

U.S. Department of Justice
Office on Violence Against Women

30 Years of the Violence Against Women Act

A Legacy and Future of Safety and Justice

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OVW

Office on Violence Against Women

Working Together to End the Violence

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Executive Summary

September 13, 2024, marked the 30th anniversary of the enactment of the original Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).¹ This landmark bipartisan legislation fundamentally transformed the nation’s response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Recognizing these crimes as serious threats to individual and public safety, Congress passed VAWA in 1994 to establish federal protections and allocate critical resources to support survivors, enhance coordinated community approaches, and hold offenders accountable. Each reauthorization expanded VAWA’s scope to address emerging challenges and meet the evolving needs of diverse communities. VAWA’s creation and passage were made possible through the collective efforts, leadership, and commitment of survivors, advocates, and community leaders.

Established in 1995 to implement VAWA’s provisions, the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) provides national leadership on issues of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (referred to collectively as gender-based violence, or GBV). Over the past three decades, OVW distributed more than \$11 billion in federal funding to strengthen local responses and support survivors. This funding reaches all 50 states, six territories, and numerous Tribal nations annually, ensuring that communities are equipped with resources to address GBV. Through its grant programs, strategic partnerships, policy development efforts, and support for a robust network of national training and technical assistance providers, OVW continues to fulfill the promise of VAWA – empowering communities and transforming responses to these critical issues.

During the commemoration of VAWA’s 30th anniversary, OVW released [*Answering the Call: Thirty Years of the Violence Against Women Act*](#), a report chronicling the transformative impact of three decades of implementing VAWA, including how VAWA has continued to evolve with each subsequent reauthorization in 2000, 2005, 2013, and 2022 to strengthen our nation’s commitment to prevent and address gender-based violence. Drawing on research findings, data, and archival materials, *Answering the Call* provides a comprehensive retrospective of VAWA’s legacy.

30 Years of the Violence Against Women Act: A Legacy and Future of Safety and Justice shifts the focus to the present and, informed by extensive field engagement, describes the current landscape and the complex challenges survivors and communities face today and provides recommendations for continuing to advance the goals of VAWA into its fourth decade. This report builds upon a VAWA 20th Anniversary milestone report, which captured the challenges, solutions, and progress of that era. It underscores the enduring relevance of

¹ Pub. L. No. 103-322, tit. IV, 108 Stat. 1796, 1902-55 (1994). VAWA has been reauthorized four times. See Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-386, div. B, 114 Stat. 1464, 1492-1539; Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-162, 119 Stat. 2960 (2006); Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4, 127 Stat. 54; Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022, Pub. L. No. 117-103, div. W, 136 Stat. 49, 840-962.

foundational issues while highlighting service innovations and a deeper understanding of the importance of addressing complex issues more holistically over the past decade. The report also emphasizes the need to strengthen the coordinated community response (CCR) to ensure all survivors have pathways to safety, justice, healing, and well-being.

Key insights for this report were gathered from survivors, advocates, civil and criminal justice partners, health care providers, educators, community leaders, and others through extensive community engagement conducted between May 2022 and November 2024. These efforts were led by a new OVW division, the Policy, Communication, and Strategic Engagement Division, established in May 2022, with a dedicated focus on identifying and uplifting promising practices, emerging issues, and effective policies to ensure that OVW's grantmaking and policymaking remain informed by and responsive to the evolving needs of the communities it serves. This engagement included numerous community site visits and listening sessions, as well as the VAWA 30th Anniversary Summit, held on September 12-13, 2024, offering valuable insights into the shifting landscape of survivor advocacy and support. These efforts spanned numerous states, U.S. territories, Tribal nations, rural areas, and urban centers, underscoring OVW's deliberate commitment to soliciting a diversity of opinions and perspectives. OVW also reached out to non-grantees, particularly historically marginalized and underserved populations, as well as organizations from allied fields and disciplines that support survivors but have not traditionally accessed OVW resources.

Each community site visit or event was guided by the following questions:

- What inspires you most about your work?
- What significant challenges are you currently facing?
- What emerging issues are survivors in your community encountering?
- Which best practices or policies have proven most impactful in your community?
- How can OVW enhance its support, improve resource access, and better meet the needs of survivors, service providers, and the community?

Focused on survivors' needs, these discussions illuminated innovative solutions communities have developed to prevent and address various forms of GBV, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Participants also highlighted challenges such as systemic barriers in the civil and criminal justice systems, resource limitations, and evolving perpetrator tactics. It is crucial to recognize that the identified issues and solutions are neither static nor exhaustive. Each community presents unique strengths and challenges shaped by local dynamics, resources, and cultural contexts. Similarly, every survivor faces distinct challenges, possesses individual strengths, and follows a unique path to pursuing safety, justice, and healing. This report provides a snapshot of the current landscape. While not comprehensive, it reflects the collective wisdom, resilience, and determination of those dedicated to ending GBV.

OVW expresses its deepest gratitude to the individuals and communities who shared their time, expertise, and personal experiences during these visits. Many conversations included

profound vulnerability from participants, yet they also reflected an unwavering dedication to creating a safer and more equitable society. OVW is inspired by the progress made and energized by the possibilities ahead to continue VAWA's legacy of creating a safer and more just future for all survivors and where individuals can thrive free from the threat of violence.

Enduring Principles

As OVW talked to survivors and advocates across the country about their challenges, successes, unmet needs, and plans for the future, several enduring principles emerged that highlight how VAWA continues to increase support for survivors and make communities safer.

These include:

- the pursuit of justice shaped by survivors' experiences;
- the transformative impact of coordinated community responses;
- the ongoing need to improve the civil and criminal justice systems' approaches;
- the critical importance of addressing survivors' basic and essential needs; and
- the unwavering commitment to centering the voices of those most often overlooked.

Together, these principles underscore VAWA's enduring role in fostering safety, justice, healing, and equity for all survivors.

Survivors Defining Justice

Throughout OVW's engagement, survivors, advocates, service providers, and civil and criminal justice partners emphasized that justice and healing may mean different things for different survivors. Justice is neither singular nor static and is not confined solely to the framework of the civil and criminal justice systems. Instead, justice is a multifaceted concept that encompasses safety, healing, empowerment, systemic change, accountability, and procedural fairness. This is pivotal in understanding how the evolving protections under VAWA empowered countless survivors to pursue justice on their own terms and uphold their fundamental right to live free from violence and abuse.

For many survivors, justice is rooted in ensuring offenders are held accountable through the criminal justice system, encompassing the investigation, prosecution, and adjudication processes. Survivors and advocates emphasized the importance of survivors feeling believed by law enforcement, prosecutors, and the courts. Seeing tangible actions taken by criminal justice partners against offenders to stop further violence plays a crucial role in validating survivors' experiences and restoring their sense of security. Procedural justice within the system – centered on respect, transparency, and survivor participation in decision-making processes – is essential. Survivors consistently expressed that being heard and actively involved in decisions fosters trust and a sense of justice, even when outcomes

fall short of expectations. Further, connecting survivors to specialized victim services is crucial in implementing a survivor-centered, trauma-informed approach. Ensuring survivors feel valued and that their concerns are taken seriously must remain at the core of any system's response to GBV.

For many survivors of abuse and assault, engaging with the criminal justice system often presents significant challenges. These can include retraumatization within the very system meant to provide accountability and safety. Such difficulties are exacerbated by systemic inequities and the impact of criminalization on their communities, further eroding trust in legal processes. Victims of intimate partner violence face particular dilemmas. Many express a desire for the abuse to end without involving a system that might impose severe consequences on a loved one or co-parent, potentially risking further economic instability or even homelessness. Similarly, survivors of sexual assault may hesitate to report, knowing they could face more scrutiny than the offenders during criminal proceedings.

“True justice means recovery without fear, made possible through comprehensive services and a compassionate, coordinated community response.”
– Listening session participant, Phoenix

Many survivors and advocates have emphasized that justice is rooted in safety, stability, and independence. It goes beyond holding offenders accountable, encompassing access to safe housing, healthcare, employment, and the essential resources survivors need to care for themselves and their families and rebuild their lives.

Justice is not solely about punitive measures but also about the community acknowledging its role in enabling or minimizing the abuse. Families and communities that dismiss, downplay, or even perpetuate violence can cause further harm, deepening the survivor's sense of isolation and betrayal. True accountability involves communities recognizing these dynamics, taking responsibility for their role in perpetuating harm, and committing to meaningful change. This acknowledgment can offer survivors validation, safety, and a sense of justice that punitive systems alone may not provide. In some Tribal and Native Hawaiian communities, justice also includes culturally grounded practices that emphasize healing for both the victim and the abuser. These approaches aim to repair harm while addressing the health of extended families and the broader community. Such frameworks allow those who caused harm to fully understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility, and actively contribute to restoring trust and safety.

Advocates highlighted that with each VAWA reauthorization, grant resources significantly bolstered communities' abilities to create interventions and response systems that embrace a broader definition of safety and justice. These efforts enhanced criminal justice and civil court responses while expanding supportive services and programs tailored to the diverse needs of survivors. For instance, the most recent VAWA reauthorization in 2022 authorized a new grant program to fund restorative practices pilot programs that are survivor-centered

and trauma informed, offering survivors an alternative pathway to accountability, healing, and reconciliation outside the traditional criminal justice system. Advocates underscored restorative practices as both a complementary and alternative approach to justice, uniquely addressing survivors' needs for meaningful healing and resolution.

“A punitive criminal legal system doesn’t always work for survivors either. Some want to report and prosecute, some don’t want to lock up their family member. Many don’t report violence for that reason and the abuse continues.”— Restorative justice program, Oakland, California

In many of the conversations, autonomy and choice emerged as central themes in defining justice. OVW heard directly from survivors who emphasized the importance of having control over their own decisions – whether to engage with the criminal and/or civil justice systems, seek alternative pathways to justice, or prioritize seeking safety through housing and economic stability, as well as personal recovery. For many, justice means reclaiming the ability to make informed, independent choices, free from coercion, and ensuring their unique needs and circumstances shape their journeys forward. This autonomy is particularly crucial after enduring violence and abuse, which often deprives survivors of their autonomy and agency. Above all, there was a compelling and resounding call for systems to prioritize survivors’ voices, underscoring the essential role of survivor leadership in crafting diverse solutions that genuinely address their individual needs and lived experiences.

Enhancing Coordinated Community Responses

From its inception, VAWA emphasized coordinated community responses as a foundational strategy for supporting survivors of GBV. Reflecting the 1994 Act’s initial focus on the criminal justice system’s role in addressing violence against women, early VAWA grant programs were designed to foster collaboration among law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim services. Over time, this collaborative approach expanded to include a broader range of disciplines and community partners, and remains as vital today as when VAWA was first enacted, even as our understanding of justice and healing continues to evolve.

In every community OVW engaged with which OVW engaged, participants shared how they have adapted and expanded their CCRs to meet the evolving and complex needs of survivors. These updated models often extend beyond traditional criminal justice frameworks, incorporating partnerships with healthcare providers, counseling and social services, housing organizations, culturally specific programs, schools, businesses, and individuals who can expand resources and support for survivors. For example, a program in Jacksonville, Florida, established robust partnerships with hospitals, law enforcement, counseling services, the local chamber of commerce, and substance abuse programs to deliver comprehensive, wraparound services for sexual assault and domestic violence survivors. These collaborations also include cross-disciplinary training to better address the

needs of survivors dealing with substance use disorders, post-traumatic stress, and trauma.

Survivors, advocates, and community leaders highlighted how these coordinated efforts not only improve access to services but also promote a survivor-centered response that aligns with broader definitions of justice and healing. The result is a more integrated and responsive system that fosters healing, reduces revictimization, and ensures survivors receive the support they need without the burden of navigating fragmented systems.

“Collaboration leads to relationships you can lean on for out of the box solutions, where you can ask people to go above and beyond.” – Victim service provider, Birmingham, Alabama

Moreover, local communities are enhancing their CCRs by not only collaborating with county and state partners, but also actively forging partnerships with federal law enforcement and prosecution entities. A prime example of this multi-level, multidisciplinary collaboration is the partnership established through [Operation Safe Families](#) in Birmingham, Alabama. These partnerships include local law enforcement, prosecutors, a family justice center, and culturally specific service providers, creating a holistic approach to addressing domestic violence. Survivors in high-risk cases, particularly those involving the use or threat of firearms, receive a comprehensive range of services, such as safety planning, counseling, legal advocacy, and culturally responsive support, while law enforcement and prosecutors work together to hold offenders accountable under both state and federal laws.

Additionally, many advocates stressed the importance of improving coordination among federal agencies in addressing GBV. The release of the first-ever [U.S. National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence: Strategies for Action](#) was met with optimism. Based on extensive consultation and input from experts, this plan highlighted federal efforts across more than fifteen agencies to prevent and address GBV through both public health and public safety approaches. It also underscored increased commitments and opportunities for greater collaboration. Advocates particularly stressed the need for enhanced coordination in key areas such as prevention, economic security, housing, immigration, health, GBV in the workplace, technology-facilitated abuse, and addressing GBV in federal emergency preparedness and response efforts. They urged federal agencies to better align their policies and resources to provide comprehensive and effective support for survivors.

Advocates noted that while many communities have made significant progress in implementing CCRs over the past 30 years under VAWA, substantial challenges persist. Limited funding, difficulties in engaging key stakeholders, and the exclusion of critical partners continue to hinder the full potential of CCRs. Often, collaborations fail to include essential partners who may not traditionally fall within the GBV field but play a crucial role in supporting survivors, such as healthcare providers, mental health services, and housing organizations. These gaps leave vital survivor needs unmet. Equally concerning is the frequent omission of culturally specific, community-based organizations and others

focused on addressing the needs of underserved populations from CCR partnerships. The expertise and deep understanding these organizations bring are critical to creating inclusive, effective responses tailored to the unique experiences of all survivors.

Survivors, advocates, and criminal justice partners have consistently highlighted how deeply ingrained practices within traditional systems often create significant barriers to collaboration, leading to resistance to change and innovation. Different partners within CCRs frequently have distinct goals: law enforcement focuses on apprehending perpetrators, prosecutors prioritize gathering evidence for convictions, and advocates aim to meet survivors' holistic needs while safeguarding confidentiality. These differing priorities can sometimes conflict, inadvertently sidelining the needs of survivors.

To overcome these challenges, all entities must be willing to embrace change, move beyond the status quo, and align their strategies to avoid causing further harm to survivors. Truly effective CCRs require not only adequate resources but also deliberate relationship-building and a unified commitment to prioritizing survivors' well-being over institutional inertia or competing priorities. CCRs remain a cornerstone of VAWA, becoming increasingly relevant and vital as our understanding of meaningful justice, safety, and healing continues to evolve. The ability to unite diverse partners in tackling the multifaceted challenges survivors face underscores this approach's enduring significance.

Improving Criminal Justice Responses

Advocates highlight that VAWA has continually enhanced the criminal justice system's ability to respond to survivors effectively. Since its inception, VAWA has provided critical funding through programs such as the [Services * Training * Officers * Prosecutors \(STOP\) Formula Grant Program](#), the [Grants to Improve the Criminal Justice Response](#) (which was renamed in VAWA 2022), and the [Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program \(Rural Program\)](#), significantly strengthening the system's capacity to support survivors. Over the years, VAWA's introduction of new grant programs, expansion of resources within existing programs, targeted initiatives, and enhanced federal legal protections have strengthened the criminal justice system's capacity to adapt to the evolving tactics of abusers, hold offenders accountable, and protect survivors and communities under state and federal laws.

Many communities shared that they are actively implementing new practices or expanding existing strategies to enhance survivor safety. For example, communities utilized OVW grant funds to support specialized responses such as Domestic Violence High Risk Teams (DVHRTs) and Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs). These multidisciplinary teams focus on identifying high-risk cases, preventing escalation, and providing trauma-informed care tailored to survivors' unique needs. Other examples of VAWA-funded efforts include streamlining the protective order process to improve accessibility for survivors and

Resource Spotlight

[Framework for Prosecutors to Strengthen Our National Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Involving Adult Victims](#)

Released in May 2024, the guide seeks to strengthen the collective response to the prosecution of sexual assault and domestic violence by equipping prosecutors to build provable cases in a trauma-informed manner and ensures due process for defendants.

[Improving Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence by Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias](#)

In 2022, DOJ released updated guidance designed to help law enforcement agencies recognize, mitigate, and prevent gender bias and other bias from compromising the response to, and investigation of, sexual assault, domestic violence, and other forms of GBV.

enhancing enforcement through better coordination between law enforcement and courts, ensuring that violations are promptly addressed. Many jurisdictions also used funding to develop specialized courts dedicated to domestic violence cases or to improve the investigation of sexual assault cases.

VAWA also enabled comprehensive training, equipping police, prosecutors, and courts to respond effectively and in a trauma-informed manner to survivors' needs. Some jurisdictions integrated victim services directly into police departments, embedding advocates to offer crisis intervention, safety planning, and access to resources. Specialized domestic violence and sexual assault units staffed by officers trained by local anti-violence programs in abuse dynamics and lethality risks are improving responses. Many cities – including Dallas, Phoenix, and Birmingham – shared that they used VAWA resources to focus on trauma-informed training programs and partnerships with culturally specific victim service providers, fostering trust and improving survivor outcomes. Also, many jurisdictions are incorporating co-responder models that integrate law enforcement with community-based support systems, providing a comprehensive response to incidents of GBV.

Some communities without direct OVW grant support often look to funded jurisdictions as models, replicating successful programs and adopting proven strategies to enhance their own responses. Additionally, many trainings, tools, and resources developed through OVW-funded national training and technical assistance projects are available to support the work of agencies and organizations not directly funded by OVW. This ripple effect extends VAWA's impact, fostering innovation and collaboration nationwide.

Despite significant progress, systemic gaps in law enforcement, prosecution, and court systems continue to pose substantial barriers for survivors. Survivors and advocates frequently cite issues such as the minimization of violence and abuse, inadequate investigations, and dismissive attitudes toward victims of GBV – problems that are particularly pronounced in historically marginalized communities. These systemic failures not only deny survivors justice but also exacerbate trauma, perpetuate cycles of violence, and erode trust in the justice system.

Sexual assault programs continue to report troubling failures, such as law enforcement’s negligence in processing forensic evidence, aggressive interviewing tactics, and outright refusals to investigate sexual assault allegations. In some cases, where a proper investigation has not been undertaken, victims are threatened with being penalized for making “false claims,” compounding the harm and breeding widespread distrust in the criminal justice system.

Despite increased investments in training, judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officials continue to emphasize the need for comprehensive education to better identify patterns of abuse and ensure survivors receive appropriate protections. Insufficient training on trauma, abuse dynamics, and systemic inequities often results in inconsistent or harmful outcomes. Survivors and advocates cite concerns that the lack of training has led to inadequate investigations, prosecutors failing to uphold victims’ rights, practices that retraumatize victims, and lenient sentencing or diversion programs that lack accountability.

Pre-trial decisions, such as setting bail conditions and issuing no-contact orders, are crucial to ensuring survivor safety. Advocates highlighted significant gaps in understanding the risks survivors face during this vulnerable period, particularly when offenders violate these protective measures. To address these concerns, some jurisdictions implement risk assessment tools to help judges evaluate lethality risks and prioritize survivor safety. Additionally, partnerships with law enforcement and advocacy organizations strengthened the monitoring of pre-trial conditions, ensuring that violations are promptly identified and addressed to protect survivors better.

Broader systemic barriers, a lack of cultural humility, limited language access, and deep-rooted inequities continue to pose significant challenges. Organizations with a primary focus on providing services for Black survivors, for instance, highlighted systemic neglect that contributes to the disproportionately high rates of missing or murdered Black women and girls. They noted that often these communities are overpoliced but under-protected. Similarly, American Indian and Alaska Native communities continue to grapple with the epidemic of Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP), a crisis further exacerbated by jurisdictional complexities, chronically

Resource Spotlight

Domestic Violence Resource for Increasing Safety and Connection (DV RISC)

provides training and technical assistance to communities working to implement and strengthen risk assessment models and strategies that are grounded in coordinated responses to intimate partner violence homicide prevention and reduction.

National Violence Against Women Law Enforcement Training and Technical Assistance Consortium

is a single-entry point for law enforcement agencies – including police and sheriffs’ offices, prosecutors, civilian staff, and campus police – to request training and technical assistance in responding to, investigating, and prosecuting domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking cases.

underfunded Tribal law enforcement, persistent structural inequities, and historical trauma. Survivors from immigrant communities often hesitate to seek help due to fears of discrimination or deportation, while lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and trans, queer and questioning, intersex, asexual or agender, and two-spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) survivors frequently encounter skepticism or misunderstanding. These issues underscore the need for systemic reforms to ensure accountability, equity, and justice for all survivors.

The strengths and shortcomings of the criminal justice system manifest uniquely across different communities, shaped by their diverse challenges and resources. However, through OVW's engagement with communities, consistent overarching themes have emerged, providing critical insights – though not a comprehensive account – into shared experiences and systemic patterns across these varied contexts.

One recurring and urgent theme is the pressing need for cultural shifts within law enforcement agencies, prosecutor's offices, probation departments, and courts. Leadership within these institutions must take a proactive role in fostering a culture that prioritizes survivor dignity, fairness, and accountability. This transformation requires not only championing policies that center survivors but also addressing entrenched systemic challenges, such as high case declination rates and the pervasive minimization of survivor experiences.

By leading these changes, agency leaders can set the tone for meaningful systemic change, ensuring survivors are treated with the respect and justice they deserve while enhancing the effectiveness of the criminal justice system as a whole.

Meeting Survivors' Essential Needs

Advocates, criminal justice partners, and allied professionals emphasized that addressing survivors' essential needs is foundational to ensuring their safety, healing, and long-term stability. While VAWA has been instrumental in transforming the criminal justice system's response to GBV, it has also played a critical role in supporting the basic resources survivors need to rebuild their lives.

Survivors cannot begin to heal from trauma or regain stability without access to essentials such as shelter, food, hygiene products, clothing, transportation, and healthcare. These immediate needs are often the first priority when fleeing violence, and victim service providers serve as a critical lifeline in moments of crisis. At the same time, advocates stressed the importance of long-term solutions – ensuring survivors can access stable housing, employment opportunities, mental health services, and civil legal support.

A coordinated approach that addresses both immediate and sustained needs is essential. Service providers consistently highlighted that while immediate interventions are vital to ensuring safety, planning for long-term stability must begin simultaneously. Survivors

require more than just a temporary reprieve; they need ongoing resources and support systems to navigate the complex path to recovery and independence.

Basic Needs

Survivors and advocates consistently highlight critical unmet needs that pose significant barriers to recovery. Food insecurity remains a major challenge, as many survivors lack the financial resources or support networks to access regular meals, food pantries, grocery assistance, hygiene products, clothing, and other basic necessities. Transportation is another pervasive issue, especially in rural or underserved areas, where survivors often face difficulties reaching shelters, court hearings, counseling services, or medical care. While some communities have implemented creative solutions – such as transportation vouchers, ride-sharing partnerships, and volunteer driver networks – many still struggle to meet the full scope of need due to limited resources and an overall scarcity of community support systems.

The needs of children and dependents are closely connected to those of survivors, highlighting the importance of addressing family dynamics as part of the recovery process. Access to essentials such as food, clothing, school supplies, and childcare is crucial for supporting family healing and enabling survivors to focus on stabilizing their lives. Advocates emphasize that childcare, in particular, is a critical resource – yet it is often difficult to access. Reliable childcare allows survivors to attend court proceedings, seek employment, or participate in counseling without the added stress of managing caregiving responsibilities. For many parents, the ability to care for their children is a determining factor in the decision to leave an abusive relationship, making this support vital for both immediate safety and long-term recovery.

Tackling these interconnected needs is essential to helping survivors and their families rebuild their lives with stability and dignity. To meet these overlapping challenges, many communities embraced innovative and collaborative solutions. Partnerships with local food banks, mobile healthcare units, and integrated housing programs extend support beyond traditional systems, creating a more accessible safety net. Flexible financial assistance emerged as a critical tool for addressing both immediate and ongoing needs. Programs offering financial support for rent, utility bills, and childcare enable survivors to manage urgent crises while establishing a foundation for long-term stability. Additionally, partnerships with businesses created opportunities for survivors to gain employment, receive financial literacy training, and access to resources that promote independence. These collaborations provide survivors with practical tools and promote economic empowerment as a key component of recovery. By strengthening these partnerships, programs can enhance their ability to deliver comprehensive, wraparound support, ensuring survivors and their families have access to the services and resources necessary for safety, stability, and healing.

Housing

VAWA plays an important role in expanding housing options and housing protections for survivors of GBV, addressing one of the most critical barriers to safety and stability. Through targeted funding and federal protections, VAWA enables communities to implement housing solutions and expands access to essential resources, providing survivors with pathways to secure, affordable, and trauma-informed housing.

In many communities, OVW-funded transitional housing programs offer survivors safe accommodations as they work toward long-term independence and permanent housing. These programs often incorporate wraparound services such as counseling, job training, childcare, and financial literacy education, addressing multifaceted needs of survivors and their families. From urban areas with high housing costs to resource-limited rural regions, VAWA's [Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking Program \(Transitional Housing Program\)](#) support programs tailored to unique local challenges.

Despite progress, housing remains one of the most critical and sought-after resources, underscoring widespread shortages in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and long-term affordable housing. This challenge is particularly acute in rural and underserved areas where survivors are frequently forced to choose between staying in dangerous situations or facing homelessness. Marginalized communities, including LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and those with disabilities or who are Deaf or hard of hearing, encounter additional obstacles such as discrimination and limited accessible housing options.

Rising housing costs have significantly heightened the challenges survivors face in securing stable accommodations. The COVID-19 pandemic further strained housing resources, as population shifts from urban to rural areas increased demand in regions already grappling with limited housing options. In areas frequently affected by natural disasters, such as the Pacific territories, survivors encounter even greater obstacles. Geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, and recurring severe tropical weather exacerbate the difficulties in rebuilding and recovery. Destructive storms or other natural disasters often leave survivors without safe housing, forcing many to live in makeshift shelters or remain confined with an abusive person long after the initial crisis. These conditions are compounded by prolonged delays in the availability of safe, permanent housing, creating a ripple effect of adverse consequences for survivors and their families.

Systemic barriers and housing discrimination continue to obstruct survivors' access to safe and stable housing. Although [VAWA provides specific protections](#) against wrongful evictions and denials of housing assistance, survivors often face significant challenges navigating Section 8 housing and other programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Insufficient training among many local housing authorities on these protections frequently results in decisions and actions that jeopardize survivors' housing stability.

Advocates have reported that nuisance ordinances present an additional obstacle. These local laws penalize tenants for community disturbances, including repeated visits by law enforcement. Such ordinances disproportionately affect survivors of GBV who seek protection from law enforcement, forcing them to choose between seeking safety through police intervention or risking eviction and losing their housing. This creates an unjust dilemma, exacerbating the already significant barriers survivors face in achieving long-term stability and security.

While significant challenges remain, VAWA provides a framework for communities to develop comprehensive, trauma-informed housing solutions. OVW also continues to strengthen collaborations with HUD to improve access to resources and protections for survivors. Provisions in VAWA 2022 called for the establishment of a Gender-Based Violence Office at HUD, which was established in 2024, and [HUD launched a website](#) focused on VAWA housing protections and resources. By prioritizing survivor-centered approaches and addressing intersecting needs, these efforts aim to ensure all survivors have access to safe and stable housing options.

Resource Spotlight

[Interagency Statement on the Violence Against Women Act's Housing Provisions](#)

The statement outlines the housing programs included in VAWA's housing title, as well as potential scenarios that highlight the need for VAWA's housing protections, the housing rights of survivors and others, federal agency obligations to implement VAWA's housing title, and certain agency authorities to enforce these provisions.

Civil Legal Services

Civil legal services are a lifeline for survivors navigating the complex and often overwhelming legal challenges that arise in the aftermath of sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and stalking. Advocates consistently highlight how VAWA significantly improved access to civil legal services for survivors of GBV, such as obtaining protection orders and custody, enforcing housing rights, navigating immigration systems, and accessing public benefits. When survivors receive trauma-informed legal representation, they are significantly more likely to succeed in court matters when seeking protection orders or child custody and support. As a result of new provisions in VAWA 2022, VAWA-funded programs expanded the availability of [civil legal assistance](#) for survivors. These services are essential in helping survivors address the myriad legal obstacles they face as they rebuild their lives.

Incorporating trauma-informed and survivor-centered approaches into VAWA-funded training for attorneys and court personnel ensures that these professionals are better equipped to understand the complexities of abuse dynamics and the unique needs of survivors. Additionally, partnerships between legal aid organizations, domestic violence service providers, rape crisis centers, and culturally specific service providers ensure that

survivors from historically marginalized communities receive tailored support that accounts for their cultural, linguistic, and systemic barriers.

Despite the expansion of the OVW legal assistance grant program, the scarcity of legal assistance remains a persistent issue, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Survivors face long wait times for services, and the shortage of attorneys specializing in GBV or who have culturally specific expertise leaves many without the support they need during critical moments. Financial barriers also prevent survivors from accessing private attorneys, making free or low-cost legal services indispensable. Complex and emotionally charged cases such as divorce and child custody often serve as avenues for abusers to exert continued control and inflict further harm. Cases can take years to resolve, delaying outcomes that are essential for survivors to restore independence and feel empowered to move forward in their recovery.

Knowing that we may be the only lifeline for a mother to have custody of her child, we will send our attorneys far distances to represent her. – Legal Assistance for Victims Program grantee, Seattle

Legal service providers shared that the shift to virtual legal services during the COVID-19 pandemic brought both opportunities and challenges. While virtual consultations made legal assistance more accessible for some survivors, particularly in rural areas, others faced barriers such as lack of access to technology, privacy concerns, and limited digital literacy. Survivors living with abusers often found it difficult to safely participate in virtual proceedings, further complicating access to justice.

Despite these challenges, many communities developed innovative strategies to expand access to legal services. Co-locating legal advocates and attorneys within domestic violence shelters or rape crisis centers has proven effective in providing survivors with immediate access to legal support in familiar and supportive environments. Mobile legal clinics and outreach programs bring services directly to survivors in remote areas, addressing barriers such as transportation and geographic isolation. Pro bono networks and partnerships with law firms increased the availability of free legal representation, particularly in underserved regions and in high need family law and immigration matters. Additionally, the “Promotoras” model has been instrumental in helping survivors from culturally specific communities access legal services and navigate complex systems. Promotoras are trusted community advocates who provide culturally relevant support, enhance language access, connect survivors with legal assistance, and guide them through processes like obtaining protective orders and accessing immigration relief for victims.

Survivors and advocates stress that training, technical assistance, and capacity-building remain critical components of improving civil legal services. Advocates stress the need for trauma-informed training for attorneys, judges, and legal advocates that emphasizes the dynamics of abuse and the psychological impact of trauma. By equipping legal

professionals with the tools to engage sensitively with survivors, these programs help ensure survivors are not further traumatized by the legal process.

Through funding and training, VAWA played a significant role in broadening access to civil legal services, helping survivors navigate complex legal systems and work towards stability and independence.

Integrated Counseling and Case Management

Through OVW's engagement with communities, the need for integrating mental health support, peer counseling, and comprehensive case management emerged as a critical element of effective support for survivors of GBV. As noted, survivors often face a complex web of challenges, including trauma, housing insecurity, access to health care, legal disputes, employment barriers, transportation barriers, and financial instability. Holistic systems that combine mental health care, peer support, and case management provide immediate assistance while fostering long-term stability and healing.

Trauma-informed counseling plays a vital role in helping survivors process the emotional and psychological impacts of violence and abuse, rebuild resilience, and regain control over their lives. Advocates consistently highlighted that access to reliable emotional support from trained professionals or peer counselors significantly enhances recovery. For example, a program in Florida provides sexual assault survivors with specialized counseling methods, such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), integrated into routine sessions. EMDR has proven effective in helping survivors process and heal from traumatic memories. Additionally, many programs are now offering counseling tailored to survivors with traumatic brain injuries (TBI), acknowledging the significant impact these injuries, often caused by strangulation or trauma to the head, can have on survivors' ability to engage with support services and navigate the criminal justice system.

Peer counseling and support groups also play an instrumental role in survivor recovery. Programs that train survivors to become peer advocates create a cycle of empowerment, allowing individuals with lived experience to guide others through the complexities of recovery. In particular, peer counseling strengthens trust, empathy, and hope by connecting survivors with individuals who share similar lived experiences. This approach is particularly effective in marginalized communities, where cultural understanding and shared experiences are key to building trust and encouraging engagement.

“We can provide services to survivors where they do not have to explain their culture. One client who spoke only Urdu was able to receive counseling. She didn't believe in counseling nor did her family. Now they are all getting counseling.” – Culturally specific program, Dallas

Case management serves as the backbone of survivor support, ensuring immediate needs are met while helping survivors work toward long-term goals. Effective case management integrates mental health care with resources like legal assistance, housing support, and employment services. Case managers act as a central point of coordination, helping survivors navigate complex systems and preventing them from feeling overwhelmed. For instance, a rape crisis center in Mississippi integrates therapists into its case management team, recognizing that trauma responses can emerge even during seemingly routine tasks, such as completing forms or answering questions to access basic needs assistance. Multidisciplinary teams – including counselors, peer advocates, legal advocates, and housing specialists – work together in many programs to deliver coordinated care.

For programs serving diverse communities, effective case management incorporates culturally responsive practices. Advocates emphasized the importance of addressing compounded trauma, such as the intersection of abuse with past criminalization or systemic discrimination. Survivors from marginalized communities – including LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, and racial and ethnic minorities – often face unique barriers that require tailored support. Programs that employ culturally competent counselors and peer advocates ensure survivors feel seen, respected, and understood. Survivors consistently reported feeling more comfortable and engaged when their cultural identities were acknowledged and valued within the support framework. For survivors with limited English proficiency, providing meaningful language access is essential to ensuring safety, services, and justice.

This integrated approach to survivor support, combining mental health services, peer counseling, and comprehensive case management, helps address the multifaceted needs of survivors while promoting long-term healing and empowerment.

Centering Voices at the Margins

Through the years, it has become evident that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to serving survivors. As VAWA programs have expanded through each reauthorization, there has been an increased commitment to ensure that the voices and needs of survivors from culturally specific and underserved communities are integrated into grant programs and VAWA protections. This evolution reflects a deliberate effort to amplify the experiences of those who have historically been marginalized, ensuring that their perspectives and leadership shape the policies and programs designed to support survivors from their communities. By promoting equitable access to services and tailoring resources to meet the unique needs of diverse populations, VAWA supports survivor-centered solutions that are meaningful to survivors’ lived experiences, respect cultural contexts, build on the strengths and assets of the culture and community, and address systemic barriers to safety and justice.

VAWA supports the ability of service providers to recognize that survivors of GBV often face multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination and barriers to support. This understanding drives efforts to address intersectionality by acknowledging how factors such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status, and socioeconomic background, among others, shape survivors' experiences. Additionally, it is important to recognize that survivors may also face issues of historical trauma, intergenerational trauma, and multiple forms of GBV over the lifespan.

This section highlights a few key lessons learned from recent engagement with culturally specific and underserved communities. However, it is important to acknowledge that it cannot comprehensively capture the full range of experiences, strengths, and challenges unique to survivors in every community. Nor does it fully reflect the impact and complexity of each community's history or the ways systemic barriers and oppression have shaped their experiences.

Communities of Color

Advocates and criminal justice partners stressed the importance of culturally specific programs that are vital in addressing the unique needs and lived experiences of survivors from communities of color. These programs deliver essential services, such as legal assistance, emergency housing, and trauma-informed counseling, while respecting cultural contexts and linguistic needs. By affirming survivors' identities and cultures, these comprehensive, strength-based approaches build trust and encourage community engagement, making services more accessible and effective. Programs designed by communities for their communities are consistently the most effective in meeting survivors' needs.

Many programs incorporate traditional healing practices – such as collective storytelling, restorative approaches, and culturally specific rituals – to address intergenerational trauma and build resilience among survivors. For example, a Tribal program in Seattle integrates Indigenous practices, including carving Diamond willow trees and creating tobacco ties, into its healing framework, offering meaningful alternatives for survivors for whom traditional Western counseling may not resonate.

Culturally specific organizations often prioritize language access as a central component of their services. They hire advocates who can provide support in a survivor's primary language or design models where language access is foundational rather than supplementary. Additionally, many communities utilize cultural gatherings or networks – such as drumming circles, mahjong games, or traditional celebrations – as vital platforms for outreach and for

“We receive referrals from our partners for survivors who don’t speak English. We are working with them to improve their language access and collaborate on how to better support survivors.” – Culturally specific organization, Palm Springs, California

sharing critical information and resources with survivors in ways that honor their cultural identity.

Culturally specific organizations often go beyond direct services, working closely with law enforcement to provide trauma-informed training, address implicit biases, and improve responses to historically marginalized communities. These efforts not only enhance support for survivors but also fill in the gaps when mainstream providers encounter difficulties in building credibility, trust, and more effective outreach within diverse communities.

Despite these successes, survivors from communities of color and immigrant backgrounds continue to face significant barriers. Systemic racism, implicit bias in the justice system, and limited access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services often leave survivors without the resources they need for safety, stability, and healing. Immigrant survivors face additional vulnerabilities, such as fear of deportation or family separation, which makes interactions with law enforcement and government agencies especially challenging.

Funding for culturally specific services remains insufficient to meet the growing demand. Smaller community-based organizations or emerging populations often lack the capacity to access federal funds, further limiting their ability to provide services. Geographic isolation, particularly in rural or Pacific territories, compounds these challenges with limited infrastructure, a shortage of culturally specific advocates or legal professionals, and significant transportation barriers.

Systemic gaps in understanding the complex needs of immigrant communities persist, often leaving survivors vulnerable and underserved. Programs highlighted the adverse impact of laws and policies that exacerbate challenges for immigrant survivors seeking safety and stability. For instance, culturally specific organizations in urban areas reported a significant surge in service requests, overwhelming the organization's capacity to meet the increased demand. Additionally, language access barriers and the lack of cultural humility in mainstream services remain a critical roadblock to many services. Many survivors encounter housing programs, shelters, and counseling services that do not offer language access, despite the legal obligation of all organizations that receive federal funding to provide meaningful language access. These services often fail to serve or underserve survivors with limited English proficiency, or refer them to culturally specific organizations without meaningful collaboration or support. This places an undue burden on already-strained resources of smaller community-based organizations. Addressing these challenges requires sustained investment in culturally specific organizations and additional technical assistance for mainstream programs to ensure that they provide meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency.

American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

VAWA serves as a cornerstone in addressing the disproportionately high rates of GBV experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. By acknowledging

the unique challenges stemming from historical trauma, jurisdictional complexities, and systemic inequities – while prioritizing the honoring of Tribal sovereignty – VAWA has introduced critical provisions to enhance safety and justice for Indigenous survivors.

Since its original passage, VAWA has highlighted the needs of American Indian and Alaska Native communities by supporting Tribal sovereignty and increasing resources to address GBV. VAWA established dedicated funding streams for AI/AN Tribes and, in the subsequent reauthorization in 2000, clarified the enforcement of Tribal protection orders and provided funding for Tribal coalitions.

A pivotal moment came with the 2005 reauthorization, which introduced *Title IX – Safety for Indian Women*, a series of provisions entirely focused on addressing GBV in Tribal communities. This title included a statutory mandate requiring the Department of Justice to consult annually with Tribal leaders and established the OVW Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs position. These measures institutionalized a more coordinated and consistent federal focus on Tribal needs and Tribal sovereignty. Over the years, the OVW Tribal Affairs Division’s staffing levels and expertise have grown significantly.

The 2013 reauthorization further honored Tribal sovereignty by affirming Tribes’ inherent authority to prosecute certain domestic violence crimes committed by non-Native offenders on Tribal lands through Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction (SDVCJ). This provision enabled Tribes to hold non-Native perpetrators of domestic violence and dating violence accountable in their own courts, addressing a longstanding gap in jurisdictional authority. The 2022

reauthorization expanded this recognition of Tribes’ inherent authority further, renaming it Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) and broadening the scope of covered crimes, to include sexual assault, sex trafficking, stalking, child abuse, and obstruction of justice, among others. Additionally, it established a pilot program to enable Alaska Tribes to obtain designation from the Attorney General to exercise STCJ over non-Natives who commit covered crimes in their villages, and it expressly recognized the authority of Tribes in Maine to exercise STCJ, addressing historical jurisdictional disparities. The 2022 reauthorization also created a federal reimbursement program to cover expenses incurred by Tribes exercising STCJ, ensuring that financial limitations do not hinder its implementation.

During visits to Tribal nations, many Tribal leaders and advocates highlighted the vital role of federal resources and protections in supporting services and programs specifically designed to meet the needs of their communities. These resources facilitate the integration of traditional healing practices – such as ceremonies, storytelling, and restorative

“Colonization has impacted Indigenous people for centuries. A short-time fix is not enough to help heal from the past and current traumas. We need to help victims restructure all systems that have been found damaging or destructive.” – Alaska Native Village leader, Alaska

approaches – alongside modern trauma care methods. This combination allows programs to address intergenerational trauma while fostering cultural identity and strengthening community cohesion.

“The community stood guard for three days next to her covered body, waiting for law enforcement to come and investigate.” – Village public safety officer, Alaska

Federal funding also supports community-driven solutions, empowering Tribes to create culturally specific responses, including education and prevention initiatives tailored to their populations. Additionally, these resources have been critical in strengthening Tribal criminal justice systems by enhancing the capacity of Tribal courts to address GBV and promoting cross-training between Tribal criminal justice partners and local, state, and federal systems.

Despite this progress under VAWA, AI/AN communities share ongoing and significant challenges in addressing GBV. Jurisdictional complexities remain a critical issue, as the patchwork of federal, state, local, and Tribal authority often creates confusion and delays in responding to crimes. Many

Tribes still lack the resources and partnerships to fully implement STCJ, including access to adequately trained law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and defense attorneys, and to detention facilities.

Geographic isolation and limited infrastructure compound these challenges, leaving many survivors without access to essential services such as medical care, shelters, counseling, and legal assistance. Additionally, systemic racism and bias in the broader justice system contribute to inequitable outcomes for AI/AN survivors.

The MMIP epidemic remains a pressing concern, with many cases going unsolved due to inadequate coordination by federal or local partners, data collection, and investigative resources. While VAWA increased attention to this crisis, gaps in federal and state collaboration with Tribal governments persist, hindering efforts to address this issue comprehensively.

Sustained investment in AI/AN communities is essential to build on the progress achieved under VAWA and to better meet the federal government’s treaty and trust responsibilities to Tribal nations. Expanding funding for Tribal justice systems and victim services, enhancing training for law enforcement on Tribal lands, and supporting culturally specific programs will be critical in addressing the unique needs of Indigenous survivors. VAWA must also prioritize strengthening partnerships between Tribal, federal, and state governments to improve jurisdictional coordination and response times. OVC also is committed to continuing to streamline grant programs and reporting requirements in order to increase access to funding and reduce the burdens for Tribal governments.

LGBTQIA2S+ Communities

VAWA's reauthorizations progressively expanded protections and funding opportunities for LGBTQIA2S+ survivors. The 2013 reauthorization was a landmark moment, explicitly prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in VAWA-funded programs. This provision was critical in addressing historical exclusions and ensuring that LGBTQIA2S+ survivors could access services without fear of rejection or bias.

VAWA also funded initiatives to support LGBTQIA2S+ survivors, including the creation of a grant program in the 2022 reauthorization specifically focused on addressing the needs of LGBTQIA2S+ survivors. This program supports efforts that include training service providers to deliver culturally competent and inclusive care. It also supports the development of services to address unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA2S+ survivors, including intimate partner violence in same-sex relationships, the heightened risks of violence faced by transgender individuals, and the distinct needs of LGBTQIA2S+ youth experiencing homelessness or family rejection.

VAWA also supports innovative partnerships between LGBTQIA2S+-focused organizations and mainstream service providers. These collaborations aim to build capacity, foster inclusivity, and ensure that services are designed with the input and voices of LGBTQIA2S+ survivors.

Despite these accomplishments, significant barriers persist. Many LGBTQIA2S+ survivors continue to encounter discrimination and bias when seeking support, even in systems intended to protect them. Transgender survivors face elevated risks of violence and discrimination, often compounded by policies or practices that fail to accommodate their specific needs, such as access to gender-affirming housing or medical care. Culturally competent services for LGBTQIA2S+ survivors remain limited, especially in rural areas and smaller communities where access to specialized providers is scarce. Additionally, many service providers lack sufficient training to recognize and address the unique dynamics of violence within LGBTQIA2S+ relationships, such as abuse being misinterpreted as mutual aggression or dismissed entirely.

Another challenge is the intersection of LGBTQIA2S+ identities with other marginalized identities. LGBTQIA2S+ survivors who are people of color, immigrants, and/or living with disabilities often face compounded barriers, including systemic racism, threats of deportation by those who exploit or abuse them, or inaccessible services.

Furthermore, LGBTQIA2S+ communities face increased hostility, exacerbating fears and mistrust in government-funded programs. Survivors may hesitate to seek help due to concerns about confidentiality, safety, and potential legal repercussions, particularly for transgender individuals navigating restrictive state laws.

Individuals with Disabilities and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community

VAWA made significant strides in recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by survivors with disabilities, including those who are Deaf and hard of hearing. Since its 2000 reauthorization, VAWA has included funding for programs aimed at making victim services more accessible and responsive. These initiatives provided vital training for service providers to better understand the dynamics of violence experienced by individuals with disabilities and to deliver equitable, trauma-informed care tailored to their needs.

At the heart of these efforts is the Training and Services to End Violence and Abuse Against Individuals with Disabilities and Deaf People Program (Disabilities Program), which is instrumental in fostering collaborations among victim service organizations, disability service providers, and advocacy groups. This program supports initiatives to enhance accessibility by providing essential resources such as sign language interpreters, assistive communication devices, and physical modifications to shelters and counseling centers. Additionally, it funds the development of safety planning tools, advocacy resources, and training programs to equip service providers, law enforcement, and judicial personnel with the skills needed to effectively support survivors with disabilities.

For survivors who are Deaf or experience hearing loss, these efforts extend to the creation of population-specific programs that honor Deaf culture and promote direct communication in American Sign Language (ASL) or other preferred methods, rather than relying solely on interpreters. Specialized hotlines, text-based services, and outreach programs tailored to the Deaf community further expanded access to critical resources, empowering survivors to seek help in ways that respect their linguistic and cultural identities.

Despite these advancements, many victim service providers still fall short in providing full physical and communication accessibility. Some programs lack plans and policies to access sign language interpreters or real-time captioning, leaving survivors who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing without crucial support. Survivors with disabilities often face barriers such as inaccessible buildings, a lack of assistive technologies, or insufficient accommodations that prevent them from fully utilizing available services.

The challenges extend beyond infrastructure. Many service providers, law enforcement officers, and judicial personnel remain undertrained in responding effectively to survivors with disabilities. This gap can lead to retraumatization, inadequate investigations, or the failure to meet survivors' needs, for example, during shelter stays or legal proceedings.

In rural or remote areas, these issues are compounded by a scarcity of accessible services and trained providers. Mainstream programs in these regions report an increase in survivors with disabilities but often lack the resources to make their facilities and services accessible. The absence of population-specific services in these areas that have a primary focus on serving survivors with disabilities or who are deaf creates additional barriers, leaving many with few, if any, options for support.

Justice-Involved Survivors

Justice-involved survivors – those who are incarcerated or navigating reentry after detention – often face unique challenges requiring trauma-informed support. Many have histories of GBV that contributed to their incarceration, yet they often encounter stigma, systemic barriers, and limited access to services addressing both their victimization and current needs.

VAWA programs increasingly have acknowledged the intersection between victimization and criminalization, particularly for survivors whose conviction is tied to their experiences of violence and victimization. Many justice-involved survivors have histories of intimate partner violence and sexual assault, including sexual abuse as children, or trafficking that shaped their pathways into the criminal justice system.

OVW engaged with reentry programs and formerly incarcerated survivors to explore strategies for supporting this population. Trauma-informed case management is central, providing access to stable housing, mental health services, and employment opportunities. Programs also offer financial literacy, job readiness, and expungement assistance, while culturally specific initiatives address systemic inequities and cultural stigma, ensuring equitable support for marginalized communities.

Advocates stress the need for survivor-centered diversion programs, sentence reductions, and clemency policies for survivors of abuse. Training for judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys on trauma and coercion dynamics is critical to ensuring fair treatment.

In Seattle, a collaboration between a prosecutor’s office and a community-based organization demonstrates how deflection programs – a diversion strategy that refers individuals with drug use and mental health problems to community-based treatment instead of arrest – can provide important support for justice-involved survivors. Participants are diverted from prosecution and connected to trauma-informed services, such as counseling, housing, and job training, addressing the root causes of justice involvement and empowering survivors to rebuild stable, violence-free lives.

These initiatives underscore the importance of survivor-centered, holistic approaches to justice. By prioritizing trauma-informed practices, deflection models, and tailored reentry support, communities can help justice-involved survivors overcome systemic challenges, recover from abuse, and build secure futures.

“We need resources for incarcerated mothers. Children of incarcerated mothers also lack resources. We have only 20 minutes to talk to our children every day and an incarcerated mom is a deciding factor for the victimization of the next generation.”
– Incarcerated client/victim and advocate, Chicago

Young Survivors

VAWA is instrumental in supporting young people impacted by GBV, offering critical resources and training to address their unique needs. Through its grant programs, VAWA funded initiatives that focus on prevention, intervention, and comprehensive support services, empowering schools, community organizations, and victim service providers to create trauma-informed environments. These efforts brought meaningful progress in addressing the challenges faced by young survivors.

Prevention and awareness initiatives funded by VAWA educate young people about healthy relationships, consent, and bystander intervention, encouraging a culture of respect and accountability among peers. Trauma-informed training for educators, law enforcement, and service providers enhanced their ability to recognize signs of abuse, respond with sensitivity, and provide effective support. This training also includes areas of growing concern, such as technology-facilitated abuse, including the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, which disproportionately affects young women and girls. Targeted support for marginalized youth is another significant focus of VAWA. Programs tailored for immigrant communities bridged language and trust gaps, while Indigenous youth initiatives incorporated traditional healing practices to address intergenerational trauma.

Despite these advancements, significant gaps remain. There is an ongoing need for enhanced school-based interventions, including trauma-informed counseling, peer support groups, and staff training, to create safer and more supportive educational environments. In many culturally specific communities, substantial prevention funding is needed to support mentorship programs for young men and women that promote protective factors and healthy development. The rise of cyberstalking, harassment, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images highlights the urgent need for further investment in programs that teach digital literacy and online safety, equipping young people to navigate these risks.

Access to support services remains a challenge for young survivors, especially for male survivors who face significant barriers, often hindered by stigma and the lack of tailored support. Developing safe spaces and trauma-informed programs for young men and boys is essential to ensure inclusivity and break cycles of harm.

Addressing the persistent barriers faced by marginalized and underserved communities must remain a priority to fully realize the promise of VAWA. Ensuring equitable access to resources requires sustained investment in culturally specific programs and stronger collaborations between mainstream and culturally specific organizations. This includes fostering partnerships that share responsibilities rather than simply referring clients, as well

“I don’t always feel safe. I may look like I don’t have wisdom, but I know what makes me feel safe. We need counselors who understand what we go through every day.”
– Listening session participant for young women and girls

as implementing systemic changes to dismantle discriminatory policies and practices. These efforts not only strengthen individual survivors but also contribute to building more equitable systems and resilient communities.

Spotlight Issues

Through its engagement with communities across the country, OVW identified several recurring and pressing issues that reflect the complex realities faced by survivors and the organizations that support them. These spotlighted issues represent critical areas requiring focused attention and sustained effort. By delving deeper into these topics, OVW aims to illuminate challenges and opportunities that can shape the development of more effective policies, programs, and practices.

Addressing Remote and Rural Area Needs

OVW engaged with rural communities across the nation, including in the Pacific territories, and remote American Indian and Alaska Native villages. This engagement revealed significant barriers for survivors of GBV in isolated areas, ranging from housing shortages and economic insecurity to the complexities of small-community dynamics. Despite these challenges, many rural and remote communities demonstrated remarkable resilience by leveraging innovative strategies to support survivors.

A critical challenge in these areas is the lack of housing. Affordable options are scarce, leaving survivors with limited alternatives when trying to leave abusive situations. Many communities lack emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent affordable housing, forcing survivors to choose between staying in abusive environments or facing homelessness. Rising housing costs and limited rental availability exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult for survivors to secure stable accommodations even with financial assistance.

Employment opportunities also remain limited in rural areas, further complicating survivors' ability to achieve financial independence. Many small towns lack jobs that provide the stability survivors need to rebuild their lives, often forcing them to rely on public assistance or, in some cases, return to the abuser for financial support. Programs aimed at creating pathways to economic independence are essential, but job availability in these communities remains a persistent barrier.

Geographic isolation compounds these challenges. In remote areas, law enforcement responses can take hours to respond due to vast distances and limited personnel. Survivors

“Milk costs us over \$10 a gallon, and it takes law enforcement days to get to us. How can we keep our families safe if we can’t afford to feed our children or rely on law enforcement?”

– Alaskan Native village leader, Craig Alaska

in Alaska Native villages shared that law enforcement was often accessible only by plane or boat, making timely intervention nearly impossible. Survivors also face additional obstacles, such as traveling long distances for groceries, medical care, or legal assistance, which are both time-consuming and prohibitively expensive. The absence of cellular service further limits their ability to seek help during emergencies, leaving them particularly vulnerable. Survivors with disabilities or those requiring culturally specific services who live in rural areas face even greater difficulties accessing the resources they need to begin recovery.

Small-community dynamics, where law enforcement officers and other helping professionals personally know survivors, perpetrators, and their families, can also prevent survivors from seeking help. In such communities, survivors may fear confidentiality breaches or retaliation if they report abuse or seek help from police or service providers. CCRs are often hindered by these dynamics, inconsistent funding, and a lack of specialized training for responding to domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

“I have a client waiting for our mobile advocacy van. It will take us three hours to drive to her and get her. All we can do is hope she’s not hurt before we get there.”
– Domestic violence and sexual assault program, Phoenix

Despite these barriers, rural and remote communities show extraordinary resilience and innovation in supporting survivors. In Alaska Native villages, local leaders organized community-based safety networks, drawing on traditional practices and strong communal ties to provide immediate assistance to survivors. Trusted community members offer informal support, such as transportation to safe locations and temporary housing, exemplifying how cultural connections can address systemic barriers.

Mobile advocacy programs emerged as vital lifelines, particularly in remote regions. Advocates travel to survivors to provide counseling, legal support, and safety planning, reducing the impact of geographic isolation. Faith-based organizations and local businesses often fill critical gaps, offering temporary shelter, food, and financial assistance.

Churches serve as informal shelters, while local organizations run donation drives to provide clothing and other essentials. Some rural programs partner with businesses to create job opportunities for survivors, including roles in the gig economy or cooperative projects like community farms and crafts collectives, fostering financial independence.

Volunteerism is another strength of rural communities, with residents stepping in to transport survivors to services, assist with childcare, and advocate on their behalf in legal and medical settings. These informal networks are instrumental in bridging gaps and ensuring survivors receive the support they need.

These examples highlight the resilience and creativity of rural communities in addressing the barriers survivors face. With sustained investment and support, rural communities can

continue to meet these challenges head-on, ensuring survivors have access to the resources, safety, and pathways to recovery they deserve.

The Impact of Natural Disasters

During its outreach, OVW visited areas heavily impacted by natural disasters, including the Pacific territories, Puerto Rico, and coastal states, revealing the profound effects these events have on survivors of GBV and the organizations that serve them. Natural disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity, and these public emergencies lead to spikes in domestic and sexual violence as they disrupt support systems, exacerbate vulnerabilities, and create heightened dangers for survivors, particularly those living with an abuser. The disruption to criminal justice services, such as delayed law enforcement responses, court closures, and halted legal proceedings, leaves survivors without critical protection and resources, increasing their risk of harm.

Victim services are also significantly affected during natural disasters. Shelters and crisis centers often face damage or become inaccessible, leaving survivors without safe refuge. For example, in the Pacific territories, rising sea levels further strain the ability of service providers to operate consistently. Survivors' access to food, clean water, and medical care is also jeopardized, forcing many to rely on abusers or return to unsafe environments due to a lack of alternatives. Economically vulnerable survivors face compounded challenges, as disasters frequently result in the loss of homes, jobs, and financial resources.

The trauma of surviving abuse is often exacerbated during natural disasters, with displacement and instability retraumatizing survivors and limiting their access to essential mental health services. Survivors living with an abuser are at heightened risk, as displacement and sheltering in place can trap them in close quarters with those causing harm. The chaos of emergencies, reduced law enforcement presence, and breakdown of community safety nets can lead to increased violence, exploitation, and abuse, particularly for women, children, and other vulnerable populations in overcrowded shelters or displacement camps.

Despite these challenges, many communities demonstrate resilience, adapting to crises by creating makeshift shelters, leveraging temporary facilities, and pooling resources to support survivors. However, these efforts highlight the urgent need for sustainable funding, disaster preparedness, and emergency planning. Investing in infrastructure, flexible funding for immediate needs, and CCRs that incorporate disaster planning and continuity of services is critical to mitigating the impact of natural disasters on survivors. Strengthening resilience, preparedness, and collaboration will help ensure that survivors have access to safety, support, and justice even in the face of adversity.

“We are preparing for the hurricane to hit Florida. Even though we are in Mississippi, we know that we will need to prepare for the influx of survivors coming our way.” – Domestic violence shelter, Jackson, Mississippi

Economic Stability

Economic security is vital for survivors of GBV, as financial instability creates significant barriers to leaving abusive relationships. Abusers frequently use financial control as a tactic to maintain power, restricting survivors' access to money, preventing or undermining employment, damaging their credit, or denying educational opportunities. These strategies leave survivors economically dependent, making it difficult to escape abusive environments. Without economic resources, survivors often face impossible choices: remaining in unsafe situations or risking homelessness and severe financial hardship.

In response to the economic challenges faced by survivors, many programs are implementing innovative economic empowerment initiatives to support long-term financial independence. These initiatives include teaching survivors small business skills, such as entrepreneurship, marketing, and financial management. Programs are also helping survivors clean up credit histories impacted by abusive partners, which can be a significant barrier to securing housing or loans. Others are supporting access to gig economy jobs, offering flexible work opportunities that survivors can fit around childcare or other responsibilities.

Some programs have gone further by creating small eco-environments designed to help survivors generate income. These might include community gardens where survivors can grow produce to sell or cooperative initiatives where they craft goods or provide services as a collective. These efforts not only provide survivors with immediate income but also foster a sense of community, empowerment, and pride.

Many programs are also focusing on teaching basic financial management skills and helping survivors navigate the banking system. These efforts include workshops on budgeting, saving, and understanding credit, as well as assistance in opening bank accounts and establishing financial independence from abusers. Some organizations partner with local banks or credit unions to provide survivor-friendly financial products and services, such as low-fee accounts or small loans to help build credit.

Job readiness and employment support are crucial components of economic empowerment programs. Advocates work with survivors to develop resumes, practice interview skills, and connect with job training opportunities. Some programs established partnerships with local businesses to create employment pipelines for survivors, while others offer on-the-job training through social enterprises. These efforts not only help survivors secure stable employment but also rebuild their confidence and professional identities, which may have been eroded by years of abuse.

Resource Spotlight

Financial Assistance Grants for Victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, & Stalking (FAV) Program

supports victim service providers, Tribal governments, and Tribal organizations to provide flexible financial assistance to survivors.

Flexible financial assistance is intended to support survivors in achieving safety, stability, and healing by paying for necessities that are not easily met by traditional service providers and with the flexibility to meet self-identified needs quickly.

Advocates consistently emphasize the critical importance of ensuring survivors have access to public benefits as an essential component of improving economic security. Programs that assist survivors in navigating and obtaining Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and housing vouchers provide a vital safety net during their transition to independence. These public resources play a crucial role in stabilizing survivors' lives, offering support as they pursue employment or secure permanent housing, and alleviating the immediate pressures of economic instability.

Survivors and advocates stressed the critical need for flexible financial assistance. Survivors know best what they require to achieve safety. Flexible financial support allows them to address their unique needs, such as replacing tires on a car to maintain employment, paying a rent deposit to secure housing, or paying utility bills to avoid disconnection. These practical forms of assistance can make the difference between staying trapped in an abusive situation and achieving stability and safety.

Economic security is often the linchpin for survivors in achieving both safety and justice. Survivors with stable income, access to employment opportunities, and emergency financial assistance are better equipped to make independent decisions about their safety and future. By combining practical financial skills with job readiness support and flexible assistance, these programs provide survivors with a comprehensive foundation for long-term economic stability and independence. Addressing economic security not only provides immediate relief but also builds survivors' resilience and ability to maintain independence over the long term.

Addressing the Intersection of Firearms and Domestic Violence

Throughout OVW's engagement, advocates and criminal justice partners consistently emphasized the critical intersection of firearms and domestic violence. Stakeholders highlighted the grave dangers posed by firearms in domestic violence situations and stressed the urgent need for stronger policies and practices to restrict firearm access for individuals with a history of violence.

Central to these discussions was the importance of developing CCRs to ensure all parts of the system work together to remove firearms from prohibited individuals, thereby reducing the risk of lethal violence.

Training emerged as a paramount concern across the board with an emphasis on the need for comprehensive training programs for courts, law enforcement, and prosecutors to ensure effective implementation of firearm surrender and relinquishment protocols. They stressed that such training should focus on building a clear understanding of federal and state laws that prohibit individuals to obtain or own firearms under certain circumstances and require some individuals to surrender firearms, as well as practical strategies for safely removing firearms. The crucial role of courts in issuing and enforcing firearm relinquishment

orders was particularly highlighted, with many advocating for specialized training for judges to understand the risks associated with firearms in domestic violence cases.

Many emphasized that simply removing firearms from an abuser's possession is not sufficient; there must be safe and secure storage solutions to prevent these weapons from returning to prohibited individuals, and communities need resources to develop and implement such protocols. Both advocates and criminal justice partners called for the development and funding of firearm storage programs.

The importance of strengthening relationships between federal and local law enforcement and prosecutors was another recurring theme. Participants cited programs like [Operation 922](#) in the Western District of Oklahoma and [Operation Safe Families](#) in the Northern District of Alabama as successful models of collaboration that led to improved enforcement of firearm prohibitions in domestic violence cases. These initiatives, part of the U.S. Attorneys' Offices' [Project Safe Neighborhoods](#), were recognized for bringing together federal and local partners to identify high-risk offenders, ensure compliance with firearm surrender requirements, and hold offenders accountable.

Criminal justice partners also underscored the need for improved documentation practices. They discussed the importance of enhancing forms and training for both police reports and National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) reports. Many stressed that proper documentation is critical for accurately identifying prohibited individuals and effectively carrying out enforcement actions.

Another significant issue raised by criminal justice partners was the need for improved infrastructure to record and communicate firearm-related bond conditions. Many noted that in their jurisdictions, these conditions are often inadequately documented or not effectively communicated to law enforcement officers in the field, creating dangerous gaps in enforcement. They reiterated that addressing this issue is critical for holding offenders accountable and ensuring survivor safety.

Advocates and criminal justice partners emphasized that addressing the intersection of firearms and domestic violence requires a comprehensive and coordinated effort. They called for support of CCRs, targeted training for key players in the criminal justice system, enhanced data infrastructure, and stronger collaboration between federal and local agencies. By implementing these strategies, communities can work toward reducing the risks associated with firearms in domestic violence situations, thereby enhancing survivor safety and preventing lethal outcomes.

Resource Spotlight

[National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms](#)

[Resource Guide for Addressing the Intersection of Domestic Violence and Firearms](#)

[Misdemeanor Crimes of Domestic Violence Prohibitions Reference](#)

Technology-Facilitated Abuse

As technology becomes increasingly woven into daily life, it also has emerged as a powerful tool for abusers to control, monitor, and harm survivors of GBV. During engagement with survivors, advocates, and community organizations, OVW heard recurring concerns about the pervasive and insidious nature of technology-facilitated abuse. Survivors shared how abusers used smartphones, GPS tracking, and social media to monitor their movements and intimidate them, even after they had left abusive relationships. For some, shared technology in the home, such as smart-home locks, cameras, and thermostats, became stalking tools for abusers to create an environment of constant surveillance and fear. Additionally, cars are easily tracked, making it much more difficult for survivors to seek safety.

A particularly harmful aspect of technology-facilitated abuse is the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, often referred to previously as “revenge porn.” Through the use of artificial intelligence (AI), it has also become easier for an abuser to create intimate images and videos that can be used to cause harm. Advocates and law enforcement explained how these violations of privacy are used to humiliate and silence survivors, and undermine their ability to maintain or seek employment, with images often spreading rapidly across social media and online platforms. The psychological and social impacts of this abuse are profound, often resulting in health and mental health challenges, including recurring traumatic stress disorders, as survivors must contend with the permanence and easy replication of digital harm, the additional and ongoing abuse by other individuals and strangers who view the images, and the slow or inadequate responses from social media platforms and law enforcement.

“The number of cases we receive is increasing. Our officers are receiving more training, and we’re helping other cities in the state by sharing our cybercrime lab resources. For many of us, this is a new type of forensics.”
 – Law enforcement roundtable, San Diego

Advocates highlighted additional challenges faced by rural and underserved communities, where survivors may lack access to digital literacy programs or supportive resources. In these areas, limited law enforcement training on technology-facilitated abuse compounds the problem, leaving survivors with few options for recourse.

Despite these challenges, many communities and organizations are developing innovative practices to combat technology-facilitated abuse. Programs that provide digital safety education are crucial in equipping survivors with the knowledge to protect themselves. Advocates are learning more about how to identify location tracking apps, secure survivors’ devices, and protect their digital privacy. Some programs that are embedded in schools and youth organizations focus on teaching young people about online safety and recognizing abusive behaviors in digital spaces, as well as recognizing the dangers of sextortion that often targets minors. These initiatives not only empower survivors but also help prevent abuse by fostering awareness among potential perpetrators and bystanders.

Many law enforcement agencies offer training for their officers to address the complexities of technology-facilitated abuse. In cities such as Miami and Seattle, specialized units handle cases of cyberstalking and online harassment. Other jurisdictions are seeking resources to train officers to understand the tools and platforms used by abusers and to address the unique challenges survivors face in these cases.

Stalking

Survivors of stalking shared stories that reveal a deeply misunderstood and underestimated crime, one where the severity and impact are often overlooked. Stalking frequently intersects with other forms of abuse creating a complex web of harm that requires a nuanced and informed response. Yet, too often, survivors find their experiences minimized or dismissed by law enforcement, prosecutors, and even victim service providers, particularly when the stalking is not tied to intimate partner violence or sexual assault.

For survivors, the consequences of this lack of awareness are profound. Inadequate support, missed opportunities for early intervention, and insufficient prevention measures leave many survivors vulnerable and without recourse. Organizations receiving VAWA funding must recognize stalking as equally critical as other VAWA crimes, dedicating the same level of resources and attention to addressing this pervasive issue.

Training for law enforcement and prosecutors emerges as a cornerstone of this effort. Officers and prosecutors must be equipped to recognize stalking behaviors, understand their potential for escalation, and build strong cases that lead to meaningful accountability. This requires specialized training in areas such as evidence collection, risk assessment, and the growing role of technology in stalking cases. Without these tools, the criminal justice system risks failing survivors and missing opportunities to prevent further harm.

The relentless nature of stalking forces survivors to alter their lives in drastic ways: changing jobs, relocating, and severing social ties and the use of social media to escape their stalkers. These disruptions often result in economic instability, social isolation, and a lasting erosion of safety and autonomy. Even if the stalking subsides, its effects can linger for years, casting a long shadow over survivors' lives.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted and coordinated approach. Comprehensive training programs for victim service providers, law enforcement, and prosecutors must focus on stalking's unique dynamics and effective intervention strategies. Public awareness campaigns are essential to educate communities about the seriousness

“When you think about gender-based violence, everyone thinks about domestic violence, sexual assault, and dating violence ...AND stalking. As if it’s an afterthought that doesn’t deserve the same level of attention and resources like the other crimes.” – Survivor, Stalking Roundtable

of stalking and its intersection with other abuses. Enhanced collaboration between agencies – facilitating improved information sharing and risk assessment protocols – can lead to a more cohesive response. Investment in technology and resources to track and combat cyberstalking is critical in an increasingly digital world.

Just as important is the provision of long-term support services for survivors. Access to mental health counseling, safety planning, and practical assistance, such as address confidentiality programs, can make a profound difference in helping survivors rebuild their lives.

Looking Forward

This report reflects the invaluable contributions of survivors and professionals in the field who generously shared their wisdom, insights, and recommendations. While the challenges remain formidable, the progress achieved through collective effort and determination is equally profound. Over the past 30 years, VAWA demonstrated this impact, with each reauthorization shaped by the advocacy and lived experiences of survivors and the tireless work of those in the field. VAWA's evolution is rooted in the exchange of knowledge – between communities, professionals, advocates, and survivors – fostering growth and progress in the field's prevention efforts and response to GBV.

A consistent theme has been the willingness to share hard-earned knowledge and lessons learned. This collaborative spirit underscores the critical importance of continued training, technical assistance, and research to support communities and enhance responses. VAWA is instrumental in advancing these efforts, funding initiatives nationwide that provide local service providers with essential resources and information that promote best practices. These efforts empower communities with the tools and expertise needed to address complex and evolving challenges.

VAWA has long stood as a beacon of hope and transformation, driving legal protections, funding vital services, and shifting societal attitudes toward GBV. Yet, the evolving landscape of violence and the complex needs of survivors call for continued adaptation. Challenges such as technology-facilitated abuse, economic instability, climate-induced displacement, and systemic inequities demand innovative and responsive solutions. Survivors from historically marginalized communities – including racial and ethnic minority communities, as well as rural, immigrant, LGBTQIA2S+, disabled and Deaf/hard of hearing, and American Indian, Alaska Native, and Indigenous populations – face compounded barriers that necessitate culturally specific, population-specific, accessible, and tailored services.

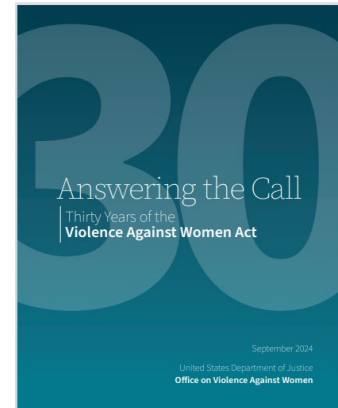
The path forward requires bold action and unwavering collaboration. It must continue to embody the lessons learned from survivors, advocates, and the field, advancing survivor-centered practices, investing in underserved communities, and dismantling structural barriers that perpetuate violence.

As we look ahead, it is crucial to recognize that advancing our nation’s commitment to prevent and end GBV is not the responsibility of a single agency, organization, or movement. It demands a collective, coordinated effort across all sectors – justice, health care, education, community organizations, faith-based entities, and policymakers. Most importantly, the voices of survivors and their vision of justice must be the driving force of this work, guiding policies and practices to honor their diverse experiences and meet their unique needs, while advancing efforts to create communities centered on respect, human dignity, and the elimination of GBV.

Appendix A: Companion Publications

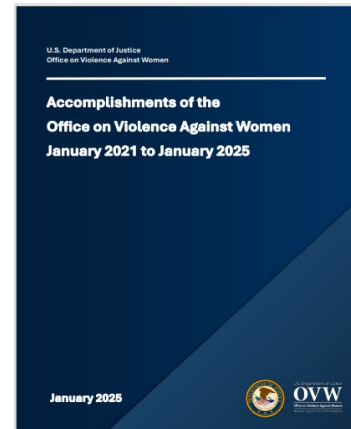
Answering the Call: Thirty Years of VAWA

This report chronicles the impact of three decades of VAWA grant funding in the United States. Using research findings, numbers, archival material, and grantees' and survivors' own words, this report present snapshots of the ways VAWA transforms communities' efforts to support survivors, hold offenders accountable, and work collaboratively to end gender-based violence.



Accomplishments of the Office on Violence Against Women January 2021 to January 2025

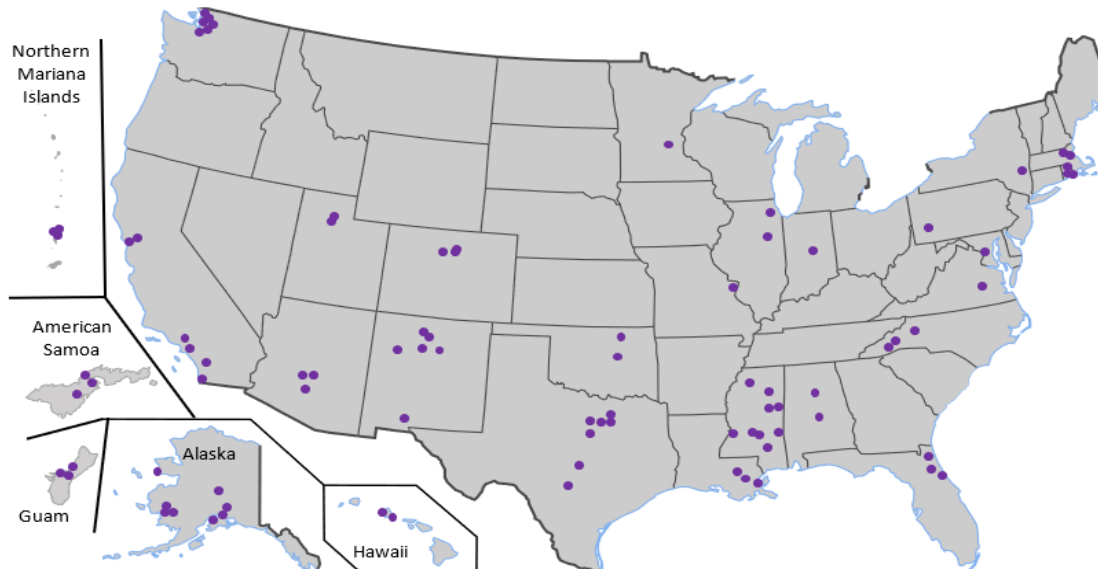
This document highlights key achievements of OVW from 2021 to 2025. During this time, OVW made significant strides in advancing comprehensive services and support for survivors by issuing grants that strengthen Coordinated Community Responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking across all states, territories, and many Tribal nations.



Appendix B:

Community Engagement

May 2022 - November 2024



Alabama

Birmingham
Fairfield
Montgomery

Alaska

Akiachak Tribe
Anchorage
Bethel
Central Council of the
Tlingit & Haida Indian
Tribes
Chickaloon Village
Traditional Council
Craig Tribal Association
Fairbanks
Hydaburg Cooperative
Juneau
Kenai
Kenaitze Indian Tribe
Ketchikan
Klawock
Knik Tribal Council
Kwethluk Tribe
Nome
Organized Village of Kake
Organized Village of
Kasaan

America Samoa

Malaieimi
Nu'uuli
Pago Pago
Utulei

Arizona

Maricopa
Phoenix
Salt River Pima-Maricopa
Indian Community

California

Agua Caliente
Los Angeles
Lynwood
Pauma Band of Luiseno
Mission Indians of the
Pauma & Yuima Reservation
Oakland
Palm Desert
Richmond
Riverside
San Diego
San Francisco
Yucca Valley

Colorado

Denver
Keystone
Lakewood

N. Mariana Islands

Capitol Hill, Saipan
Chalan Piao, Saipan
Puerto Rico, Saipan

Florida

Augustine
Green Cove Springs
Jacksonville

Guam

Barrigada
Hagatna
Sinajana
Tamuning

Hawai'i

Honolulu
Waianae

Illinois

Chicago

Indiana

Indianapolis

Louisiana

Houma
New Orleans
Thibodaux

Massachusetts

Boston
Woburn

Minnesota

Minneapolis
St. Paul

Mississippi

Columbus
Hattiesburg
Jackson
Meridian
Oxford
Pearl
Starkville
Tupelo
Vicksburg

Missouri

St. Louis

New Mexico

Albuquerque
Espanola
Grants
Las Cruces
Pueblo of Pojoaque
Santa Fe

New York

Albany

North Carolina

Asheville
Cherokee
Eastern Band of
Cherokee Indians

Oklahoma

Muscogee Creek Nation
Oklahoma City
Tulsa

Pennsylvania

Pittsburgh

Rhode Island

Bristol
Central Falls
Providence
Warwick

Texas

Dallas
Fort Worth
Granbury
Plano
San Antonio
Weatherford

Utah

Herriman
Salt Lake City

Virginia

Richmond

Washington

Auburn
Lummi Nation
Renton
Seattle
Tacoma
Tukwila
Tulalip Tribes of
Washington

Washington D.C.

Appendix C:

Recommended Resources

Grants

OVW administers formula and discretionary grant programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994 and subsequent legislation. Over the last 30 years, OVW has administered over \$11 billion in grants to support communities across the nation to improve services and support for victims and increase access to justice, safety, and healing in response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

Below are new grant programs implemented in FY 24. For more information on all grant programs, visit www.justice.gov/ovw/grant-programs.

- **Demonstration Program on Trauma-Informed, Victim-Centered Training for Law Enforcement on Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Program (known as the Abby Honold Program)**
OVW [awarded grants](#) totaling \$3 million to support the development and evaluation of enhanced, trauma-informed training for law enforcement to improve their response to victims. This [new grant program](#), authorized by VAWA 2022, was championed by a former college student whose own experience as a survivor of sexual assault led her to support efforts to improve law enforcement's response to these crimes.
- **Enhancing Investigation and Prosecution of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Initiative**
OVW launched [this new program](#) and [awarded](#) nearly \$15 million directly to 32 law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices to strengthen investigations and prosecutions of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. This program allows law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices to build capacity by funding additional positions, measure effectiveness through improving data collection, and enhance responses to these crimes by implementing training, policies, and practices emphasizing trauma-informed investigations and coordinated community responses. The ultimate purpose of this program is to support victim safety and autonomy, increase offender accountability, and promote agency trust within the surrounding community.
- **Restorative Practices Pilot Program**
[OVW awarded grants](#) to 11 pilot sites totaling over \$16 million through [this new program](#) authorized by VAWA 2022 to support, strengthen, and expand existing restorative practice programs that address domestic violence, sexual assault, dating

violence, and stalking through a trauma-informed and survivor-centered approach. [OVW also awarded \\$8 million](#) to fund [research and evaluation of restorative practices](#) in collaboration with the pilot sites. Additionally, [OVW awarded \\$6 million](#) in grants to three entities to serve as national training and technical assistance providers on restorative practices and to work with the pilot sites.

- **Financial Assistance Grants for Victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program**
[OVW launched a new program](#), authorized by appropriations acts, to support victim service providers, Tribal governments, and Tribal organizations in providing flexible financial assistance to survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking, alongside other victim services. Flexible financial assistance supports survivors in achieving safety, stability, and healing by making funds available to address the needs of individual survivors that are not easily met by traditional victim services.
- **Local Law Enforcement Grants for Enforcement of Cybercrimes Program**
[OVW awarded grants](#) totaling \$5.3 million [to support communities in preventing, investigating, and prosecuting cybercrimes](#) against individuals and providing training for law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, victim service providers, and judicial personnel to address such crimes, including cyberstalking, sextortion, and the nonconsensual distribution of intimate images.
- **Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) Reimbursement Program**
Through the [Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Reimbursement Program](#), authorized by VAWA 2022, OVW provided initial reimbursement funds in 2024 to 14 eligible Tribes. This new program reimburses federally recognized Tribes for expenses incurred while exercising STCJ over non-Indians who commit covered crimes within Tribal communities.

Technical Assistance and Training

OVW's Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Initiative provides specialized training, expertise, and innovative problem-solving strategies to address the challenges of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Designed to strengthen the capacity of civil and criminal justice professionals and victim service providers nationwide, the TTA Initiative provides OVW grantees, potential grantees, and subgrantees with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively respond to the needs of survivors.

The [TA Provider's Resource Center \(TA2TA\)](#), managed by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, provides a directory of OVW's TA providers. TA2TA offers a wide range of training tools, resources, and a calendar of OVW-funded educational events, both

in-person and online. The platform also features webinars tailored to OVW TA providers and a dedicated orientation portal for new grantees participating in OVW's TTA Program.

The below list includes select TTA providers focused on commonly requested assistance but is not exhaustive of all available providers. For a full list, use the link below for the TA2TA portal.

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms (NRCDFV)

OVW funds the NCRDVF, which is operated by the Battered Women's Justice Project. NRCDFV offers training, technical assistance, and resources, including a model firearms relinquishment protocol, community strategies, and examples of successful approaches. NRCDFV provides a [library of information and tools](#) and promotes a community-based peer mentor system to share implementation and enforcement efforts. NCRDVF partners with the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence to track [state and federal firearm laws on domestic violence](#).

National Center on Protection Orders and Full Faith & Credit (NCOPOFFC)

With OVW support, the Battered Women Justice Project operates the [NCOPOFFC](#), which provides technical assistance and training on protection orders, the full faith and credit provision of VAWA, and inter-jurisdictional enforcement of protection orders. NCOPOFFC provides resources on federal, and state firearms prohibitions related to protective orders.

Law Enforcement Training and Technical Assistance Consortium (LETTAC)

The OVW-funded LETTAC provides training and technical assistance for law enforcement in responding to, investigating, and prosecuting crimes of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking in a trauma-informed manner, supporting victim healing, safety, and justice. LETTAC provides no-cost comprehensive tailored training and technical assistance on a wide range of topics, including the intersection of domestic violence and firearms.

Domestic Violence Resource for Increasing Safety and Connection (DV RISC)

DV RISC is a national resource center led by the Center for Justice Innovation, Esperanza United, and Ujima Inc., that provides training and technical assistance on intimate partner violence risk and lethality assessments for courts and communities to effectively respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence.

Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual Violence

The Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual Violence National Resource Center offers free resources, training, and technical assistance to employers, workers, and advocates to prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual harassment and violence, and stalking impacting the workplace.

The Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center

The Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC) is a resource center dedicated to raising awareness and providing critical resources about the crime of stalking. SPARC works to strengthen responses to stalking by equipping professionals with the knowledge and tools needed to protect victims and hold offenders accountable. By offering specialized training and education, SPARC empowers allied professionals to effectively identify, address, and combat the complex dynamics of stalking.

State and Territorial Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Coalitions

OVW provides VAWA funding to each state and territorial [sexual assault coalition and domestic violence coalition](#). Coalitions coordinate victim services activities and collaborate and coordinate with federal, state, Tribal, and local entities engaged in addressing violence against women. Statewide sexual assault coalitions provide direct support to member rape and crisis centers through funding, training and technical assistance, public awareness activities, and public policy advocacy. Statewide domestic violence coalitions provide comparable support to member domestic violence shelters and other domestic violence service providers. Many coalitions engage with local communities to promote coordinated community responses and collaborate on developing firearms legislation and policies that support and protect survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Select OVW and DOJ Publications

Biennial Report to Congress on Grant Funds Under the Violence Against Women Act

The Violence Against Women Act mandates that the Attorney General submit a report to Congress every two years on the effectiveness of activities carried out with grant funds, including the number of persons served and the number of persons seeking services who could not be served.

DOJ Framework for Prosecutors to Strengthen Our National Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Involving Adult Victims

Released in May 2024 to strengthen the nation's collective response to the prosecution of sexual assault and domestic violence, this framework helps equip prosecutors to build provable cases in a trauma-informed manner that treats victims with humanity and ensures due process for defendants.

Improving Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence by Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias

Updated in May 2022, this resource helps law enforcement agencies recognize, mitigate,

and prevent gender bias and other bias from compromising the response to, and investigation of, sexual assault, domestic violence, and other forms of GBV.

Resource Guide for Addressing the Intersection of Domestic Violence and Firearms

This resource lists the Department of Justice’s funding, training, and partnership opportunities to enforce firearms laws intended to keep guns out of the hands of adjudicated abusers.

Misdemeanor Crimes Domestic Violence Reference Card

The Department of Justice issued a new reference card explaining the tools available under the Gun Control Act to prosecute domestic violence offenders who illegally obtain firearms – including the new Bipartisan Safer Communities Act dating-relationship provisions.

Know Your Rights: Non-Consensual Disclosure of Intimate Images

The Department of Justice’s Access to Justice, the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys, and the Office of Violence Against Women created a “Know Your Rights” pamphlet to raise awareness that individuals can bring a civil action in federal court against someone who shared intimate images, explicit pictures, recorded videos, or other depictions without consent. It also includes sharing those intimate images through technology, such as the internet or social media.

National Protocol for Intimate Partner Violence Medical Forensic Examinations

Released in May 2023, this first-ever national protocol guides the clinical practice for conducting medical forensic exams for patients experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV). The goal of this protocol is to guide clinicians across a variety of healthcare settings in effectively providing medical forensic examinations to patients experiencing IPV, which may include strangulation.

A National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations

This third edition of the National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations provides detailed guidelines for clinicians and ancillary professionals, including criminal justice practitioners and victim advocates, in responding to the immediate needs of patients who have experienced sexual assault.

Interagency Statement on VAWA’s Housing Provisions

On September 12, 2024, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Treasury, Veterans Affairs, and Justice issued an Interagency Statement on VAWA’s Housing Provisions affirming the housing rights of survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking as well as others under VAWA.

Research and Evaluation

Between FY 2021 and FY 2024, OVW's Research and Evaluation Initiative awarded nearly \$13 million in grants to support research and evaluation projects. These efforts focused on innovative approaches to preventing and addressing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. By advancing evidence-based practices, these projects help VAWA-funded communities enhance their work with strategies proven to be effective.

Data Resources

National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS)

Housed at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NISVS provides statistics on the national prevalence of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking among women and men in the United States.

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

NCVS is the primary source of information on criminal victimization in the United States.

- The Supplemental Victimization Survey also provides further detail on stalking: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/data-collection/supplemental-victimization-survey-svs>

Compendium of Research on Violence Against Women 1993-2018

This resource lists and briefly describes all projects funded under NIJ's Violence Against Women and Family Violence Program through 2018.

CrimeSolutions

CrimeSolutions provides research on the effectiveness of programs and practices in achieving criminal justice-related outcomes in order to inform practitioners and policymakers about what works, what doesn't, and what's promising.

Uniform Crime Reports

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) collects and publishes national crime statistics for the Summary Reporting System and the [National Incident-based Reporting System](#).

Crime Data Explorer

The FBI's Crime Data Explorer aims to provide transparency, create easier access, and expand awareness of criminal and noncriminal law enforcement data sharing; improve accountability for law enforcement; and provide a foundation to help shape public policy in support of a safer nation.