

Domestic and Sexual Violence Survivors Need Targeted Funding to Stay Safe and Rebuild Their Lives Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

The National Network to End Domestic Violence urges Congress to ensure the next COVID-19 relief package includes and expands upon the House-passed HEREOS Act (H.R. 6800) to address survivors' needs. Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault face deadly consequences resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and have urgent housing, economic, health, safety, and other human needs. Immigrant survivors and survivors of color face disproportionate impacts of the pandemic compounded by the lack of access to resources. Programs that serve survivors need increased, flexible funding.

Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)

Increase funding by \$100 million and eliminate matching fund requirements to allow programs in every state and U.S. territory to provide emergency shelter, housing, and services for survivors and their children.

Culturally Specific Services Program for Survivors of Color

Provide \$40 million for culturally specific programs to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on survivors from racial and ethnic minority communities (new program, administered by FVPSA Office).

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

Eliminate match requirements for VOCA grants and amend the law to include direct penalties and fines from federal deferred and non-prosecution agreements to be deposited into the Crime Victims Fund (CVF), which provides non-taxpayer dollars to victim service providers in every state and territory. Increasing deposits into the rapidly-declining CVF will sustain funding for victim services.

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

- ★ Increase Sexual Assault Services Program by \$100 million;
- ★ Increase STOP formula grants by \$225 million to provide victim services in states, territories, and tribes; and
- ★ Increase VAWA Transitional Housing Program by \$40 million.

Housing for Victims of Domestic Violence

Increase U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care Domestic Violence Bonus Fund by \$100 million to provide survivors with immediate housing.

Immigrant Survivors

Ensure immigrant survivors have access to health and economic supports by extending immigrant visas (e.g., U visas, T visas, etc.) and work authorization, offering access to COVID-19 testing and treatment, and providing stimulus checks for those paying taxes using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number.

Unemployment Insurance and Paid Leave

Provide paid leave for survivors and access to unemployment insurance when they have to leave jobs due to abuse, while maintaining HEROES Act provisions that expand caregiving and medical reasons for taking paid leave, increase the wage replacement maximum for family care purposes, and expand “family care” definitions.

Investments in the Social Safety Net

Include HEROES Act provisions that invest in housing assistance, increase food and nutritional programs, improve the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs, and provide grants for organizations to provide increased pandemic pay for essential workers, including victim service providers.

Emerging Data: Domestic violence and COVID-19

- ★ Over 150 U.S. cities, counties, and states have reported double-digit increases in domestic violence hotline calls, police calls, website visits, or even homicides.
- ★ Contacts to the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) in April were 15% higher compared to April 2019. In the first three weeks of the pandemic, 2,345 survivors contacting the Hotline cited COVID-19 as a “condition of their experience.”
- ★ Forty percent of [rape crisis centers](#) and 46% of [YWCA domestic violence programs](#) reported an increased demand for services.
- ★ Unique visitors to the [WomensLaw.org](#) legal information website from January – April 2020 more than doubled compared to the same period in 2019.
- ★ [Multiple studies](#) have found a correlation between disasters with similarities to the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in domestic violence. The need for services often peaks months after survivors can safely leave their homes.

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