victims have come forward seeking recovery services. According to a 2020 survey by NAESV:

- **62% of rape crisis centers have a waiting list for counseling services** — a 12% increase from last year with some waiting lists several months long.
- 35% of programs lack a therapist on staff.
- 62% of programs saw an increased demand for services in 2020.

“Turnover is on the rise. As advocate stress levels increase due to the demands of the job, they start looking for less stressful jobs with higher pay and better benefits. We tend to get folks who are new to the profession, they get some experience, then leave for better pay and less stress.” — Kansas Advocate

The Need is Great.

According to 2015 data from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: **1 in 5 women have been the victim of rape or attempted rape.**

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. As an example, in FY 21, the states of Kansas and New Hampshire each received about \$400,000 for the entire state.

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.

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.

“As of today, I can proudly say that I am a SURVIVOR and not a victim of sexual assault. I can encourage others and help them get to their place of healing.” — Arkansas survivor

Congress can be an essential part of the solution by increasing appropriations for the Sexual Assault Services Program to \$100 million.

HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Contact Terri Poore, Policy Director at terri@endsexualviolence.org



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

Rape Prevention & Education Program (RPE)

Funding authorized: \$50 million

FY 21 Appropriation: \$51.75 million

FY 22 Appropriations Request: \$75 million

Increase authorization to \$150 million

Ensure involvement of and funding for state sexual assault coalitions

"After leading a community education program in a local middle school, we received a letter from a 13-year-old boy saying, 'I did not understand that teasing my younger sister could be isolating and hurting her. I went home and apologized to her and told her that I would be her champion from today forward.'" — a California prevention educator

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, school administrators, teachers, students, and youth increased their requests for prevention services, i.e. virtual workshops and trainings." — a New York prevention educator

The #MeToo movement; national focus on sexual assault on campuses, in the military, and faith communities; 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' capacities.

A 2020 survey by NAESV revealed that 62% of programs saw an increased demand for services, while one-third of programs had a waiting list for prevention education of a month or longer.

Rape Prevention & Education (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 increase significantly.

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, and policies.

NAESV is recommending language in the re-authorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to increase the authorization of RPE to \$150 million and ensure expert involvement of state sexual assault coalitions in RPE planning and implementation.

Preventing sexual violence requires the full participation of state sexual assault coalitions who conceived, developed, and advocate for the RPE program.

State sexual assault coalitions have specific expertise, experience, and resources related to the prevention of sexual assault and want to work in partnership with state public health officials.

We recommend language in VAWA that:

- Requires meaningful involvement in state RPE planning of the state sexual assault coalition and underserved communities.
- Creates a state coalition grant program with 15% of RPE funding for the state and territorial sexual assault coalitions, with 10% (of the 15%) set aside for tribal sexual assault coalitions.

Why increase funding for RPE?

According to the [National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey](#) one in five women were victims of a completed or attempted rape at some point in their lifetime.

The societal costs of sexual violence are incredibly high, including medical and mental health care, law enforcement response, and lost productivity. 2017 research sets the lifetime economic burden of rape at \$122,000 per victim and reveals a strong link between sexual violence and chronic disease.

We know RPE is working.

A 2016 study conducted in 26 Kentucky high schools over five 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 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** 8th grade class.

HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Contact Terri Poore, Policy Director at terri@endsexualviolence.org



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund

FY 22 Request:

- Pass the VOCA Fix to increase deposits and restore the Crime Victims Fund (CVF).
- Release steady funding from the CVF 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*, and is the most essential and flexible source of funding for crime victim services across the nation.

From FY 2010 through FY 2014, the CVF collected an average of \$2 billion each year but disbursed only an average of \$700 million per year. Congress raised the cap significantly in FY 2016, and the next two years, at the request of advocates and programs, were able to invest in new staff and expanded services.

Tragically, these investments cannot be sustained because deposits into the CVF are at a historically low level. Deposits the last three years have been \$445 million, \$495 million, and \$503 million respectively—the lowest levels since 2003. This decrease is caused in part by an increase in the use by the U.S. Department of Justice of deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements which, unlike penalties from convictions, are deposited into the General Treasury rather than the CVF.

As a result of this trend, states are experiencing enormous cuts to their awards.

For example, victim services in Ohio lost \$55 million in 2020. Rape crisis programs specifically lost over \$7.5 million, with individual programs losing between 32% and 57% (as well as three 100% cuts) of VOCA funds. This will essentially cut services in half, reducing survivor access to pre-2000 levels.

Unless deposits into the CVF increase, there is a good chance that the entire fund balance could be depleted within a few years. Congress must act now to avoid further devastating cuts to local programs and increased gaps in survivor services by:

Enacting the “VOCA Fix” language to increase deposits to the fund: Fund deposits should be supplemented with payments made pursuant to deferred and non-prosecution agreements.

Providing a steady stream of funding that can be relied on consistently: Large fluctuations in the cap do not benefit survivors or victim services providers.

Funding tribes: NAESV fully supports funding tribal victim services from the Crime Victims Fund to meet the desperate needs of victims on tribal lands.

Waiving match: Many programs, especially those in rural areas, cannot apply for all the

funds they need because of the match requirement. Sufficient local funding is simply not available in many communities. While some states have a streamlined process for match waivers, others do not. The match requirement should be waived to allow this funding source to have the maximum positive impact for victims.

Addressing red tape: Long delays in reimbursement, complicated funding requirements and inflexible processes tie the hands of programs and may lead to funds being returned and/or staffing crises. States need more direction and support in creating processes that work efficiently to meet the needs of victims.

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 1,000 rape crisis centers, rely on VOCA assistance grants to provide critical direct services for over 3.4 million victims a year.

A 2020 NAESV survey of rape crisis centers revealed that 62% have a waiting list for counseling services; 35% don't have therapist on staff; and 62% of programs saw an increase in demand for services.

Biggest unmet needs according to programs:

- Therapy
- Services for teens
- Transportation
- Housing
- Access to SANE nurses

VOCA makes a difference.

Here's what rape crisis centers had to say about VOCA in our 2020 survey:

"Many survivors want/need therapy. I can provide counseling, support and resources but they need a good therapist — and we do not have one staffed at our agency doing therapy work." — an Iowa advocate

"Since we opened our SAFE Center, the number of rape victims coming forward for services has nearly doubled." — A Florida advocate

"VOCA is PAAR's largest funder at 40%. A significant decrease would result in layoffs and decreased services." — a Pennsylvania advocate

"The uncertainty of the funding is of grave concern especially when dealing with the pandemic and attempting to keep your organization running." — a West Virginia advocate

"The federal and state funding for the 20-21 year will not cover all the increases in expenses for our programs. This does NOT include the increase in expenses incurred due to COVID-related items. We may be forced to lay off people before the end of the fiscal year." — a California advocate

"...if [VOCA is] cut further, we will experience a decrease in services, especially in our small rural counties where access is crucial to survivors of sexual violence." — a Florida advocate

Distributing steady funding to states from the VOCA fund in FY 2021 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, Policy Director at terri@endsexualviolence.org



FUNDING IS CRUCIAL FOR RAPE CRISIS CENTERS

Rape crisis centers across the country are experiencing severe funding issues.

62%

of programs have experienced an increased demand for services.

64%

of programs received a decrease in funding — the largest decrease was in private giving.

When rape crisis centers are underfunded, they can't meet the needs of sexual assault survivors, and prevention programs are sidelined.

The services that we have been able to provide have been invaluable to our clients, and the thought of not having that ability due to funding is heartbreaking.

- A West Virginia Advocate

Inadequate funding delays services and increases barriers for victims and underserved communities

62%

of programs have a waiting list for counseling services, with some waiting lists over three months long for an appointment.



One third of programs have a waiting list of a month or longer for prevention education.

We want to reach out to our Spanish Speaking community and cannot do the outreach we'd like to due to limited funding and our inability to increase staff capacity and our inability to hire additional bilingual staff.

- A Illinois Advocate

38%

of programs experienced a reduction in staffing — main causes were non-competitive salaries and stress.



35% of programs lack a full-time counselor or therapist on staff to assist sexual assault survivors.

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds are critical to maintain our sexual assault services. A decrease in VOCA will translate into a decrease in services to victims.

- A Pennsylvania Advocate

Programs say survivors who are homeless and elderly are especially underserved.

The survivors appear to have more complex trauma that includes stress about paying bills due to loss of income from COVID, children being out of school, death, etc.

- A Florida Advocate



It's time to increase funding for rape crisis centers.

Based on a National Alliance to End Sexual Violence 2020 online survey of rape crisis centers.

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, 2016.¹
- 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.¹
- 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, 2016.²
- 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.³
- 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 six-month reporting period, LAV Program grantees provided services to an average of 28,553 victims.⁴
- VAWA grants helped ensure that victims from historically underserved populations were able to access life-saving services. During each six-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.³
- More than 1.3 million individuals participated in VAWA-funded education, awareness, or prevention activities.³
- From 2014 – 2016, during each six-month reporting period, VAWA-funded grantees provided services to an average of 124,916 victims, children, youth, and other dependents.³
- 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.³

- 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.³
- Across the two-year reporting period, VAWA-funded grantees responded to 591,788 hotline calls.³
- 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 two-year grant period.³
- 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.³ Thanks to VAWA, more victims are coming forward and receiving life-saving 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, it has made the following impacts:

- Between VAWA's implementation in 1994 and 2011, serious victimization by an intimate partner declined by 72% for women and 64% for men.⁵
- A 2010 study demonstrated that an increase in the availability of legal services is associated with a decrease in intimate partner homicide.⁶
- 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.⁷
- Nationally, VAWA saved as much as \$14.8 billion in its first six years alone.⁸
- 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.⁹
- 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.⁹
- A 2016 study conducted in 26 Kentucky high schools over five 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.¹⁰

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