



Campaign for Funding to End Domestic and Sexual Violence

Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence and Stalking Face Harmful, even Deadly Cuts under Sequestration

It has been 18 years since the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was signed into law. As Senators Leahy (D-VT) and Crapo (R-ID) recently said in an Op-ed:

“Since its initial passage nearly two decades ago, VAWA has proven to be a powerful tool in reducing violence against women by providing critical support to law enforcement agencies and services for survivors . . . Although we have made significant progress, domestic violence and sexual assault remain serious challenges. Every day, abusive partners kill three women in this country, and for every victim killed, there are nine more who narrowly escape. Approximately 1 in 3 adolescent girls is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse by an intimate partner, and 1 in 5 women will be raped in their lifetime. These numbers are staggering. It would be unacceptable to let politics interfere with our commitment to stopping this violence and abuse.”

While VAWA's reauthorization has stalled in Congress, “sequestration” poses yet another serious challenge to victims' safety and well-being. The Budget Control Act would cut 8.2 percent from all federal programs, across the board, on January 2, 2013, including VAWA. 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, and the Campaign for Funding to End Domestic and Sexual Violence, sequestration would result in nearly 200,000 fewer victims receiving life-saving and cost-effective services. Specifically:

- 112,190 fewer victims would have access to domestic violence programs and shelters;
- Approximately 64,000 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;
- 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.

Sequestration cuts, combined with the VAWA's stalled reauthorization, will have a direct negative impact on victims fleeing violence and abuse. Just as VAWA programs are transforming communities' responses to violence, these cuts will close the door to safety and support for many victims and their families.

“If it were not for the people who were there to help me through what I was going through; the counselors, just the staff period, just a place to stay, a place to put my children. If I did not have that I might be one of those people in the newspaper.” - Survivor of domestic violence from VAWA-funded New Jersey program

Additional Potential Impacts

Investment in VAWA programs not only saves money in averted social costs,ⁱⁱⁱ 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, rapists and abusers are more likely to become repeat offenders.^{iv} Without programs like transitional housing, many victims have no long-term alternative to their relationships and are forced to return to their abusers.^v And without VAWA programs, like those that provide legal services, victims are at an increased risk for intimate partner homicide.^{vi}

We strongly urge Congress to avoid sequestration, as it could be seriously harmful, even deadly, for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.

ⁱ 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.

ⁱⁱ This data was calculated by reducing the number of victims reported to be receiving services under VAWA by 8%, based on the theory that if VAWA programs receive 8% less funding then 8% fewer victims will be able to access services.

ⁱⁱⁱ Andersen Clark, K., et al. (2002). A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994. *Violence Against Women*, 8, 417.

^{iv} Archer, C., DuPree, C., Miller, N., Spence, D. & Uekert, B. (2002 November). National Evaluation of the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies Program. Alexandria, VA: Institute for Law and Justice.

^v Melbin, A., Sullivan, C. & Cain, D. (2003). Transitional Supportive Housing Programs: Battered Women's Perspectives and Recommendations. *AFFILIA*, 18(4).

^{vi} Reckdenwald, A. & Parker, K.F. (2010). Understanding Gender-Specific Intimate Partner Homicide: A Theoretical and Domestic Service-Oriented Approach. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38, 951-958.



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THE IMPACT OF SEQUESTRATION ON VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

112,190

Fewer victims will access shelter

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.

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

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."ⁱ

Potential Impact of Impending Cuts

The stability of domestic violence programs across the country is being eroded through a multitude of budget cuts, and unmet needs are already extreme and dire. The 8% cut imposed by sequestration will only further the unconscionable gap between desperate need and available services.

- An estimated additional **112,190** victims would NOT be able to access FVPSA-funded services if sequestration is enacted.ⁱⁱ
- 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.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - In just one day during 2011, over 10,500 requests for services went unmet because programs lacked the resources to meet victims' needs.^{iv}
 - 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.^v

Additional Potential Impacts

Sequestration would not only limit victims' immediate access to domestic violence services, 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 and secure stability for themselves and their children.

We strongly urge Congress to avoid sequestration, as it could be seriously harmful, even deadly, for victims of domestic violence.

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- ⁱThe National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRC DV) and the University of Connecticut School of Social Work: Meeting Survivors' Needs through Non-Residential Domestic Violence Services & Supports: Results of a Multi-State Study, funded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and U.S. Department of Justice. Lyon, E., & Lane, S. (2009). Meeting survivors' needs: A multi-state study of domestic violence shelter experiences. Harrisburg, PA: National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. Retrieved from <http://www.vawnet.org>. For additional information on effectiveness of domestic violence programs, see also: Berk, R. A., Newton, P. J., & Berk, S. F. (1986). What a difference a day makes: An empirical study of the impact of shelters for battered women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 48, 481-490; Bybee, D.I., & Sullivan, C.M. (2002). The process through which a strengths-based intervention resulted in positive change for battered women over time. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(1), 103-132; Constantino, R., Kim, Y., & Crane, P.A. (2005). Effects of a social support intervention on health outcomes in residents of a domestic violence shelter: A pilot study. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 26, 575-590; Goodkind, J., Sullivan, C.M., & Bybee, D.I. (2004). A contextual analysis of battered women's safety planning. *Violence Against Women*, 10(5), 514-533; Sullivan, C.M. (2000). A model for effectively advocating for women with abusive partners. In Vincent, J. P. & Jouriles, E. N. (Eds.) (1999). *Domestic violence: Guidelines for research-informed practice* (pp. 126-143). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers; Sullivan, C. M., & Bybee, D. I. (1999). Reducing violence using community-based advocacy for women with abusive partners. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 67(1), 43-53.
- ⁱⁱ Under Threat: Sequestration's Impact on Nondefense Jobs and Services. A report for Senator Tom Harkin, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. July 25, 2012. Available at <http://harkin.senate.gov/documents/pdf/500ff3554f9ba.pdf>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Health and Human Services; Administration for Children and Families; Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. *Domestic Violence Services 2010; Family Violence Prevention and Services Act Grantees Data Report* (2010).
- ^{iv} National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV). (2012 February). *Domestic Violence Counts 2011: A 24-hour census of domestic violence shelters and services across the United States*. Washington, DC.
- ^v "Mary Kay Truth About Abuse" Survey: National Findings from Third Survey of Domestic Violence Shelters in the United States: Released April 2011.