



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

JAN 17 2018

The Honorable Robert W. Goodlatte
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Department of Justice submits this report to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and the House Committee on the Judiciary pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4 (codified at 42 U.S.C. §13925(b)(15)) (VAWA 2013), which requires that the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) confer biennially with key stakeholders in the violence against women community. Specifically, VAWA 2013 mandates that OVW: (1) establish a biennial conferral process with the 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, lessons learned 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 input OVW received through email comments and eleven conferral sessions held between November 2015 and December 2016. The report includes OVW actions taken during and after the conferral period in response or related to issues raised by conferral participants. The report will also be made available to the public on OVW's website, www.justice.gov/ovw.

We hope that you will find the information presented in this report provides a better understanding of OVW's efforts to reduce violence against women. If you have any questions regarding this report, please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Stephen E. Boyd, written in a stylized, cursive script.

Stephen E. Boyd
Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

JAN 17 2018

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

Dear Congressman Nadler:

The Department of Justice submits this report to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and the House Committee on the Judiciary pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4 (codified at 42 U.S.C. §13925(b)(15)) (VAWA 2013), which requires that the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) confer biennially with key stakeholders in the violence against women community. Specifically, VAWA 2013 mandates that OVW: (1) establish a biennial conferral process with the 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, lessons learned 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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Stephen E. Boyd
Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure



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Washington, D.C. 20530

JAN 17 2018

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Department of Justice submits this report to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and the House Committee on the Judiciary pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4 (codified at 42 U.S.C. §13925(b)(15)) (VAWA 2013), which requires that the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) confer biennially with key stakeholders in the violence against women community. Specifically, VAWA 2013 mandates that OVW: (1) establish a biennial conferral process with the 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, lessons learned 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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Stephen E. Boyd
Assistant Attorney General

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Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

JAN 17 2018

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The Department of Justice submits this report to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and the House Committee on the Judiciary pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4 (codified at 42 U.S.C. §13925(b)(15)) (VAWA 2013), which requires that the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) confer biennially with key stakeholders in the violence against women community. Specifically, VAWA 2013 mandates that OVW: (1) establish a biennial conferral process with the 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, lessons learned 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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Stephen E. Boyd
Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure



2016-2017 Conferral on the Violence Against Women Act

Report to Congress

December 2017

Summary of stakeholder conferrals held in 2015 and 2016 and OVW responses

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Introduction

Statutory Directive

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) submits this report to the Judiciary Committees in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. We do 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)).

The Act requires OVW to confer biennially with key stakeholders in the violence against women field. Specifically, the Act 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.

OVW welcomes this opportunity to share with Congress the issues and concerns expressed by the men, women, and children who benefit from the federal government's funding to respond to and prevent violence against women.

Structure of the Conferral

Between November 2015 and November 2016, OVW held six public conferral sessions, accepted email comments, and held five invitation-only sessions covering the four topics defined in VAWA 2013:

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

OVW also specifically sought input on a fifth topic: technical assistance needs of grantees and other stakeholders.

Conferral sessions were moderated by OVW senior management with translation services from American Sign Language interpreters. Participation was via telephone, webinar chat, email, or in person.

The issues mentioned most frequently across all five topics involved:

- Housing;
- Criminal justice, including law enforcement and prosecution;
- Legal representation in both family and criminal courts;
- Marginalized populations (especially persons who are disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) individuals, immigrants, and refugees);
- Coordination across communities and disciplines; and
- Challenges in rural jurisdictions.

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.

Invitations and announcements were made via email (using all of OVW's various distribution lists), Twitter, and OVW's webpage. Stakeholders were encouraged to share information about the conferral sessions via their own communication channels.

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 shown in quotation marks or are paraphrased and identified as stakeholder comments.

This report first summarizes stakeholders' comments presented during the conferral sessions and then summarizes OVW's actions relating to the issues addressed in those stakeholder comments. Part One of this document consists of comments from stakeholders, with no commentary from OVW. OVW's input is reflected only in Part Two. The report does not present an exhaustive list of OVW's actions relating to these issues and focuses on activities from August 2016 through August 2017.

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

Part 1: Stakeholder Comments

1. Emerging Trends

Housing. Victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking routinely find housing to be a critical factor in maintaining their own and their children's safety, according to conferral participants.

- Stakeholders reported that members of the LGBT community are sometimes denied housing services. They asked OVW to help make organizations aware of and abide by existing anti-discrimination laws. Conferral participants reported seeing a rise in homelessness and a lack of shelters for gay and transgender survivors of color. Shelters are not always prepared to support gay and transgender individuals and sometimes turn them away. "In some cases, this has led to 'survival sex' for money or food."
- Another emerging housing trend relates to hotels. "We are seeing more hotels used for extended stays, which is problematic because the confined space creates conflicts within the family, and it is a stopgap measure instead of a solution."

Firearms. Stakeholders described a range of issues related to firearms.

- Those who staff hotlines said that they regularly receive calls from victims whose abusers directly threaten them with a firearm or constantly remind them that they have a gun.
- According to conferral participants, existing laws designed to prohibit abusers from having firearms are inconsistently enforced.
- Stakeholders expressed concern about legislation that makes it easier for abusers to obtain and keep their firearms. Stakeholders recommended more systematic advocacy and education about the links between firearms and domestic violence incidents.
- Participants also stated that many law enforcement agencies, especially in rural jurisdictions, do not have adequate facilities for storing the firearms they confiscate from abusers.

Legal Services. Decisions made in family court continue to be challenging according to stakeholders.

- Stakeholders expressed concern about a lack of legal representation for victims in family court and victims' insufficient understanding about the processes in family court.
- One participant said: "There appears to be a switch from safety to the parental rights of the abusive parent."
- A father wrote to say the court had unfairly kept him away from his children and that both he and his children are now broken and alienated.
- Stakeholders said it seemed that OVW was moving away from providing funding for supervised visits and safe exchanges. One stakeholder specifically mentioned the Safe Havens program, which became part of the Justice for Families program after VAWA 2013.

"We cannot operate at the previous level without grant support despite our strong connections to the community and the sustainable infrastructure we have accomplished."

Marginalized and Underserved Populations. Conferral participants said there is greater attention being given to populations who in the past had not received sufficient services. These populations primarily include refugees and immigrants, people with disabilities, and those who identify as LGBT.

- Stakeholders reported that they perceive law enforcement as needing improvement in investigating and prosecuting crimes involving LGBT victims.
- Conferral participants reported that immigrants and refugees may lack access to services because of language barriers, perceived fear of police, and ignorance of the law.

Sexual Assault Kits. Stakeholder comments about sexual assault kits revolved around the procedures and processes underway to reduce backlogs at law enforcement agencies or laboratories.

- "We are seeing confusion about how to handle Jane Doe [anonymous] kits," one stakeholder said. They asked OVW for guidance on how to handle sexual assault kits in cases where the victims do not want their names released to law enforcement, although the victims' sexual assault kits have been submitted, anonymously, to a laboratory for testing.
- More states are abolishing their statutes of limitation, increasing the amount of time to report sexual assault, or both. As a result, stakeholders recommended that OVW award grants for dedicated investigation and prosecution of cases that are identified through delayed reports of sexual assault.

Coordinated Community Response. Having community groups coordinate closely with one another, often through Coordinated Community Responses, remained a priority for stakeholders.

- Despite the growing appreciation of Coordinated Community Responses, many stakeholders said there continues to be a great need for coordination with law enforcement, especially in African-American and immigrant communities.
- "How is OVW thinking about addressing the needs of people who are afraid of contacting law enforcement for help?" This stakeholder was specifically referring to communities with a high percentage of immigrants.

Incarceration. Stakeholders reported that the number of women who are incarcerated has increased, and that these women are a vulnerable population in need of services.

- Conferral participants noted that many incarcerated women are victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. They reported that the trauma of victimization can lead to behaviors that may cause arrest or incarceration, or the victimization itself may lead to arrest, such as in cases of domestic minor sex trafficking.
- They also stated that children of incarcerated women need ways to stay connected to their mothers. "We need ways to help families stay intact."
- Stakeholders raised concerns that incarceration can lead to increased risk of suicide by victims.

2. Unmet Needs

Conferral participants reported an extensive array of unmet needs, many of which overlapped significantly with the issues discussed in “Section 1. Emerging Trends.” Specific unmet needs discussed by stakeholders are described below.

Housing. Affordable shelter was frequently mentioned as an urgent need for which service providers had few resources to respond. The longer a survivor of violence must wait for housing, the higher the risk of homelessness or returning to a perpetrator.

- One commenter described the need for services combined with housing: “HUD [the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development], HHS [the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services], and their grantees need increased understanding of victims’ needs in order to provide supportive services. Increased collaboration by OVW with those agencies is helpful. We wish OVW controlled all of the support service funds, and that HUD funds were used to build more housing.”
- Another stakeholder said: “Anything OVW can do to help grow the housing options is appreciated.”
- Stakeholders reported that survivors need more time in transitional housing: “30 to 90 days is not sufficient time to get some of our folks ready to live on their own after suffering this type of trauma over a number of years.”

Stakeholders also reported that delays in processing U visas pose a high risk of increased homelessness¹ and that too many housing providers are not prepared for non-English speaking clients.

- “Accessible housing is greatly needed” for people with physical disabilities, according to stakeholders.

Criminal Justice Professionals. The majority of stakeholders talked about the need for criminal justice professionals (police, attorneys, judges) to become more knowledgeable about handling gender-based violence.

- Participants said training is needed for criminal justice professionals on identifying and responding to abuse, especially when interacting with people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, LGBT victims, children, and other marginalized or underserved groups.
- Educational seminars for criminal justice professionals to learn about domestic violence, child sexual abuse, and family law were suggested as beneficial. Participants requested that these seminars be streamed and shared via social media platforms.
- Training was a common request from stakeholders: for investigators collecting evidence and building better cases, including around issuing protection orders; for prosecutors on how to properly charge cases and obtain convictions; and for judges to understand the specific nature of domestic and sexual violence and their impact on children and families.

¹ The U visa can be sought by victims of certain crimes who are currently assisting or have previously assisted law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of a crime.

Legal Services. Many stakeholders expressed concern about a lack of legal representation for victims who need legal help to get protection orders; to protect their rights as victims in criminal and civil cases; and to handle divorce, custody, and landlord issues. “We do not need advocates; we need lawyers,” said one survivor who joined the webinars.

- Stakeholders recommended more attorney services, judicial training, and multidisciplinary teams to deal with child custody in abusive relationships.
- Stakeholders requested legal help to support U visa cases and survivors who are immigrants. “We continue to see the need for housing and legal services for survivors, especially from the immigrant and refugee communities.”
- Participants reported a need for seed money to establish legal services agencies and for small agencies to gain a firmer, more stable foothold. Stakeholders noted that support for capacity building leads to sustainability.

Marginalized and Underserved Populations. One stakeholder said, “It is imperative that domestic violence and sexual assault resources are accessible to all clients, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or immigration status.” Other stakeholders generally expressed agreement with one who said: “We are hoping to further expand our knowledge in serving underserved populations.”

- One participant noted, “There are huge gaps and needs in rural communities . . . for more local services, for additional advocates, for additional funding. These service providers are often operating on a shoestring budget and serve vast distances.”
- Participants reported that immigrants and refugees are often victims of prior trauma. However, they said service providers and law enforcement do not always understand the physical and psychological impacts of trauma and the violence experienced by many immigrants and refugees. They explained that a lack of cross-cultural sensitivity training can retraumatize victims and make their adjustments even more difficult and time-consuming.
- One participant summarized what others had expressed: “We continue to be delayed in creating accessible services and spaces. The services in the community that individuals with disabilities need to access are woefully inaccessible for gaining the dignity and violence-free life they deserve . . . additionally, we strongly encourage agencies with a focus on disability to be part of [multidisciplinary teams like Coordinated Community Responses or Sexual Assault Response Teams].”
- Stakeholders said emergency rooms, law enforcement, and courts need guidance about how to engage survivors with disabilities and survivors who are Deaf. The guidance would address both their responsibilities under the law as well as strategies for engaging survivors in ways that are appropriate and trauma-informed.
- According to participants, there is a great need for information about how to serve victims who are incarcerated as well as alternatives to prison.
- “Stronger guidance from the federal level will reinforce and support the work we do locally, as advocates for survivors in these service environments,” said one participant.

Comprehensive Services and Collaboration with the Community. Stakeholders reported a continuing strong need for better connections among multidisciplinary community groups. They said that victims usually need an array of individualized services (shelter, legal assistance, etc.) that are most effective when coordinated. “Many of our clients face multiple complex barriers and co-occurring issues, particularly in the area of substance abuse and mental and physical health that present challenges to effective case management.”

- Stronger partnerships and collaboration between school and community resources and more attention to middle and high school students are essential, said stakeholders. “While college campuses face unique conditions, K-12 educational institutions would also benefit from an in-school community resource presence.”
- According to one participant, “Intersectionality [of experiences of victimization with gender, race, culture, language, sexual orientation, disability, community of origin, etc.] needs to be included in all policies, trainings, etc. We need to be viewing people in totality and be aware of how many different factors affect their experiences.”
- Stakeholders explained that individuals and families need support not only from the community, but also from each other. Sexual assault survivors, for example, need support from their partners, siblings, and parents. Several stated that assistance solely from an advocate is inadequate.
- Several participants noted that connections to healthcare services are critical.
- Commenters said there is still a lack of prevention education, including for faith communities, that addresses healthy relationships in a culturally competent way. They suggested communal approaches that connect with victims in traditional ways or familiar settings (e.g., a traditional healing ceremony or a community celebration).

Campus. Participants in conferrals reported a number of unmet needs on campuses.

- Stakeholders reported that there is still confusion over who has jurisdiction for sexual assaults – the school or local law enforcement – which can make it difficult for students to file a complaint.
- Commenters stated that bystander intervention programs need strengthening to increase awareness that bystanders can have an impact on stopping violence.
- Participants noted that there is confusion on campuses about how to interpret legislation and then develop responses and practices, such as campus judicial boards, that will comply with federal guidance.
- According to participants, colleges and universities need more collaboration with local victim advocates, and law enforcement needs more clarity about responding to sexual assault reports on campus. “When that collaboration is missing and law enforcement is clumsy, the result is confusion and retraumatization.”
- Stakeholders said they are seeing a demand for campuses to refer victims to local rape crisis centers and not only to on-campus “peer support” services.

3. Promising Practices in the Field

Evidence-based practices commonly arise from systematic evaluation of innovative actions taken by those who work day-to-day with survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Stakeholders told OVW about a number of practices they use that show promising results.

Marginalized and Underserved Populations. Many participants had found a promising approach in providing services that address the intersection of challenges facing victims who are marginalized by sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination.

- One stakeholder at a college or university explained the success she has had keeping in touch with Asian students who leave campus during vacation and breaks: she continues to provide services using online chat, Skype, and Google Hangout.
- One stakeholder discussed that in refugee communities, a lack of knowledge about statutory rape can be a problem. To handle it, she explained the success her agency has had by organizing community education and women's circles to educate parents about statutory rape.
- According to many commenters, having staff who speak other languages can improve outcomes; there is a great need for multiple language services.

Housing. "We don't have a shelter [in our jurisdiction] so we approach rental property owners and ask them to reduce their costs, then we subsidize the rent through Victims of Crime Act funding," said one participant.

Trauma-informed Care. One participant summarized a concept described by many others: "We have had great success in the switch to trauma-informed, voluntary services over the past few years in our direct services."

Involving Men in Preventing Gender-based Violence. Several stakeholders stated that a greater focus on engaging men has shown promise.

Involving Family Members. According to stakeholders, engaging a survivor's family and friends in the process of dealing with domestic violence has been successful, especially when the survivor wants the perpetrator to be held accountable for the violence and abuse.

Coordinated Community Response. Many participants expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of projects that involved coordination and collaboration among systems like criminal justice, health care, victim services, and child welfare.

Law Enforcement Training. One stakeholder emphasized the success they had had after providing training to law enforcement on recognizing the warning signs of potentially lethal acts of domestic violence (for example, that strangulation is a sign of imminent danger) and on collecting evidence to bring better cases.

4. Technical Assistance Needs

Conferral participants expressed great appreciation for OVW-funded technical assistance. They also requested the following:

In-person Trainings. There was general agreement that in-person events deliver greater overall benefits than online events because in-person events foster stronger connections among grantees who are doing similar work but are disconnected, in part due to great geographic distances.

Continuous Training. Stakeholders pointed out that the most effective technical assistance occurs more than once. They suggested that a good practice is to provide an introduction to a topic and then return for additional, more advanced training, especially training that includes extensive group discussion and case studies as opposed to didactic teaching.

Trauma-informed Care. Stakeholders said they needed assistance in authentically implementing trauma-informed care. "We have noticed that organizations state that their services are trauma-informed but [we] find that such service is not actually implemented throughout the organization. In addition, organizations are not familiar with organizational trauma and as a result, they are not cognizant of how trauma influences their own services."

Organizational Development. Smaller organizations reported needing technical assistance to improve organizational development and financial practices and how to raise funds and create trauma-informed spaces. "We need technical assistance on how to raise money so we can create a sustainable program without lobbying," which is prohibited with grant funds. Organizations in the U.S. territories in the Pacific said they need to build their capacity to provide training and technical assistance locally instead of relying on technical assistance organizations on the mainland.

Shared Calendar on TA2TA.org. One stakeholder suggested that technical assistance providers and grantees would benefit from an increased use of the shared calendar on the consolidated technical assistance website, www.TA2TA.org.

Additional Topics for Technical Assistance. Stakeholders suggested several other areas in which they need technical assistance, including:

- Working with perpetrators of violence;
- Assisting non-abusive family members of victims;
- Implementing a Coordinated Community Response; and
- Dealing with forced marriage.

5. Administration of Grants

This topic produced many specific suggestions to improve the administration of grants, though often the suggestions conflicted with statutory or regulatory mandates. For example, many grantees complained about restrictions on conferences and asked OVW for options that would require legislative changes.

Grant Management System (GMS). There were a number of comments and suggestions related to DOJ's GMS.

- GMS should expand the number and types of people who can officially sign grant documents, suggested one participant. "I think it would be more efficient and beneficial to all parties if the requirement that only [one high-level person representing the grantee's name be] printed on the Award Document was relaxed to allow for all [appropriate program management staff] to sign as they are allowed on most Sponsored Agreements."
- Changing names in GMS has been cumbersome and time consuming according to stakeholders. "Replacing the current admin [sic] contact in GMS with myself has been extremely difficult. Further, it seems former admin [sic] contacts cannot be deleted from the system."
- GMS alerts those whose names are in the system, but commenters stated that only a select few people associated with the grant are in the system. "We need more names in GMS so notifications are broader."

Reporting Requirements. According to a number of participants, the process for administering grants is unduly onerous. These grantees suggested reduced reporting requirements, though this would have adverse consequences for accountability and measuring progress.

Restrictions on How Funds Are Used. Grantees reported frustrations on several issues:

- Mortgage. "We should be able to use funds to pay the mortgage in our building. Not allowing funds to be used for mortgage is a problem."
- Conference Attendance. "Don't put a limit on the number of staff who can attend the National Conference on Sexual Assault."
- Food. "Allow us to pay for food and beverages at our events." This request was made multiple times, but DOJ does not allow funds to be spent on refreshments.
- Equipment. "Can't there be more flexibility for the purchase of equipment? If we purchase a laptop do we REALLY have to use it 100% of the time for VAWA-funded activity? We have multiple sources of funding and overlapping activity. It is inefficient to not share equipment across activities."

Interaction with Program Manager. "Communication with program managers has been very challenging at times." Participants said that the challenges include: non-responsiveness on the part of the grant manager; not knowing exactly who the program manager is; receiving conflicting information from GMS about who the program manager is.

Slowness in Approvals. This was raised most often in the context of budgets and grant adjustment notices). “What we’d like to see improved: Grant Adjustment Notices being approved per the 2 CFR 200 guideline – within 30 days – or the grantee gets notified in writing as to when it will be approved.” Many stakeholders complained about approvals taking from three to six months.

Planning Grants/Long-term Grants. “Planning grants . . . are needed to give communities the chance to deeply evaluate their specific needs for supervised visitation and build the relationships and collaborations that will be essential for long-term success.” Participants said that three-year grants are helpful for planning and continued services. In addition to one-time, short-term project grants, stakeholders requested more opportunities for longer-term funding. Stakeholders also requested a longer period between notification of a grant award and the beginning of the grant period: “Having a longer period would be helpful for planning and continuity of service.”

Other Suggestions from Participants:

- **Supervised Visitation.** “I feel it was a mistake to remove the requirement for visitation programs to have advisory boards” because safe visitation programs cannot be built in isolation, said one commenter.
- **Living Wage.** “OVW should require that all grant-funded positions, particularly the advocates and staff on the front lines, be provided a living wage. Staff turnover due to burn-out and low wages is endemic.” Participants stated that quality training, living wages, staffing at levels that allows for resilience instead of burn-out requires adequate funding, as well as guidance and support via technical assistance.
- **Standard Formats.** For solicitations, grantees recommend that OVW create standard formats for the Summary Data Sheet, Budget section, and Narrative to ensure applicants provide the right information in the best format.
- **Accountability.** Participants reported that training for grantees is good, but grantees continue to need oversight and connection with OVW to make sure they are implementing the training properly and using funding correctly.
- **Subawards.** “We need clear and direct guidance on subaward agreements and monitoring subrecipients.”
- **Modification Numbers.** “It would be wonderful if OVW included the modification number in the amendment chart to help grantees more easily find the newest approved [Grant Adjustment Notice].”
- **Diversity.** Commenters requested more diversity in peer reviewers, specifically more peer reviewers from culturally specific communities.

Part 2: OVW Policies and Actions That Correspond to Stakeholder Comments

This section discusses OVW activities that correspond to stakeholder comments and themes expressed during the conferral. The discussion describes progress achieved from August 2016 to August 2017, as well as planned future activity. In general the OVW responses fall into four types:

- Grant programs;
- Federal coordination;
- Technical assistance; and
- Special initiatives.

The FY 2018 President's Budget² identified four overarching OVW priorities, which reflect input from the conferral:

- Reducing the violent crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking;
- Supporting essential services for victims;
- Reaching underserved communities; and
- Ensuring meaningful evaluation of programs and implementation of evidence-based practices.

1. Housing

During every conferral session, stakeholders spoke about the importance of housing and the difficulty finding any housing options for victims. It was clear that stakeholders view housing as a central concern for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. During the relevant time period, OVW supported a number of housing-related activities.

Grant Programs

- **Transitional Housing.** OVW's [Transitional Housing Assistance Program](#) provided 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.

Federal Coordination

- **Interagency Council on Homelessness.** During the relevant time period, OVW continued to serve on the Domestic Violence Subcommittee of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Family Violence Prevention Services Office. As a member of the Domestic Violence Subcommittee, OVW participated in developing [criteria and benchmarks for ending family homelessness](#),

² Office on Violence Against Women FY 2018 Budget Request at a Glance, available at www.justice.gov/jmd/page/file/968291/download

which were released in January 2017 and updated in July 2017. OVW intends to continue its commitment to collaborating 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 by the Subcommittee.

- **Nuisance Ordinances.** In 2016, OVW and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity collaborated to raise awareness about the unintended consequences of nuisance abatement and crime-free housing ordinances. These local laws can cause undue harm to victims of domestic and sexual violence and stalking. They may, for example, require landlords to evict tenants who have called 911 three times, even when those tenants are victims of crime who are in urgent need of police or medical assistance. In November 2016, following HUD's [release of Fair Housing Act guidance](#) on nuisance abatement ordinances, OVW and the DOJ Office on Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) convened law enforcement representatives for a discussion on keeping housing both safe and fair.
- **VAWA Housing Protections.** In October 2016, OVW and HUD collaborated on HUD's issuance of a [new rule](#) to protect victims' housing rights under VAWA 2013. OVW also began a technical assistance project to educate housing providers, legal assistance providers, and others on the requirements of VAWA and other fair housing issues, including HUD's guidance on nuisance abatement ordinances.

Technical Assistance

- **SafeHousingPartnerships.org.** During the conferral period, OVW participated in forming 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 domestic violence and homeless service providers. It provides national training, technical assistance, and resource development on domestic violence and housing. In May 2017, the Consortium released a [resource-intensive website](#).
- **Safe Housing Needs Assessment.** The Consortium launched the Safe Housing Needs Assessment in July 2017 to gather input from domestic violence, sexual violence, and housing service providers about promising practices and the extent to which the fields coordinate with each other. The results are expected to provide communities with better tools and strategies to improve coordination between domestic violence and sexual assault service providers and housing service providers.
- **Transitional Housing Snapshot.** To make its training and technical assistance on housing issues as useful as possible, OVW supported [Transitional Housing for Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence: A 2014-15 Snapshot](#). The 12-chapter report, published in December 2016 by the National Center on Family Homelessness at the American Institutes for Research, found that major challenges facing housing providers involve tailoring services to meet their clients' needs and coordinating among funding sources.

2. Criminal Justice Response

Conferral participants frequently expressed concern about the sometimes limited understanding law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges have about responding to and investigating domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. During the conferral period, OVW engaged in multifaceted approaches to strengthen the criminal justice response to these crimes.

Grant Programs

- **Discretionary Grants.** The [Improving Criminal Justice Responses Program](#) encouraged governments and courts to treat domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking as serious violations requiring the coordinated involvement of the entire criminal justice system. Award funds can be used for a wide range of activities that strengthen collaboration among criminal justice and community-based agencies. OVW has requested dedicated funds within this program for a firearms initiative in the President's Budgets for 2016, 2017, 2018.
- **Formula Grants.** The majority of funds available from OVW's largest grant program, [STOP \(Services*Officers*Training*Prosecution\) Formula Grants Program](#), is used to address the criminal justice system. Twenty-five percent of these funds must be allocated by the state for law enforcement; 20% for prosecution; 5% to courts; and 30% for victim services. The remainder is discretionary funding to be used to meet the unique needs of each state relating to the apprehension, prosecution, and adjudication of persons committing violent crimes against women.

Technical Assistance

- **PreventDVGunViolence.org.** The National Domestic Violence and Firearms Resource Center, a technical assistance project with the Battered Women's Justice Project, implemented a resource center on the intersection of domestic violence and firearms. In late 2016, OVW unveiled a [website](#) that centralizes information about guns and domestic violence. The site can help attorneys, court personnel, law enforcement, and communities that want to implement comprehensive enforcement of domestic violence-related firearms prohibitions.
- **Balancing Victim Privacy and Policy Accountability.** With support from OVW, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) hosted a roundtable in 2016 to discuss how law enforcement's use of body worn cameras presents opportunities to improve police response to violence against women, as well as complex challenges to protecting victim safety and privacy. In January 2017, IACP, with input from OVW, released a report about the roundtable, [Deliberations from the IACP National Forum on Body-Worn Cameras and Violence Against Women](#).
- **Maintaining Privacy and Safety for Victims in Open Police Data Initiatives.** In 2016, OVW and the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) brought together victim advocates, experts on victim privacy and safety, researchers, and data experts to discuss the utility of open data and how police open data initiatives can affect victims' privacy and safety. NNEDV, in collaboration with OVW and the Police Foundation, released a January

2017 report [How Law Enforcement Agencies Releasing Open Data Can Protect Victim Safety and Privacy](#) and made available a series of [resources](#) on the issue.

Special Initiatives

- **Gender-biased Policing.** In 2016, OVW partnered with the Battered Women's Justice Project to convene a roundtable discussion with experts in law enforcement, advocacy, and criminal justice research. These stakeholders discussed and developed concrete recommendations and strategies for implementing guidance issued by the Attorney General in 2015. In October 2016, OVW and the DOJ Office on Victims for Crime awarded \$9.85 million to nine grantees to implement the guidance and evaluate their results.
- **Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Demonstration Initiative.** This multiyear project, begun in 2013, continued implementing and evaluating strategies to reduce domestic violence homicides by identifying potential victims and monitoring high-risk offenders. During the conferral period, four new sites – Contra Costa County, California; Pitt County, North Carolina; Miami, Florida; and Winnebago, Illinois – were selected to implement the Lethality Assessment Program and researchers are conducting a rigorous assessment of its effectiveness.
- **Firearms Pilot Site Initiative.** The Firearms Pilot Site Initiative was launched in 2016 to give communities an opportunity to develop, implement, and test improved practices in their civil and criminal justice systems to prevent abusers from using firearms to kill or injure domestic violence victims, children, police officers, and others in the community. The Initiative is intended to help selected communities address their identified challenges in a manner that is best suited to their unique needs and characteristics.

3. American Indian and Alaska Native Victims

Addressing the high rates of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking against American Indian and Alaska Native Victims is a longstanding OVW priority and was raised during multiple conferral sessions. OVW undertook many applicable initiatives during the conferral period.

Grant Programs

- **Tribal Governments.** During the relevant time period, OVW participated in the DOJ coordinated grant process, created in 2009. The [Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation](#) (CTAS) encompassed most of DOJ's tribal government-specific grant programs in an effort to decrease the number of required applications tribes and tribal consortia must submit to receive grants. OVW accepts applications for its larger grant program for tribes, the Tribal Governments Program, through CTAS.
- **Tribal Coalitions.** The [Grants to Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions Program](#) supports the development and operation of nonprofit, nongovernmental tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions. During the conferral period, it provided education, support, and technical assistance to enhance tribes' response to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking.

- **Tribal Sexual Assault Services.** The [Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program](#) awarded grants to enhance the ability of tribes to respond to violent crimes against Indian women, enhance victim safety, and develop education and prevention strategies.
- **Alaska Capacity Building Focus.** OVW's Tribal Affairs Division focused on the significant needs of Alaska Native Villages, which have unique challenges. For example, many villages are accessible only by boat or float plane, and jurisdictional complications abound. During the conferral period and into the future, OVW will work to improve the capacity of Alaska-based tribal nonprofit organizations, tribal coalitions, and tribal technical assistance providers. The goal is to optimize the impact of OVW grant projects in local tribal villages.
- **Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction.** OVW continued to administer its [Grants to Tribal Governments to Exercise Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction](#), first launched in 2016, to assist tribes in exercising tribal criminal jurisdiction recognized in VAWA 2013. OVW also funded TA to help tribes implement special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction in their communities.

Federal Coordination

- **Annual Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation.** Each year, OVW holds a Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation to gain a better understanding of the challenges, needs, and successes in supporting American Indian and Alaska Native victims. OVW submits a [Report to Congress](#) annually on recommendations made during these government-to-government consultations, which are required by law to address the federal administration of tribal programs established under VAWA and subsequent legislation. The 2016 consultation took place in December 2016 at the reservation of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians in Palm Springs, California. The 2017 consultation took place October 3-4, 2017, on the reservation of the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation in Fountain Hills, Arizona.
- **Coordinating North American Leadership to Respond to Violence Against Indigenous Women.** In October 2016, the [North American Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls](#) met for the first time. DOJ leadership joined the ministers of justice from Canada and Mexico, along with OVW and other government representatives. The three nations committed to work together to strengthen efforts to reduce trafficking of indigenous women and girls across borders and exchange knowledge to prevent and respond to violence against indigenous women and girls.

Technical Assistance

- **The Technical Assistance Outreach Initiative to Strengthen Indian Tribes' Capacity to Address Violence Against Women.** Through this initiative, OVW sought to build the capacity of tribal governments, tribal justice system professionals, and tribal victim services organizations to respond effectively to sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking. In future years, OVW will specifically focus technical assistance support toward tribes that have had minimal success accessing OVW grant funding.
- **Alaska Tribal Governments Program Project Implementation Workshop.** During 2017, OVW planned its first Alaska-based workshop for all active Alaska Tribal Government Program grantees. This workshop, held in December 2017, focused on project implementation with "real-time" grants administration tasks, including project and budget

modifications. The workshop also included tribal leaders who discussed their roles, sustainability of grant project efforts, resource realignment, and maximizing community strengths.

Special Initiatives

- **Native Men's Gathering.** In August 2016, OVW gathered American Indian and Alaska Native men at the Oneida Nation, Green Bay, Wisconsin, to hear their perspectives and to discuss the work they are doing to reduce violence against women. The conversation centered on moving forward: motivating men to lead efforts to foster nonviolence and hold other men accountable for change, as well as addressing topics like responsibility and forgiveness. The proceedings were summarized in [*Native Men's Gathering: Experiences that Shape Behaviors and Beliefs about Violence Against Women*](#). In fall 2017, OVW facilitated a second Native Men's Gathering, which focused on identifying promising practices and recommendations for various audiences such as funders and policymakers, victim service providers, non-tribal organizations, and tribal leaders.
- **Developing Multimedia Resources on Violence Against Alaska Natives.** OVW collaborated with the DOJ Office for Victims of Crime and U.S. Attorneys to create [*A Healing Journey for Alaska Natives*](#), an award-winning series of videos designed for victim service providers, justice professionals, and others to illustrate the challenges that tribes face in responding to domestic and sexual violence against Alaska Natives, and the supportive role of culture and tradition in pursuing safety, justice, and healing. The videos and accompanying resource materials present concrete strategies for enhancing the response to violence against Alaska Natives.
- **Alaska-based SAFESTAR Program.** Through the [*National Indian Country Clearinghouse on Sexual Assault*](#), OVW began developing an Alaska-based SAFESTAR program during the conferral period. SAFESTAR stands for Sexual Assault Forensic Examinations, Services, Training, Advocacy, and Resources. It is a training program that equips community members to help respond to sexual assaults in remote areas that lack adequate resources and services.

4. Legal Assistance and Court-related Services

Another common theme heard during the conferrals was related to the legal assistance victims need to navigate the either or both of the civil and criminal justice systems. For example, victims often need legal assistance to obtain a protection order, deal with child custody issues, and understand civil and criminal court procedures.

Grant Programs

- The [*Legal Assistance for Victims Program*](#) awarded grants to organizations to strengthen civil and criminal legal assistance programs for victims who are seeking relief in legal matters relating to or arising from sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking.

- The [Justice for Families Program](#) provided funding to improve the response of the civil and criminal justice system to families with a history of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, or in cases involving allegations of child sexual abuse.
- Due to changes made by VAWA 2013, STOP and Rural Program grantees can use grant funds to provide legal assistance for victims.

Federal Coordination

- **Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable.** During the conferral period, OVW served on the federal [Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable](#), which raises awareness among federal agencies of how civil legal aid can help advance a wide range of federal objectives, including family stability, housing, and public safety. The roundtable has produced a [toolkit](#) and serves as a central resource for reference materials.

Technical Assistance

- **Domestic Violence Mentor Courts.** In 2017, OVW announced new courts participating in the [Domestic Violence Mentor Court Technical Assistance Initiative](#) to spread best practices for domestic violence courts. The program recognizes well-established specialized courts and enables them to guide other courts and court-based programs that wish to significantly improve their court responses to domestic violence cases and ensure victim safety and offender accountability.
- **Mediation Roundtable Report.** In August 2016, OVW partnered with two technical assistance providers, Futures Without Violence and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, to convene a roundtable with judges and others about the complexities surrounding the use of mediation in domestic violence cases. Participants agreed that mediation can potentially meet the needs of domestic violence victims if it is voluntary, informed, includes strong safeguards, and is preceded by appropriate screening and comprehensive training for mediators, all of which is described in the Roundtable's summary report, [Judicial Roundtable Discussion: Mediation](#).

Special Initiatives

- **Family Court Enhancement Project.** In 2013, OVW launched the [Family Court Enhancement Project \(FCEP\)](#). The project was then intended to help court systems and communities increase their ability to make sound decisions about child custody and parenting time. In January 2017, the project produced [16 guiding principles for effectively addressing these issues](#) and a report describing how the principles can be used in day-to-day court operations. A website is now in development with a launch date expected in the coming year. The site will promote replication of FCEP practices through access to web-based trainings, publications, and project profiles. In addition, the technical assistance partners, lead judges, and site representatives will provide workshops on the guiding principles.

5. Marginalized and Underserved Populations

People who have traditionally been outside the mainstream of victim services have emerged as a critical concern for OVW stakeholders as expressed during several of the conferral sessions. Survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking from culturally specific communities frequently confront unique challenges, such as linguistic and cultural barriers, when seeking assistance. The populations mentioned most frequently during the conferral sessions were immigrants and refugees; people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT); persons with disabilities; and non-English speakers.

Grant Programs

- The [Grants to Enhance Culturally Specific Services for Victims Program](#) provided funding to community-based organizations that address critical victim needs in a manner that affirms the victim's culture. This included partnerships between culturally specific programs and victim service programs.
- The [Sexual Assault Services Culturally Specific Program](#) made 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](#) was specifically focused on marginalization populations, such as Deaf, LGBT, disabled, and American Indian/Alaska Native communities.
- The [STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program](#) set aside 10% of victim services funds for culturally specific populations. States allocated the funding based on the diverse needs in their communities.
- The [Training and Services to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities Program](#) supported education, cross training, services, capacity building, and the establishment of multidisciplinary teams at the local level to address violence against women with disabilities.
- The [Consolidated Grant Program to Address Children and Youth Experiencing Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and Engage Men and Boys as Allies](#) funded projects designed to provide Coordinated Community Responses that support child, youth, and young adult victims through direct services, training, coordination and collaboration, effective intervention, treatment, response, and prevention strategies.
- The [Enhanced Services and Training to End Abuse in Later Life Program](#) (ALL Program) made awards that recognized that individuals who are 50 years of age or older who are victims of abuse in later life (including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, exploitation, and neglect), face unique barriers to receiving assistance.
- In FY 2016, OVW funded the Nevada Office of the Attorney General to support a pilot project to identify efficient and effective ways to implement state projects on elder abuse. Local projects in Clark and Washoe counties will inform a new statewide approach focusing on rural areas that may not have the capacity to sustain an ALL Program grant.

Federal Coordination

- **Access to Lifesaving Services.** In August 2016, the Attorney General and Secretaries of HUD and HHS [issued a joint letter](#) affirming that, under existing law, immigrants may not be denied certain services necessary to protect life or safety, such as emergency shelter and short-term housing assistance, on the basis of their immigration status.
- **Limited English Proficiency.** OVW programs encouraged grantees to allocate funds to support the provision of language access for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons and requires grantees to take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP persons have meaningful access to their programs or activities. In 2016, OVW and the DOJ Civil Rights Division coordinated a day-long training for OVW staff on the importance of language access for LEP persons. In conjunction with the training, OVW ran a one-month Twitter campaign highlighting the value of planning and providing language access for LEP persons and related information available from the DOJ Civil Rights Division.
- **Impact of Criminalization.** OVW convened a roundtable that examined how criminal justice policies impact the lives of African-American women and girls because they are disproportionately survivors of gender-based violence and over-represented among women in criminal and juvenile correctional facilities. OVW released a related report, [Impact of Incarceration and Mandatory Minimums on Survivors](#), in January 2017.

Technical Assistance

- **Culturally Specific Services.** Several OVW technical assistance providers helped culturally specific, community-based organizations address the critical needs of survivors in a manner that effectively addressed culture, language, and communication. They also helped mainstream service providers strengthen their work with communities of color, immigrant communities, and faith communities. During the conferral period, OVW's technical assistance providers included the Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership, TSNE MissionWorks (formerly Third Sector New England), the National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault, the Women of Color Network, Casa de Esperanza, the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence, Black Women's Blueprint, the Indigenous Women's Resource Center, and the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community.
- **Accessibility.** In 2016, OVW placed a special condition on all technical assistance awards requiring technical assistance providers to attend a training to ensure that their products, meetings, trainings, and webinars are accessible to individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals.
- **Disabilities.** During the conferral period, OVW provided funding to the Vera Institute of Justice to maintain a [website dedicated exclusively to ending the abuse of people with disabilities](#). 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 area, as well as best-practice materials created by each project.

Special Initiatives

- **National Deaf Service Line.** In January 2017, OVW awarded \$500,000 to the Center on Victimization and Safety at the Vera Institute of Justice to plan a National Deaf Service Line that will enable Deaf victims to speak directly with a Deaf advocate or an individual who is fluent in their preferred mode of communication via video phone – any time, day or night.

6. Sexual Assault

Reducing the violent and devastating crime of sexual assault is consistently an OVW priority, and many different issues about sexual assault were raised during the conferrals. Since the passage of VAWA in 1994, OVW grant programs have supported efforts to respond to, reduce, and prevent sexual assault. However, OVW intensified efforts to address this crime during the conferral period.

Grant Programs

- **Formula Grants.** All four of OVW's formula grant programs supported efforts to respond to sexual assault. The formula grant programs are: [STOP Violence Against Women](#); [Sexual Assault Services](#); [State and Territorial Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Coalitions](#); and [Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions](#). Grants awarded through the Sexual Assault Services Program must be dedicated to direct intervention and related assistance for victims of sexual assault. The STOP Violence Against Women formula grants require that not less than 20% of the total amount granted to a state or territory be dedicated to meaningfully addressing sexual assault.
- **Discretionary Grants.** Some discretionary grants awarded during the conferral period have a particular focus on sexual assault or dedicate a portion of funds to address sexual assault. The [Sexual Assault Services Culturally Specific Program](#) and [Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program](#) are examples of the former. The [Improving Criminal Justice Responses Program](#) and the [Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence and Stalking Assistance Program](#) are statutorily mandated to spend at least 25% of appropriated funds on projects that meaningfully address sexual assault.

Federal Coordination

- **Campus Sexual Assault Climate Survey.** In October 2016, OVW created an [Action Packet](#) with tools to help schools conduct climate surveys and held webinars for students and administrators on how to administer those surveys and use the results to make meaningful changes at their schools. This built on OVW's partnership with the DOJ Bureau of Justice Statistics to develop and validate a [tool to assess sexual assault victimization](#) at their schools. The [Campus Climate Survey Validation Study](#) released in early 2016, shares the findings from a nine-school pilot study involving more than 23,000 undergraduates. OVW is now funding Research Triangle Institute International to provide technical assistance for colleges and universities on how to conduct climate surveys.
- **Historically Black Colleges and Universities Sexual Assault Climate Survey.** After the initial Campus Climate Survey Validation Study pilot program, OVW partnered with the DOJ National Institute of Justice and HHS Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to

determine how to adapt and apply the survey to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The agencies worked to make the survey more culturally specific, modifying questions to reflect the unique experiences of minority students and improving the analysis of survey responses. OVW began piloting a new, culturally relevant climate survey on several HBCU campuses in fall 2017.

Technical Assistance

- **Sexual Assault Kits.** Professionals inside and outside the justice system must work together to take inventory of sexual assault kits, test the evidence they contain, follow investigative leads in associated cases, reach out to victims, and do so in a way that balances public safety and victim safety. In order to help state and local jurisdictions do this, OVW issued a [white paper on sexual assault kit testing](#) initiatives and non-investigative kits. The white paper, issued in January 2017, briefly describes alternative reporting options and identifies resources on providing victims with medical forensic care, processing sexual assault kits, investigating the associated cases, and reaching out to victims.
- **Sexual Assault Victim Intervention Services Technical Assistance Center.** OVW is in the process of establishing a Sexual Assault Victim Intervention Services Technical Assistance Center to provide consistent, in-depth support to state and territory grant administrators, state and territorial coalitions, and local programs on how to provide and sustain comprehensive sexual assault victim services. OVW issued a [solicitation](#) in 2017 and will provide additional information in 2018.
- **Child Sexual Abuse.** In partnership with the Just Beginnings Collaborative, OVW and the DOJ Office for Victims of Crime hosted a roundtable in December 2016 to facilitate a critical discussion about drawing on the leadership of survivors in working to end child sexual abuse, while highlighting the need for community-based, culturally specific approaches.
- **Addressing Gender-Based Violence on College Campuses: Guide to a Comprehensive Model.** In February 2017, OVW's Campus Technical Assistance and Resource Project issued a [comprehensive guide for addressing gender-based violence on campuses](#). The guide is based on evidence and research about building interventions and prevention programs on campuses and uses survivor-centered approaches that foster community involvement and enhance security and investigation.
- **Campus Student Conduct Process.** To better understand current campus student conduct practices regarding sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking, OVW funded the Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the Victim Rights Law Center to convene two roundtable discussions in late 2015. A [summary of the roundtable](#), released in February 2017, contains recommendations and next steps made by national experts and practitioners.
- **A Culturally Specific Perspective: The HBCU Story.** Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) occupy a critical space in African-American communities. They offer an extraordinarily rich environment for pioneering culturally specific violence prevention, and they foster solidarity and innovative responses among advocates working to end sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking, both within and outside African-American communities. During the conferral period, OVW's Campus Technical Assistance and Resource Project [released an overview](#) of the issues facing HBCUs, how HBCUs are

proactively responding to domestic and sexual violence, and resources available for HBCUs to undertake this work.

- **Culturally Specific Prevention Curriculum.** OVW collaborated with Black Women's Blueprint to develop a culturally specific bystander intervention curriculum that HBCUs can use to prevent violence against women on their campuses. The curriculum's goal was then intended to empower students, faculty, and campus personnel to use culturally-specific intervention strategies to prevent violence. OVW will conduct pilot trainings on the curriculum at two HBCUs.
- **Restorative Justice.** A roundtable on restorative justice practices explored community-based alternatives to handling gender-based violence. Restorative justice approaches can offer communities the opportunity to take responsibility for safety and for survivors to take an active role in co-creating that safety. The Center for Court Innovation published a report from the roundtable, [Can Restorative Practices Address Intimate Partner Violence](#), and OVW is pursuing options for a related demonstration initiative on college and university campuses.

Special Initiatives

- **Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative.** Organizations that serve both victims of domestic violence and victims of sexual assault face special challenges to effectively serving sexual assault survivors. OVW launched the Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative (SADI) to delve deeply and systematically into the outreach, services, and community partnership of such organizations. [The SADI final report](#), reflecting lessons learned by six demonstration sites, was published by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center in 2017. Additional technical assistance is planned for 2018 and 2019 and will include intensive onsite assistance to state coalitions, trainings and roundtables, webinars, and publications covering a range of topics identified as crucial to enhancing sexual assault services.
- **Sexual Assault Justice Initiative.** OVW, in partnership with Aequitas: The Prosecutor's Resource on Violence Against Women, is implementing the Sexual Assault Justice Initiative in seven sites to advance and measure effective strategies for prosecuting sexual assault. Sites will use the Response to Sexual Violence for Prosecutors (RSVP) model, which includes performance measures for sexual assault prosecution that look beyond conviction rates to assess what makes for a successful prosecution. Through a grant from the DOJ National Institute of Justice, the RAND Corporation is conducting an evaluation of the RSVP model.

7. Rural Jurisdictions

To help ensure that rural survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking have adequate access to support services, OVW took the following actions during the relevant time period:

Grant Programs

- OVW's [Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence and Stalking Assistance Program](#) awarded 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.

Federal Coordination

- **Bakken Region Report.** OVW collaborated with the DOJ National Institute of Justice to support research on the impact of the growing oil industry in the Bakken region of North Dakota on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Findings from the research were published in a [November 2016 report](#).

8. Incarcerated Victims

The population of incarcerated women has grown, and conferral participants requested more resources for helping these women, the majority of whom have experienced trauma in their lives. During the relevant time period, OVW worked to support incarcerated victims of violence against women in several ways.

Grant Programs

- **STOP Program Funding.** VAWA 2013 added a purpose area to the STOP Program that was then intended to allow grantees to use funding to develop, enlarge, or strengthen programs addressing sexual assault against men, women, and youth in correctional and detention settings.

Technical Assistance

- **Supporting Incarcerated Victims.** Since 2011, OVW has funded Just Detention International (JDI) in their efforts to support incarcerated victims of domestic and sexual violence. During the relevant time period, JDI began developing and updating resource materials for victims and those who work with them. These materials include a state-by-state guide for supporting incarcerated victims, a self-help publication for incarcerated victims, a webinar series on providing services to underserved populations, mini-guides for special population groups, and a guide on facilitating psycho-educational groups inside prisons and jails.

9. Services, Responses, and Prevention

In addition to the most commonly mentioned topics that arose during the conferral sessions, a cluster of issues related to effective services, systemic responses, and prevention were frequently raised. OVW responses included the following efforts.

Victim Advocacy

- **Reflections from the Field on Victim/Survivor Advocacy.** Stakeholders emphasized that victim advocacy requires advocates to address the needs of all survivors at the individual,

system, and community levels. OVW convened a roundtable of victim advocates in October 2016 to hear about current advocacy practices and trends. The convening also delved into barriers that impede the provision of effective advocacy and obstacles that compromise efforts to engage in more robust, systems-level advocacy. A [report from the roundtable](#) was released in January 2017.

Multidisciplinary Teams

- **Coordinated, Comprehensive, Community-based Responses.** The intersecting and overlapping aspects of victimization were common themes during conferral sessions. Stakeholders reported that their most effective efforts take a holistic approach and involve comprehensive and multidisciplinary teams who work collaboratively to create solutions to crime problems. Combining ongoing safety planning, crisis intervention, bilingual and bicultural case management, translation services, emergency housing, and legal services as part of a Coordinated Community Response is an evidence-based practice.³ Incorporating Coordinated Community Responses and other multidisciplinary teams was an important part of many OVW grant programs during the conferral period.

Trauma-Informed Approaches

- **Trauma-Informed Project Report.** Conferral participants noted that trauma-informed approaches can be viewed and applied in different ways. To help OVW stakeholders gain clarity on the issue, OVW commissioned a project that was then intended to capture different perceptions of trauma-informed policies and practices. OVW also held a half-day training for all OVW staff. The [project and its resulting report](#) were developed by the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault with OVW funding.

Primary Prevention

- **Engaging Men and Boys in Violence Prevention.** Many stakeholders discussed the importance of reaching out to men and boys. In August 2016, OVW convened a roundtable to discuss barriers and gaps in current strategies for engaging men and boys to help improve the response to violence against women. The roundtable resulted in several specific

³ Examples of studies showing the effectiveness of Coordinated Community Responses:

Beldin, K., Lauritsen, A., D'Souza, H., & Moyer, B. (2015). Citations and convictions: one community's coordinated response to intimate partner violence & efforts toward offender accountability. *Social Sciences*, 4(2), 421–433.

Greeson, M. R., & Campbell, R. (2015). Coordinated community efforts to respond to sexual assault: a national study of Sexual Assault Response Team implementation. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30(14), 2470–2487.

Greeson, M. R., Campbell, R., Bybee, D., & Kennedy, A. C. (2016). Improving the community response to sexual assault: an empirical examination of the effectiveness of Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs). *Psychology of Violence*, 6(2), 280–291.

DePrince, A. P., Belknap, J., Labus, J. S., Buckingham, S. E., & Gover, A. R. (2012). The impact of victim-focused outreach on criminal legal system outcomes following police-reported intimate partner abuse. *Violence Against Women*, 18(8), 861–881.

Family Justice Center Alliance. (2013). *Final evaluation results: Phase II California Family Justice Initiative statewide evaluation*. San Diego, CA: Alliance for HOPE International.

Shepard, M. F., & Pence, E. L. (Eds.). (1999). *Coordinating Community Responses to Domestic Violence: Lessons from Duluth and Beyond (Vol. 12)*. Sage Publications.

recommendations, which can be found in [Where We've Been, Where We're Going: Mobilizing Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-Based Violence](#), a summary of the roundtable.

10. Administration of Grants

During the conferral period, OVW took the following actions or planned future activity related to stakeholder comments about the administration of grants:

Quarterly Listening Sessions. Starting in 2018, OVW will begin quarterly listening sessions with stakeholders and gather frequently asked questions to which answers can be compiled and shared. The sessions will give grantees and OVW the opportunity to explore issues of mutual interest and provide regular feedback without waiting for the next biennial conferral. The schedule for these sessions and information about how to join will be available on OVW's website.

Grants Management System. Many conferral participants commented on challenges with the DOJ Grant Management System (GMS) used to process and manage grants. GMS is maintained by the DOJ Office of Justice Programs and is currently undergoing an overhaul. In December 2016, OJP initiated a Business Process Improvement committee to create "GMS 2.0," which would resolve, among other issues, many of the concerns raised during the conferral. OVW is actively participating in this process.

Grantee Web Page. During 2017, OVW began a review of its [Grantee webpage](#) to update documents and consolidate grant management information so resources are easier to find and use. In addition, the OVW website's [Grantee Contacts webpage](#) was updated in 2017. Like the improvements to GMS, updates to OVW's website will also respond to many of grant-related concerns voiced during the conferral.

Responding to Victims. Some conferral participants expressed frustration with contacting OVW and other federal offices for help dealing with their own victimization. In April 2017, OVW established a Responding to Victims Working Group to determine how to best help the hundreds of victims who call OVW seeking direct support services. (OVW does not provide direct services.) OVW updated its website to clarify OVW's role and refer victims to national and local crisis response hotlines and organizations. The working group facilitated a mandatory training to ensure that staff answering victim calls are prepared to offer support and refer victims to appropriate resources.

Serving as Peer Reviewers of OVW Grants. Stakeholders specifically requested that OVW recruit more diverse peer reviewers. Serving as a peer reviewer is also one of the best ways to learn more about the OVW grant application process. OVW receives many hundreds of grant applications each year and relies on expert reviewers to contribute assessments of the quality of the applications. During the conferral period, OVW encouraged grantees and other stakeholders to register as potential reviewers. OVW maintains an extensive cadre of peer reviewers and continually undertakes outreach efforts to broaden the list of reviewers. More information about becoming a peer reviewer can be found on OVW's [Peer Review page](#).

Alaska Native Villages Capacity Building. OVW's focus on supporting Alaska Native Villages included examining the grant administration process as part of an effort to accommodate the unique environmental conditions, lack of resources, and language and cultural barriers in Alaska Native Villages. During the relevant time period, OVW consolidated these grants into one portfolio managed by one program specialist who will work closely with grantees and technical assistance providers to coordinate efforts. As noted on pages 17 and 18, OVW also began a technical assistance initiative focused on Alaska Native Villages.

Training for Grantees. During the relevant time period, OVW began refreshing its [Training and Technical Assistance webpage](#) to consolidate information and locate resources in a more logical and user-friendly manner for grantees seeking assistance after receiving a grant award. In addition, a number of trainings took place to help potential applicants, interested organizations, grantees, and others apply for and manage their grants:

- **Solicitation Webinars.** OVW began creating webinars for potential applicants to help them understand the requirements of solicitations and thus submit more viable applications. The webinars were published on OVW's Training and Technical Assistance web page.
- **New Grantee Orientation.** Within the first months of receipt of an award, new grantees must attend in-person or web-based training on how to administer their grants, including how to complete grant reporting requirements. OVW continued to improve these trainings during the conferral period. In addition, OVW offered ongoing technical assistance through a series of web-based trainings.
- **TA2TA.org.** In 2016, OVW expanded the TA2TA.org website. It was originally created to enhance coordination of OVW's technical assistance projects, and now provides additional information for grantees and potential applicants.

Measuring Effectiveness. OVW uses a rigorous process for collecting, reviewing, and cleaning grantee data and ensuring that the data are valid and reliable measures of grantees' activities. To help grantees understand these reporting requirements, OVW supported training through the Measuring Effectiveness Initiative, which is operated by the [Muskie School of Public Services at the University of Southern Maine](#). Four trainings were held in 2016 with several more scheduled for 2017. The forms grantees complete as part of their progress report contain ample numeric and narrative data that, when synthesized across programs and grantees, offer a vivid picture of the scope and impact of OVW-funded work. OVW works with the Muskie School to analyze grantee data and compile it for biennial reports to Congress, the most recent of which was [published in February 2017](#).

Conclusion

It was common for stakeholders to preface their conferral comments with an expression of appreciation for VAWA and OVW and the lifeline that grant awards provide to their communities.

While the conferral sessions were intended to be a major listening opportunity for OVW, they also gave stakeholders an opportunity to ask OVW questions about federal rules and policies. In addition, they were an opportunity for attendees to connect with one another and learn that their concerns were shared by others from across the United States.

OVW prioritizes hearing from stakeholders throughout the year and takes varied approaches to do so. The conferral process, however, offers a unique and meaningful way to share and receive information.

OVW greatly values the input from stakeholders and thanks all conferral participants for their time, energy, insight, and commitment to ending violence against women.

Appendix: Conferral Topics and Dates

Online Topical Conferrals, Public

1. Emerging Trends, September 13, 2016

What are you seeing arise – both the good and the bad – in the field? How are you responding to these trends? What do you think OVW should do in response to these trends?

2. Unmet Needs, September 27, 2016

What are the key issues in your community that are not fully addressed? What populations in your community are unserved or marginalized? What are you doing to address these needs? What do you think OVW can do to help?

3. Promising Practices in the Field, October 4, 2016

What strategies have you identified as particularly effective in addressing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking? Are you having success doing something new or different? Have you measured that success or documented your innovative promising practice?

4. Technical Assistance Needs, October 12, 2016

What needs do you have that are not well addressed by existing OVW technical assistance? What technical assistance is working well? What technical assistance or training is needed by other members of your Coordinated Community Response/sexual assault response team?

5. Administration of Grants, October 26, 2016

What is most difficult or frustrating from your point of view? Have changes in grant administration over the last two years been helpful? What would you like to see improved? What is working well?

6. All Previous Topics, November 2, 2016

If you missed any of the previous sessions, this one will cover all five topics: Emerging issues, unmet needs, promising practices, technical assistance, and the administration of grants.

Conferrals for Key Stakeholder Groups, Invitation-only

1. Technical Assistance Providers, November 18, 2015

In-Person, All Technical Assistance Providers Meeting, Bethesda, Maryland

2. State and Territorial Coalitions, January 12, 2016

Webinar, Bi-monthly OVW/State and Territorial Coalitions Call

3. Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions, February 10, 2016

In-Person, Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition New Grantee Orientation, San Diego, California

4. STOP and SASP State Formula Grant Administrators and State and Territorial Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions, March 29, 2016

In-Person, STOP and SASP Administrators and State and Territory Coalition Directors Joint Meeting, Rosemont, Illinois

5. Culturally Specific Service Providers and Community-Based Programs, August 24, 2016

In-Person, Culturally Specific Services Program Institute, Denver, Colorado