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
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THE IMPACT OF SEQUESTRATION ON VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, DATING VIOLENCE AND STALKING

64,000
Fewer victims will access vital services

VAWA: 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 a current or former intimate partner. One in six women and one in 33 men have 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 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, and both the rate of non-fatal intimate partner violence and the number of individuals killed by an intimate partner have decreased. Because of VAWA, victims have unprecedented access to services that enable them to escape abuse and rebuild their lives. In 2012, programs under VAWA will provide lifesaving services to approximately 740,000 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.

Potential Impact of Impending 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 8% cut imposed by sequestration will only further the unconscionable gap between desperate need and available services. Sequestration would result in an estimated almost 64,000 fewer victims receiving these life-saving and cost-effective services, including:

- Assistance obtaining protection orders
- Advocacy and accompaniment in medical and legal settings
- Crisis intervention and counseling
- Transitional housing services
- Representation in and assistance with civil legal matters
- 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 counted many successes, 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 expand 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 Potential Impacts

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

\begin{itemize}
\item[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.
\item[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.
\end{itemize}
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.”

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.
- 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 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.

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.


