



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Jordan:

The Department of Justice (Department) is pleased to submit this report, pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4 (VAWA 2013) (previously codified at 34 U.S.C. 12291(b)(15)), which requires the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to confer biennially with key stakeholders in the violence against women community. Specifically, VAWA 2013 mandates that OVW (1) establish a biennial conferral process with State and tribal coalitions and technical assistance providers who receive funding through grants administered by OVW, as well as other key stakeholders; (2) confer regarding the administration of grants, unmet needs, promising practices in the field, and emerging trends; and (3) publish a report summarizing the issues presented during the conferral and what, if any, policies OVW intends to implement to address those issues.

To meet this reporting requirement, OVW has enclosed a report describing the input OVW received through email comments and four conferral webinar sessions held between September 2021 and October 2021. This report includes OVW actions taken during and shortly after the conferral period in response to or related to issues raised by conferral participants. It does not include changes made to OVW programs by the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 or new programs funded by the 2023 Appropriations Act because they are too far outside the conferral period.

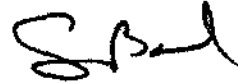
The report will also be made available to the public on OVW's website.¹

¹See U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), www.justice.gov/ovw.

The Honorable Jim Jordan
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We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may provide additional assistance regarding this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

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Slade Bond
Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure

MAR 15 2024



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Nadler:

The Department of Justice (Department) is pleased to submit this report, pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4 (VAWA 2013) (previously codified at 34 U.S.C. 12291(b)(15)), which requires the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to confer biennially with key stakeholders in the violence against women community. Specifically, VAWA 2013 mandates that OVW (1) establish a biennial conferral process with State and tribal coalitions and technical assistance providers who receive funding through grants administered by OVW, as well as other key stakeholders; (2) confer regarding the administration of grants, unmet needs, promising practices in the field, and emerging trends; and (3) publish a report summarizing the issues presented during the conferral and what, if any, policies OVW intends to implement to address those issues.

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U.S. Department of Justice

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Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chair
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Durbin:

The Department of Justice (Department) is pleased to submit this report, pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4 (VAWA 2013) (previously codified at 34 U.S.C. 12291(b)(15)), which requires the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to confer biennially with key stakeholders in the violence against women community. Specifically, VAWA 2013 mandates that OVW (1) establish a biennial conferral process with State and tribal coalitions and technical assistance providers who receive funding through grants administered by OVW, as well as other key stakeholders; (2) confer regarding the administration of grants, unmet needs, promising practices in the field, and emerging trends; and (3) publish a report summarizing the issues presented during the conferral and what, if any, policies OVW intends to implement to address those issues.

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Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure

MAR 15 2024



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Graham:

The Department of Justice (Department) is pleased to submit this report, pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4 (VAWA 2013) (previously codified at 34 U.S.C. 12291(b)(15)), which requires the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to confer biennially with key stakeholders in the violence against women community. Specifically, VAWA 2013 mandates that OVW (1) establish a biennial conferral process with State and tribal coalitions and technical assistance providers who receive funding through grants administered by OVW, as well as other key stakeholders; (2) confer regarding the administration of grants, unmet needs, promising practices in the field, and emerging trends; and (3) publish a report summarizing the issues presented during the conferral and what, if any, policies OVW intends to implement to address those issues.

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Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure

MAR 15 2024



Conferral on the Violence Against Women Act 2020-2021

Report to Congress

Summary report of stakeholder conferrals held in 2021 and OVW responses

December 2023

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I. Introduction

A. Statutory Directive

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) submits this report to the Judiciary Committees of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. It does so pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4 (VAWA 2013) (codified at 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(15)).

VAWA 2013 requires OVW to confer biennially with key stakeholders in the violence against women field. Specifically, the VAWA 2013 mandates that OVW:

1. Establish a biennial conferral process with state and tribal coalitions and technical assistance providers who receive funding through grants administered by OVW, as well as other key stakeholders;
2. Confer regarding the administration of grants, unmet needs, promising practices in the field, and emerging trends; and
3. Publish a report summarizing the issues presented during the conferral and what, if any, policies OVW intends to implement to address those issues.

This report meets the above mandate by providing the summary of comments and OVW's responses, insofar as the comments address issues within OVW's purview. Because this is the report on the 2021 conferral, the OVW responses are based on our programs as they were in January 2022.¹ **The views expressed in this report are those expressed by the attendees at the sessions and do not necessarily reflect the views of DOJ or OVW.**

This will be the last OVW conferral report because the requirement for conferral was removed by the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 (VAWA 2022).² OVW continues to engage with stakeholders in numerous ways and consider stakeholder input and feedback, even without the requirement of holding conferrals.

B. Structure of the Conferral

Between September 2021 and November 2021, OVW accepted email comments and held four public conferral sessions via webinar covering the four topics defined in VAWA 2013:

1. Unmet Needs;
2. Emerging Trends;
3. Administration of Grants; and
4. Promising Practices in the Field.

¹ This means that it does not include changes put into place by the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 (VAWA 2022). For more information on VAWA 2022, please see <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/blog/ovw-celebrates-violence-against-women-act-reauthorization>. It also does not include new programs that were authorized in VAWA 2022 or created through appropriations after January 2022.

² Pub. L. 117-103, division W, section 2(a)(2)(E).

OVW invited stakeholders, including state, territorial, and tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions, technical assistance providers, OVW grantees, advocates, service providers, and interested members of the public, to participate in the conferral sessions. There were no restrictions on the number of conferral sessions in which a particular stakeholder could participate or the number of attendees in each session.

Invitations and announcements were made via email (using OVW's distribution lists), social media, OVW's webpage, and a dedicated conferral webpage. Stakeholders were encouraged to share information about the conferral sessions via their own communication channels.

Conferral sessions were moderated by OVW attorneys with live American Sign Language and Spanish interpretation and closed captioning in English. Participants could provide comments orally, enter comments into the webinar chat during each conferral session, or submit written comments to OVW's Conferral email inbox through October 31, 2021.

A list of the dates and topics of the conferral sessions is in the appendix.

C. Overview of Results

Stakeholders from across the country commented on pressing issues for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Based on this comprehensive feedback from stakeholders, OVW identified the following reported unmet needs, emerging trends, promising practices, and suggestions for improving grant administration.

To maintain anonymity, names and affiliation of stakeholders are not referenced in this report. The comments included herein are the opinions of stakeholders participating in the conferral process; they do not represent OVW's views or opinions. Stakeholder comments are paraphrased unless shown in quotation marks. Comments are reported in the section in which they fit best, and not necessarily the session in which they were made.

This report also details OVW policies and actions taken in response or related to issues raised by conferral participants. It is far from an exhaustive list of OVW's relevant actions, but it provides some highlights of OVW's ongoing and planned activities that are responsive to participants' concerns. Pursuant to 34 U.S.C. 10238, OVW also submits a biennial Report to Congress on the effectiveness of our grant programs. The most recent report, for 2022, provides additional detail on many of the initiatives described in this report. All OVW's Reports to Congress, including this one, are available at <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/reports-congress>.

Occasionally, stakeholders commented on issues that do not fall under OVW's purview (for example, the need for affordable rental housing for victims). Even where OVW does not administer grants or have authority regarding a particular issue, these comments are included in this report to convey the full breadth of feedback provided by stakeholders.

OVW convenes an annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation pursuant to section 903 of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of

2005, Pub. L. No. 109-162 (codified as amended at 34 U.S.C. § 20126). The purpose of this consultation is to solicit recommendations from tribal governments concerning administering tribal funds and programs, enhancing the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native women from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking, and strengthening the federal response to such crimes. OVW produces a separate report summarizing the recommendations received from tribal leaders and an update on the federal response to these recommendations. Information on OVW tribal consultations and copies of the annual reports are available at <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/tribal-consultation>.

II. Issues Presented by Conferral Participants

A. Conferral 1: Unmet Needs (September 9, 2021)

Conferral participants identified the following areas where they see communities and survivors having unmet needs:

Accessibility and Underserved Populations

- Support for LGBTQI+ survivors, especially transgender survivors.
- Additional resources for male survivors.
- Sign language interpretation services for survivors who are Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Culturally specific services, including long-term support, for women from Middle Eastern countries.
- Tribal-specific services, including culturally specific program development/design and capacity building to address violence in tribal communities.

Alternative Justice Approaches

- Support for community-based strategies for harm reduction and prevention outside of the criminal justice system, including transformative and restorative justice.
- More training and technical assistance on non-law enforcement options for survivors' safety and offender accountability.

College Campuses

- Increased funding for program development and sustainability for services as well as prevention and education programming on college campuses, including bystander intervention programming. One participant stated that colleges have unique risks, unusual protective factors, and specific campus cultures that present challenges in addressing domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA).
- Enhanced advocacy and victim services for college students, especially those most at-risk of experiencing gender-based violence, including students attending tribal colleges and universities.
- Address “purity culture” on college campuses, particularly faith-affiliated campuses, that place a high value on sexual “purity” and may dissuade students who have experienced sexual assault from reporting the assault or seeking services.

- More climate survey research on sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence, particularly with high school students, and with minority-serving institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).

Confidentiality

- Assistance with implementation of VAWA policies around confidentiality without impeding access to services and resources, particularly in rural and custodial settings.

Courts

- Training for judges on the dynamics of gender-based violence.
- Funding for specialized domestic violence courts and family justice centers.
- Funding for rural courts to support specialized domestic violence judges, investigators, prosecutors, civil legal attorneys, and guardians ad litem.
- A participant suggested implementing a uniform or national order of protection, so all law enforcement agencies, courts, and other key players are using the same terminology and name for the order regardless of which jurisdiction issued the order.

Housing

- Affordable rentals and transitional housing options across the country, particularly in rural areas.
- Permanent and/or long-term housing options, as waitlists for permanent housing vouchers are hundreds of people long.
- Emergency housing and shelter across the country in response to increased calls for services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Housing for male domestic violence survivors.
- Housing for survivors with children.
- Emergency and long-term housing for undocumented domestic violence survivors who are often without work authorization for extended periods of time.
- Shelters that understand and address the culturally specific needs of refugee and immigrant populations into their services.
- Financial assistance to support mortgage and tax payments and settle rental histories of shelter residents that are often the result of financial abuse from perpetrators.
- Funding to equip shelter or transitional housing providers to support the unique needs of older survivors.

Law Enforcement

- Improved language access for survivors to report to law enforcement in languages other than English.
- Support for online law enforcement reporting options that are accompanied by follow-up from law enforcement.

Legal Services

- Available and affordable civil legal representation for survivors, especially in divorce and custody cases and child welfare cases.

- Many participants mentioned that perpetrators often limit survivors' access to funds, which in turn results in the inability to pay for legal representation to escape abusive situations.
- Consistent, sustainable funding to support often long and drawn-out family law proceedings.
- Representation for victims in defamation lawsuits (or under threat of lawsuit) brought by their perpetrator after the perpetrator is not charged or is found not guilty of domestic violence.
- Funding for immigration-related legal needs, including asylum.
- Bilingual attorneys who represent survivors in family law proceedings, especially Spanish-speaking attorneys.
- A participant noted that women having equal legal rights to men (such as through passage of the Equal Rights Amendment) would be a necessary step in addressing the root of the problem.
- Participants identified the need for legal services particularly to meet the needs of underserved communities. One participant highlighted specifically that the legal needs associated with Orthodox Jewish survivors are complicated by dual court systems (i.e., rabbinical courts) and there is a continued need to expand legal services' capacity to respond to these unique cultural circumstances.

Prevention

- Prevention across the lifespan, starting with youth programming on healthy relationships all the way up to support awareness programming for older adults at risk of abuse.
- Education programming in high schools on the dynamics of gender-based violence.
- Prevention work that incorporates effective youth peer-to-peer training models.
- Funding for prevention programming for incarcerated youth.
- Funding to educate trusted adult community members like parents, clergy, youth leaders, coaches, etc., to recognize and respond to incidents of childhood abuse.
- Funding to support the development of prevention materials and workshops in multiple languages, especially Spanish and Arabic.
- Education funding that includes information on access to mental health and substance abuse programs.
- Tribal-specific prevention work that allows tribal communities to draw on cultural strengths, values, and beliefs.
- Prevention education including on topics such as consent, healthy relationships, signs of abuse, etc., for populations disproportionately affected by violence, including the Deaf community as well as the disabilities communities.
- Funding to support community-based, culturally specific prevention efforts.
- Funding to support victim service providers conducting "prevention awareness campaigns" in their communities.
 - One participant mentioned that community members and/or organizations are often not aware of the range of services that victim service providers in their communities offer.
- Expansion of batterer intervention and prevention work.
- Prevention programs or more flexible funding to prevent teen dating violence as many current grant programs are focused on services and limit use of funds for prevention of teen dating violence.

Rural Areas

- Additional affordable legal assistance, forensic medical services, batterer intervention programs,

and services for survivors of elder abuse in rural areas.

- Affordable rentals and transitional housing options across the country, particularly in rural areas.

Sexual Assault

- Housing for sexual assault survivors outside of the context of domestic violence.
- Access to legal representation needs related to sexual assault, particularly for marginalized and under-resourced communities.
- Culturally specific services specifically for sexual assault survivors.
- Training in responding to the unique needs of sexual assault survivors, especially in dual sexual assault/domestic violence organizations.
- One participant raised a concern about men being falsely accused of sexual assault.

Supervised Visitation

- Additional supervised visitation sites are needed as many communities do not have supervised visitation services at all or the services they have are at capacity.
- Increased awareness of the need for and value of supervised visitation.
- Support for supervised visitation programming staff to reduce fatigue, burnout, and turnover, and ensure quality services designed to maintain survivors' safety.
- One participant noted that general mental health professionals are often not trained on the dynamics of intimate partner violence post-separation, so allowing funding for domestic violence-informed therapeutic visitation would be a way to resolve these concerns.

Trafficking

- Education, continuing education, and other opportunities to increase economic independence and security for victims of human trafficking.

Training and Technical Assistance

- Training on the identification and assessment of traumatic brain injuries.
- Proper training for attorneys, judges, and other court personnel to respond to domestic violence survivors.
- Training on all aspects of domestic violence, including emotional and financial abuse.
- Training on topics such as grant management and financial management for non-grant program staff in organizations.
- Training and technical assistance for tribes to manage awards and track project deliverables.
- Native/tribal specific advocacy training as well as advocacy program design that is culturally centered.

Victim Advocates/Service Providers

- More funding to hire additional advocates to address an increased call for services.
- Resources for advocates to prevent burnout (e.g., employee assistance programs), turnover (e.g., higher salaries), and vicarious trauma (e.g., mental health programming).
- A better understanding among victim service providers of the global context and dynamics of historical and intergenerational trauma that underserved populations such as immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers face, in order to better respond to their culturally specific needs.

- Funding to increase salaries for prevention educators.
- Better accountability processes to ensure that victim service providers are providing meaningful services to tribal nations.

Victim Services

- Long-term counseling in addition to emergency crisis intervention.
- One participant emphasized that supported counseling programs should offer different modes of healing (e.g., Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, art expression, etc.).
- Funding to support case management beyond shelter and emergency housing.
- Consistent, long-term funding to build organizational structure and encourage sustainability of victim service programs, especially for culturally specific programs that often struggle to get programs off the ground.
- Funding to support transportation needs of survivors.
- Funding to support childcare for survivors.
- Additional family justice centers.
- Ensuring that male victims of DV have access to a full range of services.

OVW Policies and Actions

The following ongoing grant programs and planned OVW activities address concerns raised by participants:

- The [Grants to Enhance Culturally Specific Services for Victims Program](#) provides grant funding to community-based organizations that address critical victim needs in a manner that affirms the victim's culture. Culturally specific community-based organizations are more likely to understand the complex, multi-layered challenges and obstacles that victims from their communities face when attempting to access services. They are also often better equipped to form essential relationships and engage their communities in the creation and implementation of services relevant to the diverse and unique needs of the victims. This includes building and maintaining partnerships between culturally specific programs and victim service programs.
- The [Sexual Assault Services Culturally Specific Program](#) makes grant awards that create, maintain, and expand sustainable sexual assault services provided by culturally specific organizations uniquely situated to respond to the needs of sexual assault victims from culturally specific communities.
- The [Grants for Outreach and Services to Underserved Populations Program](#) focuses on marginalized populations, such as Deaf victims, victims from underserved religious minorities, and victims with disabilities.
- The [STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant \(STOP\) Program](#) statute mandates that States allocate 30 percent of funds for victim services, and that 10 percent of the victim services funds be allocated to culturally specific community-based organizations. The STOP Program statute also mandates that States allocate 20 percent of funds for projects to address sexual assault. In reviewing State implementation plans and monitoring STOP awards, OVW will continue to ensure that States allocate the culturally

specific funding based on the diverse needs in their communities and meet the sexual-assault set aside.

- The [Training and Services to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities Program](#) supports education, cross training, services, capacity building, and the establishment of multidisciplinary teams at the local level to address violence against individuals with disabilities.
- The [Enhanced Services and Training to End Abuse in Later Life \(ALL\) Program](#) makes grant awards that address unique barriers to receiving assistance that individuals who are 50 years of age or older who are victims of abuse face (including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, exploitation, and neglect).
- OVW is exploring ways that the office can support survivor-centered criminal justice reform, which includes alternative justice approaches to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. These approaches may include community-based restorative practices programs, increased batterer intervention programming, and more.
- Several current OVW technical assistance providers support the efforts of culturally specific, community-based organizations to address the critical needs of survivors in a manner that effectively addresses barriers to services through culturally and linguistically specific services and outreach. They also help mainstream service providers strengthen their work to support survivors from communities of color, immigrant communities, and faith communities. See [TA2TA.org](#) for OVW-funded technical assistance providers.
- OVW places a special condition on all technical assistance awards requiring that technical assistance providers attend a training to ensure that their products, meetings, trainings, and webinars are accessible to individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals.
- OVW funds Activating Change to maintain a website dedicated exclusively to ending the abuse of people with disabilities ([endabusepwd.org](#)). The website's resources are used by victim and disability service providers, self-advocates, and policymakers. It features an interactive and searchable map of the people, programs, and projects across the country working in this field, as well as best-practice materials created by each project.
- The [Grants to Reduce Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking on Campus Program \(Campus Program\)](#) makes grant awards that encourage a coordinated community response to the unique issues and challenges that colleges and universities face in preventing and responding to sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.
- In FY 2020, OVW released a [Domestic Violence Mentor Court Technical Assistance Initiative](#) solicitation. This initiative funds well-established specialized domestic violence courts to mentor novice or developing courts and court-based programs that wish to significantly improve their responses to domestic violence cases. These well-established courts share their expertise by hosting site visits, linking courts with peers facing similar challenges, and assisting other domestic violence courts to implement best practices.

- OVW funds technical assistance providers to train judges and judicial officers within the criminal and family courts, such as through the Judicial Education Network or the Mentor Courts program described above.
- The [Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking \(Transitional Housing\) Program](#) provides funds for short-term (6-24 months) housing assistance and supportive services to improve the ability of domestic and sexual violence victims to access housing.
- OVW serves on the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness workgroup on domestic violence with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Family Violence Prevention Services Office. OVW intends to continue its commitment to collaborate with other federal agencies, participate in leading the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness among families with children, and incorporate a victim-centered approach in all activities undertaken.
- OVW will participate in the Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium, a partnership of federal agencies: HUD, HHS, OVW and the DOJ Office for Victims of Crime. The Consortium fosters increased collaboration among victim service providers and homeless service providers. It provides national training, technical assistance, and resource development on domestic violence, sexual violence, and housing, including a resource-intensive website.
- The [Legal Assistance for Victims \(LAV\) Program](#) funds grant awards that increase the availability of civil and criminal legal assistance needed to effectively aid adult and youth victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking by providing funds for comprehensive direct legal services to victims in legal matters relating to or arising out of that abuse or violence.
- Most OVW programs are restricted in the amount of funding that can support prevention work. The [Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Assistance \(Rural\) Program](#), [Consolidated Grant Program to Address Children and Youth Experiencing Domestic and Sexual Assault and Engage Men and Boys as Allies \(CYEM\) Program](#), STOP, Campus Program, and [Tribal Governments Program](#) are permitted to fund prevention work.
- Priorities in OVW solicitations for 2022 included advancing racial equity, increasing access to justice for all survivors, strengthening efforts to prevent sexual assault, expanding economic justice and financial advocacy for survivors, and improving outreach, services, and support for survivors from underserved communities, particularly LGBTQ+ and immigrant communities.
- OVW is exploring ways to expand the reach of its programs to address unmet needs, such as those of LGBTQ+, rural, and other underserved victim populations.
- The [Rural Program](#) awards grants that support projects uniquely designed to address and prevent domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in rural jurisdictions. The program promotes collaboration among victim advocates, law enforcement officers, pre-trial service personnel, prosecutors, judges and other court personnel, probation and parole officers, and faith and community-based leaders. The goal is to reduce violence and ensure that victim safety is paramount in providing

services to victims and their children who live in rural communities.

- OVW supports grants for the provision of supervised visitation and safe exchange services by and between parents affected by domestic violence through the [Justice for Families Program](#), the Rural Program, the Tribal Governments Program, and STOP, as well as training and technical assistance related to the provision of supervised visitation and safe exchange services.
- OVW supports a robust technical assistance program to address the training and technical assistance needs of grantees through each grant program and for the broader field. The need for technical assistance consistently exceeds the resources available. Each year, OVW evaluates the needs of grantees and the broader needs of the field and adjusts the program to ensure that the topics and audiences of the technical assistance are aligned with the need and that we are using the most effective delivery methods.
- OVW supports the provision of training and technical assistance for attorneys and social service providers assisting trafficking survivors with legal needs through the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking's (CAST) Comprehensive Training and Technical Assistance Program.
- OVW funds Elevate|Uplift, a project co-led by a consortium of SA-specific organizations, to provide training, technical assistance, and resources to OVW grantees, subgrantees, and potential grantees on building organizational and staff capacity in providing trauma-informed and comprehensive sexual assault victim services within rape crisis centers, dual sexual assault/domestic violence agencies, and multi-service organizations.

B. Conferral 2: Administration of Grants

Conferral participants identified the following areas for improvement in OVW's administration of VAWA grants:

Application process

- Smaller or rural programs are short-staffed, which can make it difficult to find the resources to complete the grant application process.
- Tight turnaround with due dates makes it difficult for programs to apply and can make it difficult to get commitments from partners to meet the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) requirements of solicitations.
- Current application systems undermine access for community-based and culturally responsive programs that lack grant-writing resources, particularly for programs primarily focused on providing services in languages other than English. The lack of language access is a significant barrier.
- Multiple participants reported that solicitations are written in technical language that can make it difficult to understand exactly what is required, especially for organizations with limited resources and expertise in applying for federal grants.
- Participants suggested incorporating a more streamlined application process requiring fewer individual attachments or documents.

- One participant reported that one program required a specific grant budget form, which differed from the online JustGrants budget form and required a lot of additional work to convert the solicitation budget form to the format on JustGrants.
- One participant noted that they had submitted applications three times for OVW funding unsuccessfully and that JustGrants was particularly difficult.

Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP)

- “We continually receive notifications that the ASAP system needs us to create a new password and that our account is inactive. We are unclear why it happens, and ASAP doesn't always seem clear why it happens.”
- Trouble receiving and submitting payments along with challenges around response time to funding inquiries and delays in OVW approval of the final grant budget.

Award Notifications/Budget Clearances

- A current grantee noted that funding decisions are announced very close to the end of existing award periods and that uncertainty of whether a grant will be continued is a challenge. Similarly, another grantee said, “Renewal notification is too close to the end of the current grant. You need time to close out a grant if you are not getting renewed. For transitional housing clients, we end up having to end leases and transfer clients out unnecessarily because we are uncertain about funding.”
- Participants reported long delays between the time a grant is awarded and when the budget is approved giving the grantee access to funds, and that it is very frustrating, especially for continuation grants where any budget changes are insignificant from the previous grant.
- “I have been attempting for over a year to draw down on our grant. The first delay was waiting on our budget to be approved. The second was waiting for our policies and procedures to be approved. (And they already had been approved through the last grant period).”
- “GFMD help desk has been very helpful!” stated one participant.

Conferences/Trainings

- A participant noted that it will be extremely difficult to plan an in-person conference or training post-COVID that allows sufficient safe distancing of people within the space but still meets the DOJ-set conference threshold rates for space, A/V, and planning expenses.
- Given the uncertainties of post-COVID attendance at live events, due to variants and travel variables, there is concern about technical assistance providers being asked to cover conference cost overages.

Grant Managers

- One participant noted a lack of individualized communication from their grant manager that has made it challenging to follow the grant protocols and also difficult to know if they are adequately following the appropriate rules and regulations. Participants noted challenges in communicating with some OVW grant managers. A participant acknowledged that this may be due to OVW staffing shortages and the volume of grants being managed by any one OVW grant manager, but waiting for a response from a grant manager sometimes for months can delay grant activities.
- Participants also noted a challenge when their award is assigned to a new OVW grant manager and that sometimes they get different feedback from the new grant manager that conflicts with what they were told by the previous one.
- A Transitional Housing grantee noted that some grant activities have been delayed by waiting to

get policies and protocols approved first by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV, the technical assistance provider for the Transitional Housing Program) and then approved by OVW, with the process for approval being confusing.

- Participants complimented several OVW grant managers and GFMD staff for their responsiveness and helpfulness.

JustGrants System (JustGrants)

Application Process

- One participant raised concerns around the two-step application process for applying for funding through JustGrants.
- Multiple participants reported having trouble viewing application attachments in JustGrants during the application process, and JustGrants seeming to delete attachments or not show attachments properly after the applicant attached a document. Many participants submitted duplicate documents as a result.
- One participant noted that the JustGrants budget entry process was considerably more cumbersome and duplicative compared to GMS. Another participant noted that another challenge for the budget entry process is the absence of Excel formulas built into the system; for example, if an applicant is applying for a three-year budget, and years two and three should have a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), the applicant would have to calculate the correct adjustment manually.
- Regarding the application process in JustGrants, a participant said, “The ‘save’ button under tasks does not actually save. Only the main save at the bottom of the page saves. This resulted in a lot of lost time entering data.”
- The application “print” option does not show all file names loaded.
- One Transitional Housing applicant stated that multiple sections of the application process in JustGrants did not align with the documentation requested in the solicitation, and that the system did not help the applicant know whether they were submitting all required application documents.
- “We were able to submit all the grant applications through JustGrants but it was really hard because each purpose area asks for different things and wouldn’t let me move on if I didn’t upload something for that purpose area. I had to upload blank documents.”
- Multiple applicants reported that JustGrants continues to show their application as incomplete even when the applicant has confirmed their application was successfully submitted.

Deliverables

- Grantees asked for a larger comments section for award deliverables. To provide required information about the deliverable, such as the purpose and how it relates to grant activities, some grantees have to add a cover page to the deliverable document providing that information.
- Grantees complained that the deliverables function in JustGrants is hard to use.

Grant Adjustment Modifications (GAMs)

- One participant noted that the “change request” function for GAMs does not work in JustGrants.
- “It’s also very difficult to track submissions in the system, and correct uploads in the system if our grant manager has requested a change.”

- A participant noted that JustGrants does not allow printing of GAMs so maintaining an accurate hard copy file is very difficult. “We have been working with our OVW Program Manager to submit a backlog of GAMs, but there seems to be a JustGrants problem with GAMs and attachments, which has significantly delayed this work.”

Technical Support

- Several participants stressed the need for training/webinars on the JustGrants system that are specific to each program. Training should include step-by-step instructions for each of the required processes associated with grants like application submissions, reporting, closeouts, etc.
- Multiple participants noted that JustGrants instructional videos do not comport with the options on the actual screen and following the step-by-step instructions in many of the training manuals does not match what users see in the system. Participants recommend training materials be updated to accurately reflect what users see in JustGrants.
- “Many times, the technical support lines for JustGrants and ASAP have no idea how to help (once you get through to a person) and just say they will escalate our ticket. Unfortunately, once escalation occurs, it may be weeks to hear back from someone about the issue.”
- Commenters were complimentary of the OVW JustGrants help desk and stated that they appreciated the timely and helpful assistance provided.

User Experiences

- Participants suggested that each grant award should allow for multiple staff to have the same views and capabilities. They gave the example of both the financial manager and the award administrator needing to provide information within a budget modification request, and it can be cumbersome when only one of those people has access to the modification within JustGrants.
- “When applying via JustGrants this spring, we had an issue where documents that needed to be signed by our agency administrator were only accessible to me (the application submitter). We ended up printing the documents and submitting them as attachments, because there was no way for the appropriate person to sign them in the JustGrants system.”
- “Switching between grant submitters, the system would sometimes get stuck and not allow the change in submitter. The system would list one submitter name, but it was still stuck under the other person.”
- “When submitting grant reporting data, it is not always visible to the DOJ Program Manager. When re-opening and re-submitting, the issue persisted. There was no download feature. Ended up having to send screen shots via email.”
- Multiple participants noted that JustGrants is inefficient, burdensome, not intuitive or user-friendly, and the former Grants Management System (GMS) was significantly easier to maneuver.
- A participant reported JustGrants is not accessible to Deaf and/or Blind individuals for several reasons including, but not limited to, no place to increase font size or other content and no alternative ways to submit applications, reports, or GANs.
- “There are pretty significant glitches. For example, if you upload multiple documents, it’s only the first attachment that actually appears automatically for the program specialists at OVW, they have to go back into the program to access additional ones, so we have been asked to upload the individual documents separately, which we can do but didn’t know to do that beforehand.”

- “Positive remark, the acceptance of the award process is a lot easier now. Getting my authorized individual to check off, you used to have to print out those pages, they would have to initial them and send it back in. The fact that she can do it all electronically in the system has saved us a lot of time....”

Performance Reporting

- A participant noted difficulty reporting on the Muskie Reports and asked for the reporting to go into an HTML reporting site as opposed to using the current PDF format.
- Grantees of the Transitional Housing, Rural, Culturally Specific Services, Sexual Assault Services, and Coalitions grant programs stated it takes many more than the suggested one hour to complete a performance report.
- A participant stated the performance report process is very confusing and suggested providing clearer instructions if the process cannot be changed.
- “One of the challenges for us is that we have populations like survivors who were transgender, non-binary, etc., and the reporting forms do not allow us to capture that. They are not inclusive in terms of gender identity or sexual orientation.”

STOP/SASP

- One participant noted that the STOP implementation plan is difficult because it takes too much time.
- One participant suggested that OVW require state STOP administrators to follow standardized procedures for distributing STOP funds. For example, the participant recommended requirements for how long the application period remains open to ensure applicants have time to apply for STOP funding, or allowing STOP funded programs to request and receive funds within the same timelines as entities directly receiving federal funds.

Other Comments

- “There are too many systems to use and keep straight with application submission, payment requests, different usernames, passwords, reporting sites. Training for the various systems do not connect together.”
- OVW needs to provide more resources on the website in languages other than English, such as the grant program summaries.
- One participant stated their appreciation to OVW for aligning the Coalition Grant with the Oct. 1 fiscal year.

OVW Policies and Actions

The following ongoing and planned OVW activities address participants’ concerns:

- OVW hosts pre-application information sessions for potential applicants to help them understand the requirements of solicitations and thus submit applications that are more viable for funding. Recorded webinars are published on OVW’s web page.
- To streamline the application process, some OVW solicitations include an option for a five-year project period, so that grantees will have more time to develop their projects before needing to compete again for funding. For example, applicants to the Tribal

Governments program may receive a 36-month competitive award with an additional 24-month noncompetitive award to follow if they meet all requirements set out by the programs' solicitations.

- While the ASAP system is under the purview of the Treasury Department, OVW's Grant Financial Management Division staff have worked diligently to assist grantees having difficulty accessing funds through ASAP and refer grantees to training materials and other resources published by the Treasury Department at <https://fiscal.treasury.gov/asap/>.
- Annually, OVW programs host a new grantee orientation for new grantees and new project directors on how to administer their grants, including how to complete grant-reporting requirements.
- OVW's Grants Financial Management Division (GFMD) annually provides training on budgets and financial reporting requirements during each grant program's new grantee orientation. Grantees can ask questions and receive personal assistance at this training. GMFD also continues to develop new trainings made available on OVW's website.
- OVW is working on ways to improve the conference approval process.
- OVW continues to fill open Grants Specialist and Financial Analyst positions to increase the number of staff and improve its ability to respond to grantees and shorten the time required to approve budgets.
- OVW established a JustGrants help desk to provide faster assistance to OVW grantees experiencing technical issues with the JustGrants system.
- OVW recognizes that the current PDF performance reporting forms operate on antiquated technology and are unduly time-consuming to complete. Eventually, JustGrants will incorporate a performance reporting survey directly in the system to replace the PDF forms. Although the rollout has been delayed, OVW anticipates that the new system will be easy for grantees to navigate and will resolve the issues raised.
- OVW and the TA provider for the STOP Program have developed numerous tools to assist the states in meeting the complex statutory requirements for the implementation plans. For example, the [STOP Formula Program Implementation Plan Checklist](#) outlines every item that needs to be addressed in the plan.

C. Conferral 3: Promising Practices in the Field

Conferral participants identified the following promising practices in the field:

Coordinated Community Responses

- A participant said they received questions from faith leaders around how to respond to people in their congregation who abuse their intimate partner. The participant worked with a national organization to develop a resource for faith leaders to respond to disclosures and is seeing a lot of interest in that resource. They posted the resource and a related webinar on their website so that others in the community can access it. The participant stated, "Safety comes first, but if it is safe to do so, faith leaders can encourage attendance at Intimate Partner Abuse Education Programs."

- Another participant noted that they created a checklist for police officers investigating domestic violence incidents, so they are less likely to arrest the victim, and more likely to get a better, holistic picture of the incident.

COVID-19 Related Responses

- In response to COVID, a domestic violence coalition implemented a hotel program. This program provides funding for survivors and their families to stay in hotels in response to the increased call for housing services as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.
- Participants reported moving in-person trainings to a virtual format and providing more time for participant engagement and conversation. Others created self-paced online courses for advocates and others interested in learning how to recognize and respond to domestic violence and open forums for the exchange of information.
- Moving to virtual support groups increased attendance and made support groups more accessible for many. Programs also reported using Zoom and other platforms to provide medical and other advocacy remotely.
- One participant noted telehealth in an extremely rural community as a promising practice for those needing services.
- Providers of supervised visitation for families with a history of domestic violence began offering virtual visits when visitation centers were closed or at a significantly reduced capacity for in-person visits.
- A tribal TA provider operates a direct service advocacy program for urban Native individuals in Colorado. During COVID, advocates started working with the food rescue program in town by distributing food boxes. As survivors would come to pick up food boxes, advocates could conduct check-ins and discuss safety plans with survivors without their abuser present. Advocates also continued and expanded outdoor activities during the pandemic in the form of an indigenous healing garden, which involved teaching survivors about traditional medicines.
- Participants identified an increased openness of law enforcement to alternative, self-directed reporting and interview methods, such as interviewing survivors remotely.

Financial Assistance

- Participants requested direct and flexible assistance for survivors that would allow for funds to be paid directly to the survivors.
- “Access to funds is a huge incentive for survivors to access advocacy when they are not sure if emotional support will meet their most pressing needs. We currently have what we call emergency financial assistance that we use to pay for emergency hotel rooms, gas cards, rent, and groceries. These funds have helped survivors who are in community college stay in school, which is huge in gaining financial independence. The more flexibility we can provide, the more useful the funds will be.”
- Multiple participants reported using existing grant funds to support expenses for survivors transitioning to safety, such as new locks, storage unit costs, transportation, a security deposit, or moving costs and say this support has been especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also voiced support for continued or expanded financial resources to address all services a survivor may need when escaping a violent home.

Housing

- “We found a lot more calls coming into our crisis hotline for an injunction for protection and rehousing, instead of admissions to emergency shelter last year. As a result, we are beefing up

those programs to help keep our shelter census down, and make sure more survivors get appropriate services.”

Restorative Justice/Alternative Justice Approaches

- A participant supported a restorative justice bill to protect confidentiality of restorative justice conversations in criminal and civil actions, which passed and was signed by the state’s governor.
- Participants discussed restorative justice as a tool for survivors.
- A culturally specific organization was funded to convene cohorts of providers who primarily work with Black survivors of domestic and sexual violence. One area of their work is unpacking how traditional law-enforcement centric “high risk team” models often fail Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) survivors among others. Instead, this group is exploring how other community-based approaches may better keep Black survivors alive.

Underserved Communities/Culturally Specific Practices

- A participant highlighted the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) for working to ensure services and systems for victims are tailored across the lifespan and encouraging existing systems to include issues that are unique to an older victim’s experience.
- Multiple participants reported work to include men and boys in conversations around domestic violence and sexual assault.
- Multiple promising practices related to corrections or to services for formerly or currently incarcerated survivors and their families were noted by participants. Examples included trauma-informed interaction training for corrections professionals, restorative practices in corrections, gender-specific programming, specialized domestic violence or other courts, and leadership training around how to create a safe, supportive culture within the corrections system.
- A City Attorney in Minnesota developed the Crossroads Curriculum as an intervention program for female offenders and Duluth operates female-specific groups for offender education.
- One participant highlighted Survivors First, a Washington program led by and for Black women, which is built on a partnership between a victim service provider and a prosecutor’s office to reach women who have been prosecuted for crimes of survival, which often includes crimes committed as a result of domestic violence, recognizing that so many Black women who are in local jails are survivors.
- One participant noted that their indigenous community is 10,000 to 12,000 people within a larger community of 700,000. To reach survivors within that indigenous community, advocates have hosted a women’s hand drum group, lessons on ribbon making, and other traditional activities that indigenous survivors are more likely to attend.
- A participant recommended collecting race, sexual orientation, gender identity and other demographic information from victims who chose to share that data as a promising practice in holding the organization accountable for reaching a diverse population of victims.
- A participant noted that disability law provides many potential accommodations and services and using disability law to advocate for survivors on campuses and in custodial settings may be a promising practice. For example, survivors may need accommodations as a result of post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, or other physical or psychological consequences of abuse.
- “Our emergency shelter facility also transitioned to serving people of all gender identities and expressions about two years ago. We have a running census of about 80 people on any given day and, to date, we have had zero negative incidents or reported experiences as a result.”
- A participant noted that highlighting the intersections of oppression and domestic and sexual violence, such as racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia and recognizing these

issues as root causes of violence, may be a promising practice.

Other Promising Practices

- A participant reported the expansion of their hotline work to include a chat line with very clear privacy guidelines and an educational piece about tech safety.
- “We are working with a reentry program that has incorporated Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) for any high risk/high needs offenders. I just completed a CoSA with a high-risk domestic violence offender.”
- In Oklahoma, domestic violence and sexual assault programs are discouraged from using “Woman” or “Women” in their names, in order to be more inclusive.
- “Our community uses Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview techniques to ensure they are trauma-informed.”
- One participant from Maine noted that they are in the process of adopting the Ontario Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Tool (ODARA) via statewide legislation. ODARA has proved to be an invaluable tool across disciplines as it has educated system players, guaranteed effective safety planning for victims, and promoted accountability for offenders. The participant also noted that the ODARA tool is currently being formally evaluated as a promising practice.
- A DC victim service provider worked with local playwrights and theater professionals to develop an eight-week storytelling project for survivors. As people work through the crisis clinical work and have done enough healing work, they learn public speaking and creative storytelling skills with the opportunity to get in front of systems such as police, judges, or faith leaders and talk about how that group had been problematic or a facilitator to their harm. The program recently transitioned to being peer-led.

OVW Policies and Actions

The following ongoing and planned OVW activities address the promising practices in the field:

- Through its Research and Evaluation (R&E) Initiative, OVW is funding studies on the effectiveness of VAWA-funded strategies for serving victims and holding offenders accountable. Several examples of R&E projects can be found under *Emerging Trends* above. Additional examples include: a study of a healthy relationships curriculum for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; an ongoing evaluation of a training for religious leaders on supporting victims and connecting them to services; multiple projects assessing different models for batterer intervention programming; several evaluations of novel approaches to sexual assault victim services; two projects studying e-filing of protection orders; a meta-analysis of campus-based sexual violence prevention models; and an evaluation of a sexual assault training for all sworn officers in a large metropolitan police department.
- OVW funds a number of technical assistance projects advancing promising practices, such as the Battered Women’s Justice Project’s [National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and Firearms](#), the International Association of Forensic Nurses’ Medical Forensic Care Project addressing sexual assault forensic exams, and Inspire Action for Social Change’s technical assistance around OVW’s Guiding Principles for Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange. See [TA2TA.org](#) for OVW-funded technical assistance providers.

- Through an FY 2019 grant, the University of Southern Maine is working in partnership with the Justice Research and Statistical Association to research, pilot, evaluate, and recommend outcome measures that OVW and its grantees can use to measure success in law enforcement's response to VAWA crimes.
- In FY 2021, OVW, in partnership with OJP's Bureau of Justice Assistance, released a solicitation for a [National Service Line for Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse Initiative](#), which funded one organization to explore the development of a National Service line to assist correctional facilities achieve and maintain compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act Standards 115.51 and 115.53, as well as to ensure quality services to previously or currently incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse.

OVW often pursues special projects within the bounds of VAWA's statutory requirements to address emerging trends and/or promising practices in the field. For example, in 2021, we released a solicitation for "Firearms Technical Assistance Project" pilot sites, to help communities address challenges with implementing domestic violence firearms laws and establishing a localized, culturally specific response to the nexus of firearms and domestic violence.

- OVW supports a training and technical assistance project with Futures Without Violence on increasing organization and community prevention strategies to engage men and boys in addressing sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. This project provides written resources and virtual trainings and technical assistance on promising practices for engaging men and boys through intergenerational sessions on violence against women.

D. Conferral 4: Emerging Trends

Conferral participants identified the following emerging trends:

Courts

- Need for more family court training.
- Two participants noted that family lawyers and family courts need more training/education on domestic violence and its effects on children and adult survivors.
- One participant noted that it can be challenging to approach courts and law enforcement as a victim service provider. The participant gave the example that it may be easier for a judge to talk to a judge or someone in a similar profession, and implied that courts and law enforcement may benefit from peer-to-peer education programs.
- One participant mentioned that civil courts are behind in their response to domestic violence situations and stated that they are seeing adult survivors lose custody of their children more often when they bring up violence in their homes as opposed to when they do not.

COVID-19 Related Trends

Increased need for already limited services

- Advocates note increased reports of family violence in response to the pandemic.
- More survivors are calling crisis hotlines asking for transitional housing and/or

protection orders, instead of emergency shelter.

- Shelters have had to reduce occupancy during the pandemic, while calls for housing are at all-time highs.
- During the pandemic, the financial assistance needs, including rental assistance to support survivors staying housed, have increased significantly.
- Survivors struggling with addiction and homelessness are having difficulty accessing services without reliable/consistent access to the internet or a safe place to contact victim service agencies.
- Local victim service providers are facing challenges in keeping up with increased calls and emails from survivors in need. Survivors indicate that they are calling local, state, and national resources, and all they are getting are more phone numbers.
- High level of staff turnover, especially with advocates in the field. “This pandemic has really taken a toll on wonderful advocates (including advocates of color) as they are on the front lines and doing this work with low wages/pay.”
- One participant noted that victim advocates and attorneys representing survivors are finding it challenging to keep their home addresses private and exempted from public records with the shift to online services.
- For culturally specific organizations, accessibility remains a key issue. They are working to reach their communities through in-person and virtual services and look for methods to establish connection with participants who lack available internet access.

New Uses of Technology

- Participants note that they have moved toward shifting direct victim services to online platforms during the pandemic.
- “COVID opened up court on Zoom. It is safer and more comfortable for victims who are scared to go to court. [We] would love to see this trend continue for those victims who do not want to physically attend court.”
- One participant noted that they launched a chatline in addition to their hotline which increased access for victims.
- “We hold a trauma-informed virtual healing circle for Latinx and cultural leaders across the U.S. COVID-19 allowed us to be creative and create this space for cultural leaders. Since cultural resources continue to be lacking in our movement, peer-to-peer learning, sharing, and cross-collaboration has been more effective.”

Housing

- Advocates relayed messages that there are increasing rents and higher deposits required to get survivors housed. One participant mentioned that it is even more challenging for individuals to find permanent, affordable housing. Another participant described that there is a gap in housing for older survivors.
- Participants noted a lack of affordable housing availability.
- One participant noted that the bans on evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic made it more difficult to locate housing for survivors.
- A participant reported huge needs around housing for survivors of sexual violence and abuse as a healing and safety tool.

Law Enforcement

- One participant highlighted that some states have adopted or legislated training for law enforcement on trauma-informed adult sexual assault victim interviews.
- One participant stated that there is a trend of using forensic interviews for people with disabilities based on a model designed for children who have experienced sexual assault. The participant emphasized the need for funding to create a model for adults and adapted for adults with disabilities because it is contributing to a cultural narrative that people with disabilities are children.
- One participant stated that the rising incidence of hate crimes perpetrated against API communities have necessitated increased trust-building between these communities and law enforcement/others in the criminal justice system. The participant highlighted that there needs to be a more coordinated response/education between victim service providers, community-based organizations, and law enforcement to ensure that API communities feel comfortable reporting cases to the police.
- One participant noted that some jurisdictions utilize a “forensic center” where professional interviewers trained in trauma-informed interview techniques interview sexual assault victims while observed by the law enforcement investigator.

Legal Services

- Even those programs that have attorneys available are rarely able to fully meet the needs in their regions.
- “Even with Legal Assistance for Victims funding, the amount of funding only provides funding for a few staff attorneys at most. As a result, they cannot always meet all needs, especially with the complex needs of victims from culturally specific and underserved religious communities.”
- “We are always struggling to represent the high number of minors who need civil legal attorneys.”
- One participant reported that legal services providers are looking for ways to create more accessible services for survivors with disabilities, and that they need support with respect to creating retainer agreements, releases, etc., in plain language.

Restorative Justice

- There is a need for funding and support for more restorative practices in community-based programming.
- One participant stated that they are seeing increases in K-12 and students on college campuses who would like to pursue restorative justice practices rather than the school disciplinary process.
- “There is currently a limited response to someone who identifies as being in an abusive situation but refuses to involve law enforcement.”
- “We have been hearing a lot about the ways adult survivors of child sexual abuse need relevant healing services to be front and center in services – completely outside of the criminal legal system.”

Victim Service Providers

- Participants reported that calls for a \$15/hour minimum wage put a strain on victim service provider budgets.
- One participant stated an increased need in services for staff and volunteers who provide crisis intervention services, such as vicarious trauma and secondary trauma support and additional mental health and wellness programs, is an emerging trend.

Underserved Populations

- Participants stated that there is an increasing need for language access for social services and hospitals.
- “We are experiencing an increase in victims of intimate and extended family violence from within the Middle Eastern micro-communities in our area. We have two Middle Eastern lived experience staff persons but just cannot keep up with the intensity of their needs.”
- One participant who represents a TA provider for Deaf survivors reported that systems-based interventions (e.g., protection orders, criminal processes, family services, etc.) are not resulting in increased safety within the Deaf/hard of hearing community.
- Participants identified that it is challenging to reach survivors from communities of color and disability communities because of OVW’s focus on the criminal legal system and emphasis on victim service collaboration with the criminal legal system as opposed to supporting more community-based responses.
- One participant highlighted that older survivors are not being identified and successfully reached because services are often designed for younger survivors.
- “We are seeing an increased need for training on public benefits access for immigrant survivors.”
- One participant listed several emerging trends around survivors and service providers in correctional settings. Training on trauma informed interactions specifically for corrections professionals working with victims, restorative practices in corrections, gender specific programming, creating opportunities for coaching and communities of practice, and providing services and support for secondary trauma for victim advocates, treatment providers and corrections professionals were all listed as emerging trends.
- One participant who works for an organization at the intersection of faith and abuse in the Latinx community stated, “Many culturally specific agencies also work at the intersections of specific communities and abuse. We need a way to connect these two efforts – how do we provide faith-based expertise, resources, training, and technical assistance to culturally specific communities?”
- One participant mentioned that queer and transgender survivors often fear that they will face homophobia/transphobia by going to mainstream shelters/transitional housing service providers. This participant stated there is an emerging need for a different model of services with more flexible funding for queer and transgender survivors, especially those in rural communities.
- One participant commented that cultural leaders in mainstream organizations may experience harm in the form of micro-aggressions and blatant victimizations from white leadership/staff. Other participants echoed this sentiment and emphasized the growing need to center the experiences of Black and Brown people, indigenous people, and people with disabilities in determining the most effective victim service responses for their specific needs.

Other Emerging Trends

- A participant identified the recent shift away from victim/perpetrator models of addressing dysfunctional family relationship dynamics toward conflict resolution addressed by family therapy, highlighting that therapy is often much less disruptive and harmful (particularly to children) than justice system intervention.
- A participant working in sexual assault services on college campuses noted that “purity culture” surfaced on faith-affiliated campuses. The participant emphasized the deleterious effect on students who experience sexual assault and are afraid of repercussions if they report the assault, and how there is an increased need for raising awareness and education about purity culture for advocates and funders, research about how many people have been affected by it, guidelines for

responding to survivors of sexual assault affected by purity culture, and additional survivor resources for healing and recovery.

- One participant highlighted how programs addressing battering behavior are showing promise for reducing domestic violence, and as a result, there is an increasing need for funding to support the development of these programs to ensure that they integrate with service providers and the criminal and civil justice system. For instance, the participant stated that the Virginia Strength at Home initiative and Caring Dads present opportunities for people to relate to parenthood and fatherhood, but that they also present challenges as they may or may not be offered with appropriate connections with domestic abuse and violence survivor informed professionals within the field.
- A participant noted concern about men being falsely accused of sexual assault due to trauma-informed investigations and the MeToo movement.
- One participant noted that they are getting more and more calls from victims in the military community with domestic and sexual violence concerns and stated that many find that service providers in the community do not know enough about dealing with the military systems of social service or justice.

OVW Policies and Actions

The following ongoing and planned activities highlight some of the ways that OVW addresses emerging trends that participants identified:

- OVW funds technical assistance providers to train judges and judicial officers within the criminal and family courts, such as through the Judicial Education Network and the Mentor Courts program described above.
- In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, OVW responded to the changing needs of grantees and victims by allowing flexibility of services wherever possible. OVW directed TA providers to convert trainings previously held in-person to a virtual format and curricula when possible, and grantees under several grant programs moved to virtual services (for example, virtual court dockets and supervised visitation held on virtual platforms).
- As stated above under *Unmet Needs*, the [Transitional Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program](#) provides funds for short-term (6-24 months) housing assistance and support services to improve the ability of domestic and sexual violence victims to access housing.
- The [Improving Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Grant Program \(ICJR Program\)](#) is designed to encourage a coordinated community response that brings together effective partners from the local government including law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices and courts, nonprofit organizations, and population specific organizations to ensure that sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking are treated seriously, requiring the coordinated involvement of the entire criminal justice system and community-based victim service providers.
- As stated above under *Unmet Needs*, the [Legal Assistance for Victims Program](#) funds grant awards that increase the availability of civil and criminal legal assistance needed to

effectively aid adult and youth victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking by providing funds for comprehensive direct legal services to victims in legal matters relating to or arising out of that abuse or violence.

- As stated above under *Unmet Needs*, OVW is exploring ways that the office can support restorative justice. The FY 2022 President’s budget included a \$25 million proposal to fund a new OVW Restorative Justice program,³ which reflects these priorities and would give OVW more flexibility in funding restorative justice programs.
- OVW is supporting the Domestic Violence Resource for Increasing Safety and Connection (DV RISC), a national resource center designed to help jurisdictions enhance their approaches to reducing risk and preventing homicide in intimate partner violence cases.
- OVW continues to invest in research to better understand the scope and impact of domestic and sexual violence, and to determine if, how, and under what circumstances various models work for preventing and addressing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. OVW’s Research and Evaluation (R&E) Initiative has funded 36 studies totaling nearly \$16 million since 2016. One project produced a national portrait of restorative justice approaches to intimate partner violence (report available at: <https://www.courtinnovation.org/publications-RJ-IPV>), several projects are studying transitional housing models (including one model that serves victims with co-occurring substance use disorders, which produced [a toolkit](#)), and another project is evaluating the Arizona Intimate Partner Risk Assessment Initiative (APRAIS). While the R&E Initiative supports many different topics and methods of study, all projects are required to have strong researcher-practitioner partnerships in place and produce findings in practitioner-friendly formats.

III. Conclusion

OVW prioritizes hearing from stakeholders throughout the year and takes varied approaches to doing so. As it continues to develop its programs and issue solicitations, OVW will continue to take the input received through the conferral webinars into consideration. OVW thanks all conferral participants for their time, dedication, and insight.

Appendix 1: List of Conferral Sessions

Public conferral session webinar:

1. Unmet Needs

³ VAWA 2022 specifically authorized a grant program for restorative practices. See 34 U.S.C. 12514. The fiscal year 2022 and 2023 appropriations included funding for the program.

September 9, 2021

2. Administration of Grants
September 23, 2021

3. Promising Practices in the Field
September 30, 2021

4. Emerging Trends
November 7, 2021