

DISTRICT  
ADVOCACY  
TOOLKIT

HOW TO  
PREPARE FOR  
CONGRESSIONAL  
MEETINGS



National Alliance to  
End Sexual Violence

# A D V O C A C Y

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TO CHANGE “WHAT IS”  
INTO “WHAT SHOULD BE”

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ADVOCACY 101	4
ADVOCACY TIMELINE	10
TALKING POINTS	11
TEMPLATE: MEETING REQUEST	13
TEMPLATE: THANK YOU EMAIL	14
APPENDIX A: NAESV DISTRICT ADVOCACY VISIT REPORT	15
APPENDIX B: CONGRESSIONAL CALENDAR	16
APPENDIX C-G: WHITEPAPERS & INFORMATIONAL HANDOUTS	
SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES PROGRAM	17
RAPE PREVENTION & EDUCATION PROGRAM (RPE)	19
VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT (VOCA) FUND	21
SEX OFFENSE SET-ASIDE IN PHHSBG	22
FUNDING IS CRUCIAL FOR RAPE CRISIS CENTERS INFOGRAPHIC	23



## ADVOCACY 101

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the legislative process, which can be both complex and impersonal. Most people do not know who their elected representatives are and have not engaged in direct advocacy of any kind, let alone federal advocacy directed at their Senators and member of Congress. However, as a constituent and a voter, your voice is important and powerful at all levels of government.

The first job of an elected official is to get elected, and starting their first day in office, they are always running for reelection. Subsequently, Members of Congress are very responsive to individuals who live in their district and have the ability to vote either for or against them. While they may not always agree with a constituent, the opinion of the people they represent is very important for them to know. The voice of a constituent, and even better, an organized group of constituents, is very powerful.

### WHY ENGAGE IN ADVOCACY?

- Engaging with Members of Congress and their staff allows you to influence the development and implementation of effective public policy.
- As a direct service provider or someone working in the field, you have state-specific expertise to bear on policy decisions.
- Advocacy and storytelling encourages movement beyond a “one-size-fits-all” approach to developing policy solutions and helps Members take into account the unique needs in their own state and communities.

### WHAT CONSTITUTES EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY?

- Advocacy is not a one time activity; ideally you want to establish yourself and your organization as a resource to Members of Congress and their staff for timely and accurate information.
- It is about building a trusted relationship with elected officials, regulators and their staff over time.
- Effective advocacy is rooted in mutual respect and trust. Even if you and a Member disagree, you want them to trust your facts and your sources; ultimately this is the best foundation for educating and persuading policymakers.



## REQUESTING YOUR MEETING

To meet with your Representative or Senator during an in-district work period, initiate your request through the scheduler in the district office where you would like to meet. You can find their website information at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) or [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).

Each Member's website will list their office locations including their D.C. office and their district or state offices; these can typically be found at the bottom of their website or under "Contact" information. Most Representatives and Senators have two or more offices in the state or district; you can visit the location that is most convenient to you.

To identify the scheduler, call the district office where you'd like to meet and ask who you should direct your request to and how they prefer receiving meeting requests (email, fax, phone request, or online forms are all options used by Congressional offices). We have provided you with a template email request which you can customize as appropriate. Within three to five days of initiating your request, call the district scheduler to confirm that it was

received; offices receive numerous requests and it is easy for an email to be overlooked. Following up is key to securing a meeting.

For Member level meetings, initiate your request as soon as possible; Member's days are often scheduled weeks in advance. Some offices may ask that you coordinate with their D.C.-based scheduler and will connect you with that office. Scheduling a meeting can be a bureaucratic process; allow sufficient time for the scheduler to process your request.

If the Member is unavailable, the scheduler will likely connect you with a staffer who handles issues related to sexual violence; it is perfectly acceptable to meet with staff. If the scheduler does not offer an alternative contact and you do not know the staffer who handles these issues, you can call the district office and ask who they recommend. It is often easier to get on a staffer's calendar and in most cases, they schedule their own meetings.



## PREPARING FOR ADVOCACY MEETINGS

One of the most important things you can do to prepare for advocacy meetings is to know who you are meeting with and where that member of Congress stands on the issues important to you and your organization. The House and Senate websites can help you identify your member of Congress ([House.gov](http://House.gov)) and Senators ([Senate.gov](http://Senate.gov)).

Another critical element in successful advocacy is to keep your message consistent with your organization's policy priorities. In preparation for your in-district meetings, The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence has provided policy one-pagers and key talking points that offer guidance on how to talk about key policy issues. Get to know the priorities well before your advocacy meetings and practice the talking points.

### **NORMAL THINGS TO EXPECT:**

- Even if you are scheduled to meet with the Member in-person, you might have to meet with staff instead because of unforeseen commitments. Similarly you may end up meeting with a different staffer than expected.
- A meeting with the Member or a staffer could be very brief and last less than 15 minutes depending on their schedule, how familiar they are with your organization, and how aligned they are with your policies and your ask.
- You may need to meet in an unplanned location or strange setting.
- Staff that you meet with may be young. That does not mean they are unknowledgeable or that they are the wrong person to be meeting with.

# GOING ON

## YOUR VISIT

Be on time. Dress appropriately; usually that means business or business casual attire. Be sure everyone in your group is introduced and knows which issues they will cover in the meeting. Always start on a positive note. Find something to thank the office for, some supportive statement or vote in the past. If nothing else, thank them for time to meet with you.

### PLANNING YOUR MEETING:



Know your audience. What committees does the Member serve on? If you are meeting with a staffer, what is their policy portfolio (i.e. what issues do they cover for their boss)? Check recent news coverage of the Member and read up on their website.



Consider inviting a survivor activist, a well-connected board member, and/or a community leader who has benefited from your prevention programs to join you to further reflect your important work.



Once you know who is participating in your meeting, determine each participant's role including who will speak about which issue and when.



Designate a team-lead who can introduce the group and frame the purpose of your meeting.



Identify in advance who is taking notes including the tenor of the meeting, any questions asked by the Member or their staff, and any meeting follow-up.



Prepare your talking points and your "ask."



Be aware of high profile cases or other issues in the news and how, if at all, you want to address or respond to those.



It is very common to meet with a Member's staff and not with the Member directly. Staff exercise significant influence on how a Member will vote and are often responsible for understanding the details; do not view a meeting with a staff as a waste of time. Often these are the people who inform their bosses decisions and votes.

If you are asked a question you do not know the answer to, it is okay to tell the staffer you do not know. DO NOT make something up, guess, or hedge. This opening actually provides an opportunity for you to follow-up with the office. Remember that advocacy is about a relationship. You want the official and staff to trust you and see you as a credible resource. If you give incorrect information you will severely undermine your credibility; instead offer to try to find the information as part of your meeting follow up.

## CONDUCTING YOUR MEETING

### DO:

- Be concise with key points ready and plan on meeting for no more than 25 minutes; most Members and their staff are scheduled every half-hour.
- Leave time for the official to respond and to ask you questions.
- Know the bill number and name if you are talking about specific legislation. Do not expect that the Member or their staff will necessarily be familiar with the legislation.
- Speak from your area of expertise and share personal stories. Storytelling puts real life faces and with facts and data.
- Find out where the official stands on the issue.
- Ask specific questions and try to get specific commitments.
- Be sure to mention if you are a constituent.
- Be passionate, but make sure to stay calm and in control of your words, body language and emotions.
- Make sure to include specific "asks."

### DON'T

- Do most of the talking! This is a conversation; leave time and space for other participants and the Member or their staff to engage. Ideally the Member or their staff will do most of the talking (ideal, but rare).
- Issue explicit or veiled threats or bring "politics" into the meeting.
- Guess the answer to a question. Misleading an official is far worse than seeming uninformed. If you do not have an answer, let them know how and when you will follow up with the information they have asked for.
- Leave without clarity on next steps.

Finally, end on a positive note. Even if you have not found anything you agree on, you can agree to keep talking. Never threaten to defeat the official in their next election. It will destroy your relationship with the official, and you can almost never deliver on that threat. Again, if nothing else, thank them for their time. You never know when the issue will be reframed and find that all of a sudden the two of you agree again. Voila, politics.

## CONCLUDING YOUR MEETING

- Ask if there are any questions.
- End on a positive note and express thanks, even if the meeting was not ideal.
- If you have been asked a question you did not know the answer to reiterate that you will follow up with an answer.
- Remind the official that you want to act as a resource.
- Invite the Member or their staff to attend an upcoming event or to tour your facility.



# TIMELINE

## LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY



BEFORE APRIL 16  
**MAKE MEETING REQUESTS**



WEEK OF APRIL 23  
**GATHER MATERIALS, HOLD PREP MEETING  
FOR ATTENDEES, PRACTICE TALKING POINTS**



WEEK OF APRIL 30  
**HOLD MEETINGS**



WEEK OF MAY 7  
**THANK YOU NOTES, FOLLOW UP WITH ANY  
INFORMATION REQUESTED AT MEETINGS AND  
INVITATION FOR AUGUST RECESS TOUR OR EVENT**



AUGUST 2018  
**TOUR/EVENT WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS**

# TALKING POINTS

## SETTING THE STAGE

- If multiple people are participating in the meeting, designate a meeting “captain” who will facilitate the flow of conversation and a note-taker who will make record any questions asked by a Member (or their staff) and any required follow-up.
- Each participant should introduce themselves including name; the name and location of their program or role; and a brief description.
- Thank the person with whom you are meeting for the appointment and the Congressperson’s work [include a tailored thank you based on the Member’s record on issues related to sexual violence if possible].

## FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

- Give the Representative, Senator, or staff member any supporting materials.
- Your story is the most important message you can share with a Member of Congress. Personalize the issue by talking about the needs in your state or district and the people you serve.
- By sharing the needs in your community and the difficulties you face meeting those needs, you paint a picture of the critical need for funding that relates directly to the Member’s constituents.

## THE NEED: TALK ABOUT THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL FUNDING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Programs aimed at preventing and responding to intimate partner violence such as VAWA, VOCA, RPE, and PHHS Block Grant have been extremely successful in our community and across the nation.
- However many victims still have unmet needs and we must continue to improve our responses to address and prevent the crisis of violence in many communities.
- The demand for safety and services increases with high profile cases, national commentary (such as #TimesUp and #MeToo), better outreach, improved response and increased awareness.
- Current funding in most states cannot meet existing demand, let alone the increase in demand rape crisis centers across the country are experiencing.
- Sexual assault services and prevention are critically underfunded, creating a dangerous gap between desperate need and adequate resources.
- In the past few years, demand for programs funded by the Rape Prevention & Education Program have skyrocketed, the evidence base has progressed significantly, the current appropriation is very nearly the authorized level, and further investment in the program is desperately needed.
- According to a 2017 survey by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, at current funding levels over half of rape crisis centers have a waiting list for counseling services.

## SERVICES & PREVENTION: HOW WE ACHIEVE CHANGE

- Federal funding plays an important role in helping fill the gap and meet local needs. According to the Office on Violence Against Women Report to Congress for the most recent 2-year reporting period, 49,000 survivors were served with funding from the Sexual Assault Services Program.
- VOCA, a non-taxpayer fund, supports over 4 million victims across the nation each year.
- Tailor talking points to your specific program and the needs of your community and your program.
  - How many survivors do you serve?
  - Do you have a waiting list and if so, how long is it?
  - Have you experienced an increase in the number of people requesting services; and if so, what does that increase look like?
  - Local data points (Example: survivors served, waiting list, increased demand).
  - What portions of your state have access to prevention? Are you able to meet the demand for prevention? What prevention successes are you seeing?

## THE SPECIFIC ASK

- Is Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_ willing to support:
- \$40 million for the Sexual Assault Services Program at the Office on Violence Against Women.
- \$2.6 billion for the Crime Victims Fund at DOJ.
- Increased program funds for Rape Prevention & Education Program at the CDC and increasing the authorization to \$150 million in the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

## CONCLUDING THE MEETING

- Thank the Member/staffer for her/his time.
- Ask if the Member/staffer has any additional questions.
- Make sure that you get the business card of the staffer(s) you meet. They are typically also at the receptionist's desk.
- Invite the Member/staffer to visit and tour your program and/or to speak at an upcoming event during the August recess.
- Ask if the Member/staffer would like any follow-up information.
- If you met with a Member, send a handwritten thank as follow up; an email is fine for staff.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

- Be sure to share your visit on social media!
- You can use twitter to thank your Member or post a photo to Facebook. For example: Thank you @SenatorABC for meeting with (insert program name) to talk about critical funding for survivors of DV & SA #endSA #endDV #BeAVoice

# TEMPLATE: MEETING REQUEST

Dear [scheduler's name],

My name is [name] and I am a constituent of Representative/Senator [name]; I am contacting you to request a meeting with the Member during the May in-district work period on behalf of the [insert organization/state coalition].

My colleagues and I are interested in speaking with the Member about the importance of funding rape crisis centers, supportive services for survivors of rape and sexual assault, and rape prevention in our community. These services have historically been underfunded, resulting in waiting lists, including [number] centers in [State]. The prominence of public conversations about sexual harassment, assault, and rape have resulted in an increased demand for services and prevention programs that most centers are unable to meet, forcing them to either turn away survivors in need or try to stretch their already stretched funding even further.

The federal government plays a critical role in supporting rape crisis centers through programs including the Violence Against Women Act, Victims of Crime Act, Sexual Assault Services Program, Rape Prevention & Education Program, and the Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grant. As direct service providers, we are eager to meet with Representative/Senator [name] and share what we are seeing in the field and the consequence of failing to fund these necessary and life-saving services.

I can be reached at [number] or [email] to schedule a meeting; I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

[Your Name]



**RESOURCE TIP:**

Work smart, not hard! You can download the editable version of this template to your to your computer. Find the word document template at [http://www.endsexualviolence.org/vawa\\_meeting\\_2k18/](http://www.endsexualviolence.org/vawa_meeting_2k18/)

# TEMPLATE: THANK YOU EMAIL

Dear Representative/Senator [name],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with members of the [state coalition] on [date] to discuss the importance of funding rape crisis centers in [state] and across the country.

Federal funding plays a vital role in ensuring that rape crisis centers in [state] can meet the demands of your constituents. While the national conversation about rape and assault has opened many people’s eyes to both the prevalence of assault and its impact on survivors, it has also drawn attention to the growing gap between the demand for, and availability of, services in our state. By fully funding programs including VAWA, VOCA, SASP, and PHHSBG, you help to ensure that no survivor is turned away.

As we discussed during our meeting...[summarize any commitment made by the Member; answer any question asked during the meeting that you did not have an answer for at the time; and/or reference any materials you offered to send as follow up].

Lastly, we would like to invite you to visit a rape crisis center during your August recess. We would be happy to help schedule and facilitate a tour so that you and your staff can see first hand the importance of the services you make possible through federal funding.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your office to ensure we are meeting the needs of the residents of [state/district].

Best,

[Your Name]



**RESOURCE TIP:**

Work smart, not hard! You can download the editable version of this template to your computer. Find the word document template at [http://www.endsexualviolence.org/vawa\\_meeting\\_2k18/](http://www.endsexualviolence.org/vawa_meeting_2k18/)

# CONGRESSIONAL CALENDAR

JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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FEBRUARY						
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NOVEMBER						
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DECEMBER						
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- House in Session Only
- Senate in Session Only
- House & Senate in Session
- Federal Holiday

### IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

White House Switchboard (202) 456-1414	Senate Democratic Cloakroom (202) 224-4691
U.S. Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121	House Republican Cloakroom (202) 225-7350
Senate Republican Cloakroom (202) 224-6191	House Democratic Cloakroom (202) 225-7330

# NAESV DISTRICT ADVOCACY VISIT REPORT

This form should be used to report on district meetings with Members of Congress or their staff.

**DATE OF VISIT**

*Insert Date*

**YOUR NAME**

*Your answer*

**YOUR PROGRAM/COALITION NAME**

*Your answer*

**YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS**

*Your answer*

**NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE OR SENATOR**

*Your answer*

**WHO DID YOU MEET WITH AT THIS MEETING?**

**(PLEASE LIST STAFF NAMES AND TITLES AND OR INDICATE IF THE MEMBER WAS PRESENT)**

*Your answer*

**EMAIL OF HIGHEST RANKING STAFF MEMBER AT THE MEETING**

*Your answer*

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

*Your answer*

**QUESTIONS ASKED:**

*Your answer*

**STONE OF THE MEETING:**

*Your answer*

**FOLLOW UP NEEDED:**

*Your answer*

**RESOURCE TIP:**

Save time by submitting this report online! Use the following links to access the NAESV District Advocacy Visit Report:

<https://tinyurl.com/ycxko3sx>



National Alliance to  
End Sexual Violence

## Sexual Assault Services Program

Funding authorized: \$40 million  
FY 2018 Appropriation: \$35 million  
FY 2019 Request: \$40 million

*"We love the work we do. It's important to us to provide our services in a compassionate, empowering holistic manner. Funding allows us to increase our capacity to provide the best possible services to victims and allow them to feel heard and seen..."*

Alabama Rape Crisis Center Director, 2017 survey

### **Sexual Assault Victims Deserve Recovery Services.**

The Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP), administered by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) in the U.S. Department of Justice, was authorized in 2005 through the Violence Against Women Act as the first federal funding stream dedicated to the provision of direct services to victims of sexual violence. According to OVW's most 2016 report on the SASP program:

- **49,000 survivors received services through SASP;**
- Over 250 advocates and counselors were funded at local programs; and
- Over 16,000 survivors received medical or legal advocacy/accompaniment.

*"Rape Victim Advocates literally saved my life. I will forever be grateful to this amazing organization, and I will work my whole life to pay forward what RVA gave to me." An Illinois survivor, 2017 survey*

*Across the country, SASP funds support the critical services victims need most.*

**SASP funds support services in every state.** Formula grants are awarded to states, territories and tribes to support efforts to provide services to adult and minor sexual assault victims and their families. Grants can be used for critically important intervention and advocacy services, especially accompaniment through medical and criminal justice systems.

**SASP funds support underserved communities.** Grants to culturally specific organizations help support intervention and related assistance for underserved victims and communities of color like *United Somali Women of Maine* and the *Hmong American Women's Association* in Milwaukee.

**SASP funds ensure quality services.** Through support of coalitions which provide

training and technical assistance, SASP helps ensure that victims receive high quality services and improved responses from the justice system. *Research shows these services increase prosecution and help victims recover.*

**Advocates help the criminal justice system respond better.** Research shows that when victims receive advocate-assisted services following assaults, they receive more helpful information, referrals and services and experience less secondary trauma or re-victimization by medical and legal systems.

Rape survivors supported by advocates were 59% more likely to have police reports taken than survivors without advocates, whose reports were only taken 41% of the time.

**Advocates help victims heal.** When advocates are present in the legal and medical proceedings following rape, victims fare better in both the short- and long-term recovery, experiencing less psychological distress, physical health struggles, sexual risk-taking behaviors, self-blame, guilt, and depression.

*“SASP allowed us to finally open a comprehensive service rape crisis center in Dallas.”* Jana Barker, Executive Director, Dallas Area Rape Crisis Center

### **The Need is great.**

According to 2010 data from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (CDC, December 2011):

- Nearly 1 in 5 women have been the victim of rape or attempted rape;

- Nearly 1 in 2 women have experienced some form of sexual violence;
- 1.3 million women were raped in the United States in the last 12 months;
- 1 in 5 men have experienced a form of sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime.

**Victims of sexual assault suffer.** They are more likely to struggle professionally, academically and from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and to contemplate suicide.

**Current funding levels are inadequate.** At FY 2017 levels, the entire state of Alabama received \$411,000 in SASP formula grant funds while **Texas, with the second largest grant award, received less than \$1 million in SASP formula funding.**

**Rape crisis centers struggle.** The nation’s 1,315 sexual assault programs often lack the resources to meet victims’ most basic needs. Attention to campus and military sexual assault as well as high profile cases has meant more victims have come forward needing recovery services. According to a 2017 survey by NAESV:

- **Over half of rape crisis centers have a waiting list for counseling services.**
- 38% of programs have a waiting list for trauma-informed therapy.

*“In the three years since our agency became the local certified rape crisis center for our area of approximately 265,000 residents, and a high spring break and military population, we have ...Our advocates caseloads have tripled.”* Rape Crisis Center Director, 2016 survey

**HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?** Contact Terri Poore, Policy Director at [terri@endsexualviolence.org](mailto:terri@endsexualviolence.org).



National Alliance to  
End Sexual Violence

# Rape Prevention & Education Program (RPE)

Funding authorized: \$50 million

FY 18 Appropriation: \$49.4 million

FY 19 Request: Increase the authorization in VAWA to \$150 million and fully fund.

RPE formula grants, administered by the CDC Injury Center, provide essential funding to states and territories to support rape prevention and education programs conducted by rape crisis centers, state sexual assault coalitions, and other public and private nonprofit entities.

Those who have been victimized by sexual violence are more likely to be re-victimized AND those who have perpetrated are more likely to reoffend, pointing to the increased need to stop the violence before it ever happens.

*If our children are to face a future free from sexual violence, RPE must be fully funded.*

***The RPE program prepares everyday people to become heroes, getting involved in the fight against sexual violence and creating safer communities by:***

- Engaging boys and men as partners;
- Supporting multidisciplinary research collaborations;
- Fostering cross-cultural approaches to prevention; and
- Promoting healthy, non-violent social norms, attitudes, beliefs, policies, and practices.

***"Before these classes, I didn't really understand what consent was."*** A student to a prevention educator in Oklahoma.

## **We know RPE is working.**

A 2016 study conducted in 26 Kentucky high schools over 5 years and published in *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that an RPE-funded bystander intervention program decreased not only sexual violence perpetration but also other forms of interpersonal violence and victimization.

***"The idea that, due to the effectiveness of Green Dot, ... there will be many fewer young people suffering the pain and devastation of sexual violence: This is priceless."*** Eileen Recktenwald, Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs

**Across the country, states and communities are engaged in cutting-edge prevention projects:**

**Alaska's Talk Now Talk Often** campaign is a statewide effort developed in collaboration with Alaskan parents, using conversation cards, to help increase conversations with teens about the importance of having healthy relationships.

**Connecticut's Women & Families Center** developed a multi-session curriculum addressing issues of violence and injury targeting middle school.

**Kansas** is looking closely at the links between sexual violence and chronic disease to prevent both.

**Maryland's Gate Keepers for Kids** program provides training to youth-serving organizations to safeguard against child sexual abuse.

**Missouri** is implementing "**Green Dot**" bystander education statewide to reduce the rates of sexual violence victimization and perpetration.

**North Carolina** was able to ensure sustainability of its consent-based curriculum by partnering with the school system to implement their sexual violence prevention curriculum in **every** 8<sup>th</sup> grade class.

**Oklahoma** is working with domestic violence and sexual violence service agencies, public and private schools, colleges and other community-based organizations **to prevent sexual violence**.

**Washington** is implementing innovative skill building projects that amplify the voices of historically marginalized communities, such as LGBTQ youth, teens with developmental disabilities, Asian American & Pacific Islander teens, & Latino parents & children.

## Why increase funding for RPE?

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

According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (CDC, 2011):

- Nearly 1 in 5 women have been the victim of rape or attempted rape.
- Most female victims of completed rape (79.6%) experienced their first rape before the age of 25; 42.2% experienced their first completed rape before the age of 18 years.
- More than one-quarter of male victims of completed rape (27.8%) experienced their first rape when they were 10 years of age or younger.

The national focus on campus and military sexual assault as well as high profile cases of sexual violence in the media have increased the need for comprehensive community responses to sexual violence but has also increased the demand for prevention programs beyond providers' capacity.

**A 2017 survey by the NAESV revealed that almost 40% of programs had a waiting list of a month or more for prevention programming.**

**A Missouri program reported:** *"The demand for our services has increased about 18% both in 2014 and in 2015. Increased awareness and increased need (crime) are most likely contributors to this trend. There are limited resources available for prevention education. In addition, new government requirements/laws, such as with Title IX and PREA, have contributed to referrals to our organization. Our organization always works to increase support from local resources, but funding is extremely competitive and limited."*

**A Massachusetts program reported:** *"With Title IX in the news, requests for prevention education have increased...We are saying no to many requests for education because of capacity issues. We are unable to build and sustain relationships with other underserved communities because of a lack of capacity."*

**A Nebraska program reported:** *"I am hugely dismayed at the lack of funding for prevention...It's noble to provide direct services to victims of sexual violence, but if we don't provide prevention monies, then we are just a band-aid. It's terribly frustrating."*

**NAESV additionally recommends the following report language** to ensure adequate funding for states:

*At least 80% of the funds appropriated for the Rape Prevention & Education Program must go to states for the purpose of local and state rape prevention activities.*

Currently, states and territories receive approximately 72% of RPE funds.

**HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?**  
Contact Terri Poore, Policy Director at [terri@endsexualviolence.org](mailto:terri@endsexualviolence.org)



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## Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund

**FY 19 Request:** Release \$2.6 billion from the Crime Victims Fund. Fund tribal services. No additional transfers

The Crime Victims Fund was created by Congress in 1984 to provide grants to state and local programs that assist victims of crime. The Fund is derived entirely from fines and penalties paid by federal criminal offenders, *not taxpayer revenues*.

From FY 2010 through FY 2014, the Crime Victims Fund collected an average of \$2 billion each year, but disbursed only an average of \$700 million per year. The remaining \$6.5 billion difference was used as a budgetary offset.

Congress raised the cap to \$3.04 billion for FY16. After transfers, \$2.6 billion was available for the states. **Congress should fund the cap at \$2.6 billion in FY 19 which is the average of the past 3 years' deposits into to the Fund**—the same approach advocates have asked for in VOCA legislation.

**NAESV fully supports funding tribal victim services from the Crime Victims Fund, as Congress did in FY 18, but we oppose any other earmarks or transfers from the fund.**

**Rape crisis centers rely on VOCA funds to provide direct services like crisis intervention, counseling, and court accompaniment to victims of sexual assault.** Over 4,000 agencies, including over 1000 rape crisis centers, rely on VOCA assistance grants to provide critical direct services for over 3.4 million victims a year.

**A 2017 NAESV survey of rape crisis centers revealed that over half of rape crisis centers have a waiting list for counseling services.**

*“With a staff of only 4 full time victim advocates and two others in part time positions, it sometimes becomes challenging to meet the demands presented to us while serving ...a five-county service area. Crisis calls seem to come at times where the advocates already have overloaded client loads and have to prioritize or defer to other overworked advocates. These advocates also get paid the bare minimum for services to get called out to the hospital at 3AM or pay money out of pocket to offer a token of comfort to a victim.”* Rape Crisis Center Director, 2016 survey

### **VOCA is making a difference.**

As a result of the increase in the VOCA cap, many programs have now received an increase in VOCA funds. Programs have:

- Hired new advocates & increased wages to improve retention;
- Hired forensic nurses;
- Served more trafficking survivors;
- Opened satellite offices in rural areas;
- Reached more children; and
- Started support groups for youth & elders.

*“We now have a full-time staff person to coordinate our advocacy services in 11 hospital emergency rooms; we now can respond to requests from young people to offer counseling services on demand in their schools.”* Rape Crisis Center Director, 2016 survey

**Distributing \$2.6 billion to states from the VOCA fund in FY 19 will allow rape crisis centers to reach more survivors, eliminate waiting lists, improve trauma-informed responses, and assist more survivors to heal and thrive.**

HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS? Contact Terri Poore, [terri@endsexualviolence.org](mailto:terri@endsexualviolence.org).



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## Sex Offense Set-Aside in PHHSBG

**FY 19 Request:** Fund the Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grant at \$160 million. Preserve the \$7 million set-aside for rape victim services & prevention (level funding).

**Flexible funding for community needs.** The Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHSBG) administered by the CDC allows states, territories and tribes to address their own unique public health needs and challenges with innovative and community driven methods.

**\$7 million set-aside to address sexual assault.** The Public Health Service Act of 2010 included a guaranteed \$7 million minimum set-aside to support direct services to victims of sexual assault and to prevent rape.

**Preserve the set-aside.** President Trump's FY 2018 budget proposed elimination of the PHHSBG, but Congress preserved the block grant guaranteeing at least \$7 million to respond to rape.

*"This funding is critical to sexual assault victims in Louisiana. 100% is used for direct services. Our community programs receive no state dollars so this is a crucial source for services to traumatized women and children."* Rafael de Castro, Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault

*States and communities rely on the set-aside to fund sexual assault services and prevention work:*

- In California, the funds support assistance to 63 rape crisis centers to increase their capacity to prevent sexual violence.
- In Illinois, the funds support a 24/7 hotline for victims.
- 4,975 legal and medical advocacy services were provided with PHHSBG funds in Kentucky.

*"The Rape Set-Aside component of the Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grant is the foundation of rape crisis and rape prevention in our state. First awarded to all states and the District of Columbia in 1981, the funds continue to connect rape survivors with support and treatment for the most devastating crime short of murder. The funds reach into all geographical areas of the state of Illinois providing crisis intervention and education services."* Polly Poskin, Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault

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**HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS? Contact Terri Poore, Policy Director at (850) 228-3428 or [terri@endsexualviolence.org](mailto:terri@endsexualviolence.org).**

# FUNDING IS CRUCIAL FOR RAPE CRISIS CENTERS

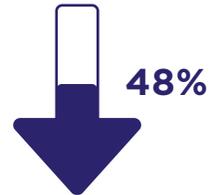
When rape crisis centers are underfunded, they can't meet the needs of sexual assault survivors, and prevention programs are sidelined.



One in five programs has experienced a reduction in staffing.



Of programs that lost staff, 80% lost at least one staff member due to lack of ability to offer a competitive salary.



Forty-eight percent of programs have had to decrease the amount of time they spend on prevention services.

Over half of rape crisis centers have a waiting list for counseling.



Many survivors on waiting lists are waiting a month or more for a counseling appointment.



One program had 90 adults and 20 children on their waiting list for counseling.



Almost 1/3 of programs pay full-time direct services staff \$30,000/year or less.



Ten percent of program respondents have only one advocate.

According to a survey by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, nearly half of the states responding reported RPE funding coverage in their state at 20% or less with rural areas especially lacking in access to prevention.

We also only have one preventionist split between 5 high schools, 8 middle schools, and numerous elementary schools. As a 24-hour agency, this is not enough to adequately serve our community.

- Rape crisis center staff member

Other mental health and social service organizations have the ability to pay living wages and offer benefits and we don't have enough funding to offer those at this point.

- Rape crisis center staff member

## IT'S TIME TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR SURVIVOR SERVICES AND PREVENTION.



For more information about this Toolkit, sexual violence advocacy,  
and the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, please contact:

Terri Poore, MSW

[terri@endsexualviolence.org](mailto:terri@endsexualviolence.org)



The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence

[www.EndSexualViolence.org](http://www.EndSexualViolence.org)

[info@endsexualviolence.org](mailto:info@endsexualviolence.org)

[@Endsxlviolece](https://twitter.com/Endsxlviolece)

1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, 10th Floor

Washington, DC, 20009