



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

May 12, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are pleased to submit the Office on Violence Against Women's (OVW) *Conferral on the Violence Against Women Act 2018-2019* biennial report to Congress. This report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives is required pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. 113-4 (codified at 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(15)). 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, 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, the enclosed report describes the input OVW received through email comments and four conferral sessions held between September 2019 and December 2019. This 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.

Please do not hesitate to contact this office if you have any questions regarding this report or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Prim Escalona".

Prim F. Escalona
Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

May 12, 2020

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

Dear Congressman Jordan:

We are pleased to submit the Office on Violence Against Women's (OVW) *Conferral on the Violence Against Women Act 2018-2019* biennial report to Congress. This report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives is required pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. 113-4 (codified at 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(15)). 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, 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, the enclosed report describes the input OVW received through email comments and four conferral sessions held between September 2019 and December 2019. This 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.

Please do not hesitate to contact this office if you have any questions regarding this report or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Prim Escalona".

Prim F. Escalona
Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

May 12, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are pleased to submit the Office on Violence Against Women's (OVW) *Conferral on the Violence Against Women Act 2018-2019* biennial report to Congress. This report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives is required pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. 113-4 (codified at 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(15)). 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, 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, the enclosed report describes the input OVW received through email comments and four conferral sessions held between September 2019 and December 2019. This 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.

Please do not hesitate to contact this office if you have any questions regarding this report or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Prim Escalona".

Prim F. Escalona
Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Legislative Affairs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

May 12, 2020

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

Dear Senator Feinstein:

We are pleased to submit the Office on Violence Against Women's (OVW) *Conferral on the Violence Against Women Act 2018-2019* biennial report to Congress. This report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives is required pursuant to section 3(b)(4) of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. 113-4 (codified at 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(15)). 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, 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, the enclosed report describes the input OVW received through email comments and four conferral sessions held between September 2019 and December 2019. This 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.

Please do not hesitate to contact this office if you have any questions regarding this report or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Prim Escalona".

Prim F. Escalona
Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Enclosure



Conferral on the Violence Against Women Act 2018-2019

Report to Congress

Summary report of stakeholder conferrals held in 2019 and OVW responses

January 2020

Contents

- I. Introduction 1
 - A. Statutory Directive 1
 - B. Structure of the Conferral 1
 - C. Overview of Results 2
- II. Issues Presented by Conferral Participants..... 2
 - A. Conferral 1: Unmet Needs 2
 - B. Conferral 2: Emerging Trends 7
 - C. Conferral 3: Administration of Grants..... 11
 - D. Conferral 4: Promising Practices in the Field Notes..... 13
- III. Conclusion..... 16
- Appendix 1: List of Conferral Sessions 17

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. 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)).

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.

B. Structure of the Conferral

Between September 2019 and November 2019, 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.

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 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.

Conferral sessions were moderated by OVW attorneys with translation services from American Sign Language interpreters and/or closed captioning in English and Spanish. Participation was via telephone, webinar chat, or email.

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. Through comprehensive feedback from stakeholders, OVW developed the following report of identified unmet needs, emerging trends, promising practices, and feedback 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.

This report includes OVW policies and actions in response or related to issues raised by conferral participants. It is far from an exhaustive list of OVW's actions, but provides highlights of OVW's ongoing and planned activities that are responsive to participants' concerns. Occasionally, stakeholders commented on issues that do not fall under OVW's purview (for example, the need for affordable rental housing for victims). Even if 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 Indian tribal governments concerning administering tribal funds and programs, enhancing the safety of Indian 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

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

Accessibility and underserved populations

- Adequate culturally specific services for victims, including services for immigrants and refugees, culturally appropriate services for survivors who are members of religious minority groups, and community education regarding the culturally specific needs of victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.
- Easier accessibility to law enforcement and victim services for non-English speakers and Deaf survivors.
- Mental health services for survivors.
- Better accessibility to technical assistance products (e.g., the use of well-synched closed-captions in all OVW funded webinars).
- Education regarding the needs of female offenders who have a history of domestic violence or sexual assault victimization.
- Training and technical assistance around the unique needs of older survivors is needed. For example, elderly survivors are typically out of the workforce and their economic needs require information on Medicare, Medicaid, and other benefits for elderly populations.
- Rural, older and aging, deaf and disabled, and LGBTQ+ are key populations that need more tailored specific economic assistance.

Child custody

- Training for family courts, law enforcement, and child protective services regarding domestic violence and resolving child custody issues in families with domestic violence.
- Legal representation for domestic violence survivors in custody cases.

Confidentiality

- A means to share information from victims in time-sensitive situations where obtaining written permission may not be possible.

Coordinated Community Response

- Resources to strengthen partnerships between law enforcement and victim service providers and to continue partnerships after the end of a grant.

Courts

- Education for judges in criminal and family courts.

Housing

- Affordable rentals and transitional housing, particularly housing for survivors with four or more children and/or with teenage boys.
- Housing for survivors who have previously separated from their abusers but suffer continued financial hardships over time.
- Financial assistance to resolve victims' poor rental histories, which often have been caused by abusers.

Law enforcement

- Additional law enforcement training on topics such as survivor safety, trauma-informed responses, sexual assault, protection orders, and identifying the predominant aggressor in making a domestic violence arrest.
- Protocols and training around storage of firearms.
- Social workers who work within police departments, which may help meet current needs, such as addressing mental health issues, assisting individuals with developmental disabilities, and the needs of older survivors.

Rural areas

- Additional batterer intervention programs, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) training and services, and culturally specific services in rural areas.

Sexual Assault

- Services directed specifically toward survivors of non-intimate partner sexual assault.
- Increased awareness is needed around what services are available for survivors of sexual assaults.
- There is an increasing need for crisis hotline support.

Stalking

- Training for law enforcement and courts on stalking behaviors, including “digital” stalking.
- Research and training on how new technology products are creating new opportunities for abuse.
- Training on civil remedies for stalking.
- Increased community awareness around stalking.

Trafficking

- Training for law enforcement and victim service providers on the differences and overlap between prostitution and trafficking.
- Housing specifically designated for trafficking victims.

OVW Policies and Actions

The following ongoing and planned OVW activities are responsive to participants’ concerns:

- The [Grants to Enhance Culturally Specific Services for Victims Program](#) will continue to provide funding to community-based organizations that address critical victim needs in a manner that affirms the victim’s culture. This includes building and maintaining partnerships between culturally specific programs and victim service programs.
- The [Sexual Assault Services Culturally Specific Program](#) will continue to make 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](#) will continue to focus 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 10 percent of victim services funds 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](#) will continue to support 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](#) will continue to make awards that recognize that individuals who are 50 years of age or older who are victims of abuse (including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, exploitation, and neglect) face unique barriers to receiving assistance.
- OVW supports a robust technical assistance program to address the training and technical assistance needs of each grant program and of the 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.
- Several current OVW technical assistance providers help culturally specific, community-based organizations address the critical needs of survivors in a manner that effectively addresses culture, language, and communication. They also help mainstream service providers strengthen their work with communities of color, immigrant communities, and faith communities. See TA2TA.org for OVW-funded technical assistance providers.
- OVW will continue to place 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 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.
- For 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 continues to fund 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 Program](#) will continue to provide 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.
- OVW will continue to serve on the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness workgroup with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Family Violence Prevention Services Office. 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.
- OVW will continue to 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 National Domestic Violence and Firearms Resource Center, a technical assistance project with the Battered Women's Justice Project, hosts 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.
- OVW will continue to support the Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Demonstration Initiative, which implements and evaluates strategies to reduce domestic violence homicides by identifying potential victims and monitoring high-risk offenders. OVW is currently considering how to enhance technical assistance for domestic violence homicide prevention projects.
- OVW will continue to support the Firearms Pilot Site Initiative, which provides 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, such as firearms storage, in a manner that is best suited to their unique needs and characteristics and identify promising practices to respond to domestic violence cases involving firearms.
- OVW is considering ways to provide more comprehensive law enforcement training.

- Priorities in OVW solicitations for 2020 include reducing violent crime, economic empowerment of victims, response to stalking, and addressing the needs of victims in rural areas. The priority of addressing the specific challenges that rural communities face in responding to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking will be included as a priority in all relevant FY 2020 solicitations.
- The [Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence and Stalking Assistance Program](#) will continue to award 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 has released the FY 2020 Sexual Assault Forensic-Medical and Advocacy Services for Tribes (FAST) Initiative solicitation. Developed through a partnership between OVW and the Office of Justice Programs (OJP)'s Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), which provided \$7,000,000 in funding for the initiative, this initiative is designed to increase the availability of trained Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFEs) and trained sexual assault victim advocates in tribal communities, including Alaska Native villages. OVW anticipates making three to five awards under this Initiative by May 2020.
- OVW has released the FY 2020 Training and Technical Assistance Initiative solicitation, which includes a purpose area to provide training and technical assistance on establishing and/or enhancing Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) services in rural, remote, and tribal communities, including providing training and technical assistance to sites funded under OVW's FAST Initiative.
- OVW will continue to support the Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC), a project of AEquitas, which is a comprehensive technical assistance resource center and website that assist multi-disciplinary professionals funded across all of OVW grant programs, as well non-OVW grantees. SPARC provides communities and organizations with information, resources, and direct technical assistance to effectively address the crime of stalking.

B. Conferral 2: Emerging Trends

Conferral participants identified the following emerging trends:

Healthcare

- Some healthcare providers who perform forensic medical exams may focus too much on collecting evidence without also addressing the health needs of the victim.
- Some rural hospitals are unwilling or unable to invest in SANE training. Many nurses are contract employees and do not stay in the community full time.
- Issues surrounding payment for access to health care deter some survivors from reporting a crime or seeking health care.

- Different states have different payment expectations for sexual assault kit examinations that place a financial strain on survivors.
- “We need to encourage or sponsor the development of a National Protocol for Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence Exams and Responses, to include the collaborative responses across the lifespan.”

Law Enforcement/Courts

- Many survivors disengage from options within the criminal justice system due to responses they receive from criminal justice participants. Survivors fear that, if they come forward to law enforcement officials, they will face “you made your bed, you lay in it” type of judgment.
- “We are seeing positive results of basing domestic violence advocates from our community-based domestic violence program into offices within our local sheriff’s offices. Law enforcement offices provide the office space and advocates are immediately present in case of any incident.”

Lethality Assessment Programs (LAP) and Other Risk Assessment Tools

- “We have partnerships with 8 local police departments to provide services and administer LAP for our area – we were able to get buy-in from the police departments by being persistent and showing them hard data on how involving victim services helps them and holds offenders accountable.”
- “We operate an emergency shelter and collaborated with our family justice center and police department to implement LAP. After training all the officers on LAP, calls to our hotline doubled overnight (from 4,000 calls annually to 8,000 annually). As a result, 43% of shelter intakes were LAP cases. We expanded our shelter capacity by 23% in response, but more space is needed.”
- LAPs have helped provide an objective way to talk to survivors about their current situations and level of danger, leading to better safety planning and advocacy for survivors.
- The Virginia Attorney General’s Office is assisting local domestic violence providers and collaborating with law enforcement to roll out Maryland’s LAP. Law enforcement officers provide the assessment and then link some of the survivors immediately to local domestic violence programs.
- The collaboration element of LAP is critical, but it is also important to include the hospital systems in the planning and implementation process.
- Arizona has begun utilizing the Arizona Intimate Partner Risk Assessment Instrument System (APRAIS) in bond decisions.
- “In Iowa, we did a pilot using the Ontario Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (ODARA) model and were able to train all local law enforcement agencies, judges, advocates, and other service providers. The ODARA provided a common metric to define an offender’s risk to better inform the courts.”

Restorative Justice

- There is a surge in college-aged students’ interest in restorative justice.

- Restorative justice is being used in higher education for some other student conduct code violations, but there has been some reluctance to apply restorative justice models to matters involving sexual assault, domestic or dating violence, or stalking.

Rural Communities

- Acquaintance density (idea that everyone knows everyone) is an issue in rural or small communities and prevents survivors from coming forward.
- In rural communities, lack of insurance and other barriers to accessibility of services limit access to support and put an additional financial strain on survivors.
- A participant said Family Justice Centers (FJCs) have been great models for service connection needs and asked if there is a way to consider a mobile FJC model for rural areas.
- Survivors are often coerced into criminal activity (or arrested for self-defensive actions when they call to report their own abuse). Similar to poor credit caused by victimization, criminal records pose barriers for survivors seeking housing and employment.
- Rural survivors would benefit from connection to legal assistance and partnerships with attorneys outside of immediate rural area. Rural areas frequently have few legal resources, and the resources available experience high demand or a conflict of interest due to the nature of living in a rural area.

Services for Survivors and Their Families

- Participants working with the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)-funded Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) stated that criminal justice system professionals are not adequately connecting victims to partner services.
- There is an emerging question of how to integrate economic advocacy into victim service work and how to tailor it to specific contexts. For example, how to talk about economic independence with survivors in crisis or while providing long-term advocacy.
- Domestic violence survivors involved solely in the civil court system, and the system not being equipped to address these issues.

Underserved Populations

- Immigrants increasingly fear involving police and other systems in the wake of domestic violence, sexual assault, or sex trafficking. National policies are having a significant chilling effect on survivors' ability to pursue justice.
- Civil legal assistance for immigrant survivors frequently involves multiple intertwined legal issues, such as immigration, family law, and consumer law, which may require significantly different legal advice or services based on the survivor's citizenship status.
- Safe housing options may be limited for immigrant survivors. Some immigrant survivors turn to predatory lending services to secure housing.

Other Emerging Trends

- Technical assistance providers identified an increase in community-based advocates providing support closely aligned with the desires of law enforcement.

OVW Policies and Actions

The following ongoing and planned OVW activities address emerging trends that participants identified:

- The FY 2020 Training and Technical Assistance Initiative solicitation also includes a purpose area to develop a National Protocol for Domestic Violence (including strangulation) Medical Forensic Examinations, as recommended by one conferral participant. Project activities will include proposing a plan to get national input from relevant experts, organizing and hosting focus groups, drafting a proposed protocol, coordinating review of the draft protocol, and editing the protocol at OVW's direction.
- One OVW-funded technical assistance project focuses on improving payment options for sexual assault forensic exams, including in rural hospitals. See [TA2TA.org](https://www.ta2ta.org) for OVW-funded technical assistance providers.
- OVW funds several technical assistance projects designed to enhance the quality and availability of services available to sexual assault victims who seek medical forensic care. Ongoing projects such as SafeTA, a partnership with the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN), provide training and technical assistance on best practices in this area. Also, in FY 2018, OVW funded technical assistance projects to develop and deploy the following: 1) resources and tools for ensuring that billing and payment for sexual assault medical forensic examinations operate in accordance with VAWA requirements and do not serve as a barrier to victims accessing medical forensic care; 2) a train-the-trainer curriculum based on the National Training Standards for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examiners; and 3) an updated Virtual Practicum for aspiring forensic nurses and affiliated professionals.
- Increasing resources for law enforcement is a priority of OVW in FY 2020. OVW is exploring new ways to provide more effective and comprehensive training for law enforcement.
- As stated above regarding *Unmet Needs*, the Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Demonstration Initiative will continue implementing and evaluating strategies to reduce domestic violence homicides by identifying potential victims and monitoring high-risk offenders.
- OVW continues to work in close partnership with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the research arm of the Justice Department, to examine the effectiveness of VAWA-funded programming. NIJ anticipates releasing findings from the evaluation of OVW's Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention Initiative in 2020.
- 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 combatting these crimes. OVW's Research and Evaluation (R&E) Initiative has funded 25 studies totaling nearly \$10 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), 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.

C. Conferral 3: Administration of Grants

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

Application process

- January grant application deadlines fall at the same time as the deadline to submit federal financial and programmatic progress reports.
- There is a short turnaround time from the release of a solicitation to when application submissions are due to OVW.
- According to a participant, the most frustrating aspect of applying for grants is waiting to hear the grant proposal status. The participant suggested that OVW implement a system where applicants can see where their application is in the review process.
- A state coalition grantee suggested moving from an annual application process to a process requiring submission less often.
- “The need to create a budget while applying for a grant is daunting, especially for a first time applicant without experience.”

Conferences/Trainings

- Technical assistance providers noted that changes in the Department's conference approval process have created new barriers to organizing training events.
- Announcing the location of mandatory technical assistance events close to the event date (because of the conference approval process) makes planning travel difficult for grantees.
- Mandatory technical assistance events are not always accessible for individuals who cannot travel by airplane.
- One state coalition grantee stated it was difficult to spend down the full \$5,000 they were required to set aside for OVW-approved training and technical assistance.

Grant Adjustment Notices (GANs)

- OVW takes too long to approve or deny GANs.
- Grantees face planning challenges because requests to extend the grant project period can only be submitted in the final 90 days of the award.
- Grantees may be able to obtain better airfare rates if OVW approved GANs to travel and attend trainings more quickly.

Grants Financial Management Division (GFMD)

- “The DOJ on-line grants financial management training is good but a live training with a Q&A would be better.”

- Budget approval takes a long time and limits what grantees can do without an approved budget.

Indirect Cost Rate Agreements

- Training is needed on negotiated indirect cost rate agreements.

Progress Report Forms

- “We desperately need an updated grant report form for consolidated youth- it is very hard to adapt every time.”
- Participants identified non-editable progress report forms as a challenge, and some stated that the Grants Management System Help Desk cannot always solve problems.
- Participants noted that it is difficult to cut and paste text into progress report forms, meaning grantees may have to retype paragraphs into the form.

Other Comments

- Colleges and universities might apply for funding more often if allowed to address sexual harassment.
- Grantees sometimes find it challenging to get in contact with their grant manager.
- Participants requested a clearer explanation of the roles of a technical assistance provider versus the OVW Program Managers, especially how they interact with each other when working with grantees.

OVW Policies and Actions

The following ongoing and planned OVW activities are responsive to participants’ concerns:

- OVW continues to examine and evaluate the minimum required funds grantees must set aside for technical assistance and training under each OVW grant program.
- OVW is working on ways to improve the conference approval process.
- OVW is considering ways to reduce the application burden for state coalition program applicants.
- OVW continues to host 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 solicitations in FY 2020 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 and Transitional Housing programs may receive a 36-month competitive award with an additional 24-month noncompetitive award to follow if they met all requirements set out by the programs’ solicitations.
- In FY 2020, OVW is releasing solicitations earlier and keeping them open longer than previous years. Solicitations released so far in FY 2020 are remaining open an average of 13 days longer than those same solicitations in FY 2019. See OVW’s website at

<https://www.justice.gov/ovw/solicitation-release-plan> for solicitation release dates and closing dates.

- OVW continues to fill open Grants Specialist positions to improve its ability to respond to grantees.
- OVW's Grants Financial Management Division (GFMD) annually provides in-person training on budgets and financial reporting requirements during each grant program's new grantee orientation. Grantees are able to ask questions and receive personal assistance at this training. GMFD also continues to develop new trainings made available on OVW's website.
- OVW continues to participate in a shared effort with other DOJ grant-making offices to build a new grants management system. The new system, which is slated to begin rollout in October 2020, will include a progress reporting module to replace OVW's fillable PDF forms. OVW recognizes that the current PDF forms operate on antiquated technology and are unduly time-consuming to complete. While the progress report module likely will not be included in the initial release, OVW anticipates that the new grants management system will ultimately resolve these problems and be easy for grantees to use.
- The new grants management system will provide applicants enhanced notification regarding submitted applications.
- Annually, OVW programs host an in-person or web-based new grantee orientation for new grantees and new project directors on how to administer their grants, including how to complete grant-reporting requirements.
- OVW is currently working with the Muskie School of Public Services at the University of Southern Maine to create a progress report form for the Consolidated Youth Grant Program.
- Based on comments received, new grantee orientations will now include a clear explanation of the differences between technical assistance providers and OVW Program Managers.

D. Conferral 4: Promising Practices in the Field

Conferral participants identified the following promising practices in the field:

Advocate Partnerships

- “Our partnership with a local law enforcement has been very successful. It involves a domestic violence advocate riding along on all domestic violence calls. She is able to connect clients to shelter, counseling, legal advocacy and other services in the field (in the immediate aftermath of a dv incident). Additionally her presence and feedback has resulted in some shifting of law enforcement culture and response to these incidents.”

- “We are seeing success with law enforcement agencies hiring advocates to work directly at the law enforcement agency. It allows them to provide immediate services to victims at the time of the incident.”
- “In Virginia, we have a multi-agency supported program called the Underserved Populations Learning Collaborative with 20 sexual assault and domestic violence programs. The Collaborative creates community partnerships and provides training and coaching to help agencies promote access to services, focusing on underserved populations. The Collaborative also allows us to tailor services to each agency and locality that has specific needs.”
- Advocacy-initiated response involves a working agreement between law enforcement and community-based advocates whereby law enforcement provides victim contact information to the community-based advocacy program in every domestic violence-related call, whether or not an offender is arrested. This links survivors with advocates as soon as possible to provide critical information, support, and resources.
- A participant noted that advocates embedded in child protection services can be effective, but require separate supervision so the advocate can stay autonomous and confidential.
- Delaware has embedded advocates in child protection and collaborates other relevant community organizations.
- Attorney-advocate integrated team models are similar to coordinated community responses and can happen in many contexts. For example, in the family law context, an attorney-advocate team model allows for longer-term advocacy relationships with survivors. This model builds the legal capacity of advocates and the trauma-informed approach of attorneys, and reduces siloing when referring legal/non-legal matters.
- Locating a bi-lingual community based-advocate within the courthouse has reached survivors who previously were not making contact with the Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault program.
- Mobile advocacy is an innovative new strategy that lowers barriers to services for survivors. This community-based strategy allows survivors to leave a program office or shelter and meet with advocates in locations wherever they feel safe. This survivor-driven, trauma-informed approach helps to build positive relationships between survivors and advocates while ensuring that the survivors feel safe and comfortable in their surroundings.
- One participant noted that a local program has an advocate embedded in the Public Housing Authority. The advocate trained two hundred and seventy staff, and housing residents have been referred for optional services from the advocate.

Coordinated Community Responses

- Established coordinated community response teams can be used as a platform for assessing perceived or actual inequities within criminal justice system.
- “Blueprint for Safety” (Blueprint) is a set of best practices for coordinated community response to domestic violence and model protocols for each discipline (law enforcement,

advocates, etc.) and how they can work together most effectively. Each Blueprint model can be adapted to fit the needs of different communities.

- Delaware is currently working on developing a coordinated community response to human trafficking. “We have implemented a coordinating council with a committee that identifies training and protocols for identifying human trafficking. This council has created a new screening process to help train police officers and healthcare providers to identify victims of human trafficking, including different ways to ask the question, ‘Are you safe?’”
- We recommend including community-based advocates in program monitoring activities.

Housing

- A participant identified Somerset House, in rural Maine, as a domestic violence shelter specifically offering services to survivors who are also dealing with co-occurring substance abuse issues. Somerset House provides wrap-around, holistic support with much longer shelter stays than are typical to place people into stable housing and maintain support to stay sober.
- “We’re seeing many victim service providers moving firmly toward the area of increasing safe housing options for survivors.”

Other Promising Practices

- “We’ve seen success in designing education and awareness focused curricula that address dating and domestic violence in collaboration with clergy and faith leaders to reach more insular communities. These workshops are also a way [that] we spread word of our hotline response services.”
- “As part of the SAKI project, we are also seeing success with developing skills and resources to encourage victim re-engagement with the criminal justice system.”
- Programs are conducting listening sessions with survivors to inform system reform efforts and create buy-in for those reforms by agency leadership.
- Integrating economic screening and full and open assessments into advocacy brings safety needs to light and identifies areas where partnerships or systems changes are needed.

OVW Policies and Actions

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

- Through its 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 evaluation of a training for religious leaders on supporting victims and connecting them to services; two projects assessing

batterer intervention programming; 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 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.
- Under a new 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 the success of law enforcement’s response to VAWA crimes.

III. Conclusion

OVW prioritizes hearing from stakeholders throughout the year and takes varied approaches to do so. The conferral process, however, is a unique and meaningful way to share and receive information. As we develop our programs and issue solicitations, we will continue to take the input we received through the conferral into consideration. OVW thanks all conferral participants for their time, energy, and insight.

Appendix 1: List of Conferral Sessions

Public conferral session webinar:

- 1. Unmet Needs**
September 26, 2019
- 2. Emerging Trends**
October 17, 2019
- 3. Administration of Grants**
October 30, 2019
- 4. Promising Practices in the Field**
November 7, 2019