



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2021

Contact: Terri Poore, terri@endsexualviolence

**NAESV Celebrates American Rescue Plan
Providing First COVID Relief Funding for Survivors of Sexual Assault**

Today, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan and sent this landmark legislation, so desperately needed, to President Biden's desk for his signature. The American Rescue Plan sends a clear message to survivors of sexual assault: we hear you and you have our support. As many survivors struggle with severe trauma reactions due to the increased stress of the pandemic, rape crisis centers and culturally specific programs are struggling to meet those needs just as they are committed to finding innovative solutions. The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) celebrates this first relief funding targeted specifically to sexual assault programs and culturally specific services.

This legislation includes the following funding to meet the specific needs of survivors of gender-based violence:

- \$198 million for sexual assault services through rape crisis centers
- \$180 million for the Family Violence Prevention & Services Act (FVPSA)
- \$49.5 million for culturally specific programs
- \$1 million for the National Domestic Violence Hotline
- \$1 million for the StrongHearts Native Helpline
- \$18 million for tribal responses to gender-based violence

Last spring, the NAESV conducted a survey of the impact of COVID-19 on the efforts of rape crisis centers to meet the needs of survivors. Results from more than 600 programs revealed the following:

89% of programs need emergency stimulus funding to respond to current requests from survivors for support and emergency assistance.

40% of programs have experienced an increased demand for services since the onset of COVID-19 both in terms of new requests and more dire and complicated requests from current clients.

The survey revealed the following priority needs of programs:

- Funds to purchase tablets, cell phones, telehealth, internet, and other equipment and platforms to allow staff working remotely to provide virtual services to survivors.
- Funds to meet the emergency needs of survivors such as food, rent, pre-paid cell phones for survivors to receive emergency support, and van rentals to deliver emergency items.
- Funds to meet the needs of vulnerable populations including immigrant and homeless survivors.

Responding to survivors' medical and legal needs has become very complex and difficult. Advocates are scrambling to find local solutions.

Quotes from advocates:

From a program director in Ohio: "We are one of the largest independent rape crisis centers in the nation. Our funding is diverse and balanced between government sources and philanthropy. We entered the month of March in the strongest financial position in the history of our organization. Now, with the anticipated VOCA cuts at the end of this year, combined with the cancellation of our signature fundraising event, and our philanthropic partners diverting donations to COVID-19 emergency response, our financial well-being is in jeopardy. Without significant intervention, we will be dramatically reducing rape crisis services to our community (urban, suburban, rural)."

From a Massachusetts advocate: "When the response is remote and people are experiencing a pandemic, it makes the work so much more difficult because we are responding to so many additional needs in a way we are all learning about. We are building the plane as we're flying it. Seclusion does not mean survivors are safe or healthy."

From an Oregon advocate: "Trauma of sexual assault survivors is heightened and becomes complex trauma with the increased economic insecurity and with having kids home 24/7. Many survivors feel more isolated so reach out to us for connection and emotional support to replace that of their usual social connections."

From an Illinois advocate: "Outreach services to vulnerable populations are extremely limited at this time; with children not being seen on a regular basis by trusted/safe adults during the school day, we anticipate a significant increase in the demand of services due to the number of disclosures that will be made when the state returns to as usual."

From a Kansas advocate: "Most services are being provided remotely making it difficult to assist survivors. Not all staff have laptops available to work with survivors remotely. Survivors need victim services now, more than ever, in this scary time."

From a Tennessee advocate: "There is a significant cost to operating remotely, and it takes a different kind of emotional toll on staff. Sexual assault survivors are often triggered during times

of crisis, such as this pandemic, so being able to maintain connection and support is essential to their wellbeing. The biggest challenge our organization has faced is making the transition to remote work with all of the necessary equipment and privacy protections.”

Funding in the American Rescue Plan will make a major difference in the ability of local sexual assault programs to meet the needs of survivors.

###

The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence is the voice in Washington for the 56 state and territorial sexual assault coalitions and 1500 rape crisis centers working to end sexual violence and support survivors.