Domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking are crimes of epidemic proportions that impact millions of families and every community in the nation. To address and prevent these crimes, the federal government created the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA). VAWA programs, administered by the Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Health and Human Services (HHS) have undeniably improved federal, tribal, state and local responses to these four crimes. FVPSA, also administered by HHS, is the lifeblood of core domestic violence programs, including shelters and outreach programs. The VAWA Rape Prevention and Education Program (RPE), administered by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), provides critical funding to support rape prevention and education programs conducted by rape crisis centers, sexual assault coalitions, and other public and private nonprofit entities.

Together, these funding streams create and support comprehensive, cost-effective responses to these pervasive and insidious crimes. However, more work still needs to be done, and stable funding is now more essential than ever to ensure that programs across the country can keep the lights on, answer crisis calls, and provide essential services for victims fleeing violence.

While VAWA’s recent reauthorization promises enhanced services and protections for victims, “sequestration” poses a serious challenge to victims’ safety and well-being. The Budget Control Act cuts 5 percent from all federal programs, across the board, including VAWA, FVPSA, and RPE. This will have devastating consequences for victims.

According to analyses done by U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, the Department of Justice, and the Campaign for Funding to End Domestic and Sexual Violence, sequestration would result in at least 106,020 fewer victims receiving life-saving and cost-effective services. Specifically:

- Approximately 70,120 fewer victims would have access to domestic violence programs and shelters;
- Approximately 35,900 fewer victims would have assistance in obtaining protection orders, crisis intervention and counseling, sexual assault services, hospital based advocacy, transitional housing services, and help with civil legal matters;
- Approximately 125,000 fewer students would have access to sexual violence prevention programs;
- Newer-funded programs that specifically meet the unique needs of rape and sexual assault victims, including medical and legal assistance and other direct services, would be significantly compromised Programs that provide services to children and youth exposed to violence would also face cuts that would undermine their ability to reach and protect victims. At least 15,000 fewer sexual violence victims would be responded to via hotlines;
- Sequestration would not only limit victims’ immediate access to services, but will also destabilize so many of the other vital supports upon which victims rely to rebuild their lives after crisis including affordable housing, mental health services, substance abuse treatment programs, job assistance programs, education, law enforcement.

Sequestration cuts, combined with additional funding challenges at the state and local level, will have a direct negative impact on victims fleeing violence and abuse. Just as VAWA and other critical programs are transforming communities’ responses to violence, these cuts will close the door to safety and support for many victims and their families.
According to analyses done by U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), the U.S. Office of Budget and Management, available at http://www.harkin.senate.gov/documents/pdf/500ff35459ba.pdf. Harkin’s report calculated the impact of an 8% cut; these numbers were adjusted to reflect a 5% cut.

According to analysis done by the Department of Justice, as reported at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/15/sequestration-vawa_n_2695465.html. We believe this number is likely an underestimation of sequestration’s impact on victims receiving services under VAWA, and it also does not include the number of service providers who would not receive vital training to respond to domestic violence because of sequester cuts.
THE IMPACT OF SEQUESTRATION ON DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, DATING VIOLENCE AND STALKING

VAWA supports Lifesaving Programs: Domestic violence directly impacts one in four women over a lifetime and 15.5 million children every year. Each day in this country, an average of three women are killed by current or former intimate partner. Almost one in five women has experienced an attempted or completed rape, and 3.4 million adults are the victims of stalking each year. This violence and abuse is devastating, costly and can be deadly.

The federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) creates and supports comprehensive, cost-effective responses to the pervasive and insidious crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. Since its enactment in 1994, VAWA has improved how our nation addresses these crimes, and has positively impacted the lives of hundreds of thousands of victims. As a result, more victims report domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking to the police, the rate of non-fatal intimate partner violence has decreased, and the number of individuals killed by an intimate partner has decreased. Because of VAWA, victims have unprecedented access to services that enable them to escape abuse and rebuild their lives. In 2012, VAWA-funded programs will provide lifesaving services to approximately 740,000 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.1

The Impact of Sequestration Cuts: The stability of domestic violence and sexual assault programs across the country is being eroded by a multitude of budget cuts, and unmet needs are already extreme and dire. The 5% cut imposed by sequestration will only further the unconscionable gap between desperate need and available services. Sequestration will result in an estimated almost 35,900 fewer victims receiving these life-saving and cost-effective services, including:

- Assistance obtaining protection orders and representation in and assistance with civil legal matters
- Crisis intervention, counseling, and advocacy and accompaniment in medical and legal settings
- Transitional housing services
- Services that meet the specific needs of victims living in rural areas, older victims and those with disabilities

These numbers, however, do not demonstrate the additional negative impacts of sequestration. While VAWA programs have are effective, many victims still have limited access to services. For example, VAWA’s Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP), the federal government’s first-ever concerted investment to ensure that victims of rape have direct recovery services, has only begun to receive funding. Any cuts would undermine the program’s ability to grow and meet the needs of sexual assault victims. New programs that serve children and youth face a similar threat. Additionally, VAWA funding supports coordinated community approaches to law enforcement and prosecution that enhance victim safety and ensure offender accountability. Sequestration threatens all of these VAWA programs and more, and will significantly limit the ability of victims to access the vital services that VAWA provides.

Additional Impacts: Investment in VAWA programs not only saves money in averted social costs,14 it saves lives. In addition to limiting victims’ immediate access to services, sequestration could also have far-reaching consequences. For example, without responsive and effective law enforcement and prosecution made possible through VAWA, abusers are more likely to become repeat offenders.15 Without programs like transitional housing and legal services, many victims have no long-term alternative to their relationships and are forced to return to their abusers and are at an increased risk for intimate partner homicide.16

We strongly urge Congress to respond to sequestration, as it is seriously harmful, even deadly, for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.
This number is calculated based on extrapolations from the number of victims served as reported in the Office on Violence Against Women's 2010 Biennial Report to Congress on the Effectiveness of Grant Programs under the Violence Against Women Act, available at http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/docs/2010-biennial-report-to-congress.pdf. This number does not reflect the victims served by such vital programs as the Sexual Assault Services Program, the Campus Grants Program and the Consolidated Youth Program.

This data was calculated by reducing the number of victims reported to be receiving services under VAWA by 5%, based on the theory that if VAWA programs receive 5% less funding then 5% fewer victims will be able to access services.


THE IMPACT OF SEQUESTRATION ON DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROGRAMS
ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

85,120
Fewer victims will access shelter or receive sexual violence services via hotline calls

and

132,000
Fewer students and professionals will receive training to recognize and respond to issues of sexual violence

FVPSA: Lifesaving Domestic Violence Programs
Domestic violence directly impacts one in four women over a lifetime and 15.5 million children every year. This violence and abuse is devastating, costly and can be deadly. Each day in this country, an average of three women are killed by a current or former intimate partner.

The federal Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), primarily a formula grant to states, funds over 2,500 community-based domestic violence programs for victims and their children, providing emergency shelter and offering services such as counseling, legal assistance and preventative education. In 2011, FVPSA-funded programs served over 1.3 million adults and children.

These effective programs save and rebuild lives. A recently released multi-state NIJ-funded study shows conclusively that the nation's domestic violence shelters and non-residential services are addressing victims’ urgent and long-term needs and are helping victims protect themselves and their children. One of the studies indicated that, if the shelter did not exist, the consequences for victims would be dire, including: “homelessness, serious losses including children [or] continued abuse or death.”

When asked what he liked best about staying in the shelter, a ten-year-old boy answered, “I can sleep at night.” - Son of survivor of domestic violence in a FVPSA-funded Maryland program

The Rape Prevention and Education Program (RPE): Preventing Sexual Violence in Communities
RPE formula grants, administered by the CDC, 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. RPE projects prepare everyday people to become heroes in the fight against sexual violence.

The societal costs of sexual violence are incredibly high including medical and mental health care, law enforcement response, and lost productivity. Annual victim costs for rape are estimated at $127 billion (excluding the costs of child sexual abuse), making rape the most costly of all crimes.

According to 2010 data from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 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; 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; and 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.

Building on the success of the innovative Green Dot bystander intervention campaign on campuses, Kentucky RPE programs are expanding into high schools. In an evaluation done on over 7,900 undergraduates, students trained in Green Dot were more likely to speak up or find a trusted adult when they witnessed an act of violence.
The Impact of Sequestration Cuts
The stability of domestic and sexual violence programs across the country is being eroded through a multitude of budget cuts, and unmet needs are already extreme and dire. The 5% cut imposed by sequestration will only further the unconscionable gap between desperate need and available services.

- An estimated additional 70,120 victims will NOT be able to access FVPSA-funded services as a result of sequestration.
- This compounds the current gap in services:
  - In FY ‘10, FVPSA-funded programs were unable to meet 172,000 requests for shelter due to lack of capacity. The number of unmet requests for shelter has seen a steady increase since 2007 due to programs being at capacity.
  - In just one day during 2011, over 10,500 requests for services went unmet because programs lacked the resources to meet victims’ needs, according to an annual report by the National Network to End Domestic Violence.
  - According to a 2011 survey of domestic violence programs by Mary Kay Inc., 47% of shelters have decreased their services due to the economy. Of those decreasing their services, 72% cancelled or scaled back their services, while 63% eliminated staff positions.

Prevention programs already fail to reach all communities due to funding limits. In fact, a 2012 survey by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence of rape crisis centers indicated that 67% had to reduce prevention education and public awareness efforts because of funding losses and 40% had waiting lists for prevention programs. A 5% cut to RPE through sequestration would result in a $2 million cut to the program resulting in:

- 125,000 fewer elementary, middle school, high school and college students receiving information about how to prevent sexual abuse and rape.
- 15,000 fewer hotline calls related to sexual violence answered by hotlines.
- 7,000 fewer professionals trained in identifying sexual violence issues.

Additional Impacts
Sequestration will not only limit victims’ immediate access to domestic violence services and communities’ ability to prevent sexual violence, but will also destabilize so many of the other vital supports upon which victims rely to rebuild their lives after crisis. Cuts to affordable housing, mental health services, substance abuse treatment programs, job assistance programs, education, law enforcement and many other vital programs will undermine victims’ ability to escape domestic violence, recover from sexual violence, and secure safety and stability for themselves and their children.

We strongly urge Congress to respond to sequestration, as it is seriously harmful, even deadly, for victims of domestic violence.

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