



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence



THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), enacted in 1994, recognizes the insidious and pervasive nature of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking and supports *comprehensive, effective and cost-saving* responses to these crimes. VAWA programs, administered by the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, give law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and community agencies the tools they need to hold offenders accountable and keep communities safe while supporting victims.

VAWA includes essential grant programs designed to provide both a systemic and services response to these crimes:

- The Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors (STOP) formula grant program funds each state and territory to improve the services and criminal justice response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. In its most recent report to Congress on the STOP program, the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) noted that STOP grant funded programs responded helped 431,244 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking; funded over 2,200 staff; and provided professional training for over 200,000 individuals.¹
- The Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP) funds each state and territory to provide services to sexual assault survivors. In its most recent reports to Congress on VAWA for services provided, OVW noted that over 40,000 survivors of sexual assault had been served by SASP per year.²
- In addition to formula grants, several discretionary grant programs support local community response teams; fund legal services for survivors; ensure access to services in rural areas; improve campus responses to sexual and domestic violence; and improve accessibility for survivors with disabilities. Through the Arrest Grant Program, 1.5 million bed nights in emergency or transitional housing were provided to victims and their children in the most recent reporting period.³

VAWA SAVES LIVES AND SAVES MONEY

VAWA-funded programs have unquestionably improved the national response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. More victims are coming forward and receiving lifesaving services to help them move from crisis to stability, and the criminal justice system has improved its ability to keep victims safe and hold perpetrators accountable.

Since VAWA was first passed in 1994:

- Reporting of domestic violence has increased as much as 51%.⁴
- All states have passed laws making stalking a crime and have strengthened rape laws.
- The rate of non-fatal intimate partner violence against women has decreased by 63%⁵ and the number of women killed by an intimate partner has decreased by 23%.⁶
- A 2010 study demonstrated that an increase in the number of legal services available is associated with a decrease in intimate partner homicide.⁷
- A 2009 Department of Justice Study found Kentucky saved \$85 million in one alone year through the issuance of protection orders and the reduction in violence they caused.⁸
- VAWA saved \$12.6 billion in its first 6 years alone.⁹
- A recent study found that when sexual assault victims have the support of an advocate in the aftermath of an assault, they receive more helpful information, referrals and services, and experience less secondary trauma or revictimization by medical and legal systems. They also fare better in the short and long term and are more likely to file a police report than those without such support.¹⁰

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- ¹ STOP Program, 2014 Report, Part A, available at <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/file/641566/download>
- ² SASP Formula Grant Program, 2014 report, available at <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/file/641571/download>
- ³ 2012 Biennial Report to Congress on the Effectiveness of Grant Programs, available at <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/vawamei/attachments/congressreports/Discretionary2012ReportToCongress.pdf>
- ⁴ Intimate Partner Violence in the U.S.⁹ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Jan. 2008.; Cassandra Archer et al., Institute for Law and Justice, National Evaluation of the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies Program 14 (Nov. 2002).
- ⁵ (Truman, J.L. & Morgan, R.E. (2014, April.)) Nonfatal Domestic Violence (2003-2012). U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs: Bureau of Justice Statistics, available at, <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipvav9311.pdf>. (see page 3)
- ⁶ (Catalano (2013, Nov.)) Intimate Partner Violence in the U.S Attributes of Victimization, 1993–2011. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs: Bureau of Justice Statistics. Nov 2013 <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ipvav9311.pdf> (see Table 2 comparison of 1993 and 2010 numbers)
- ⁷ Reckdenwald, A., & Parker, K.K. (2010). Understanding gender-specific intimate partner homicide: A theoretical and domestic service-oriented approach. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38, 951-958.
- ⁸ *The Kentucky Civil Protective Order Study: A Rural and Urban Multiple Perspective Study of Protective Order Violation Consequences, Responses, & Costs.* (2009). U.S. Department of Justice.
- ⁹ Kathryn Andersen Clark et al., A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, *Violence Against Women* 417 (2002).
- ¹⁰ (Campbell, R. (2006). Rape survivors' experiences with the legal and medical system: Do rape victim advocates make a difference? *Violence Against Women*, 12, 30-45.