



THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT of 2005 Summary of Provisions

In December, 2005, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 2005 to continue successful and lifesaving programs, while also taking the next steps to end sexual and domestic violence. The President signed VAWA 2005 into law on January 5, 2006. After more than a decade of progress addressing these issues, the federal government has renewed its commitment to the safety and security of victims of domestic and sexual violence and their families.

The statistics on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking are alarming:

- Nearly one in four women experience at least one physical assault by a partner during adulthood;¹
- People ages 12–19 are raped and sexually assaulted at rates higher than any other age group;²
- More than one in three American Indian and Alaska Native women will be raped in their lifetimes and six of ten will be physically assaulted;³
- Thirty-eight percent of domestic violence victims will become homeless at some point in their lives;⁴ and,
- Stalking affects over 1.4 million people a year.⁵

VAWA has made incredible inroads to end sexual and domestic violence. Thanks to VAWA 1994 and VAWA 2000, non-fatal, violent victimizations committed by intimate partners declined by 49%.⁶ VAWA's achievements are evident: the 1994 law saved an estimated \$14.8 billion in net averted social costs in its first 6 years.⁷ However, because more victims are now able to come forward, demand for local services has continued to rise. For example, since VAWA 1994 there has been a 51% increase in reporting of domestic violence⁸ and the National Domestic Violence Hotline has seen calls increase an average of 18% every year.

This reauthorization of VAWA continues the remarkable gains that have been made to end domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. VAWA 2005 brings together *existing* resources to create new collaborations that *efficiently* deliver services to victims of domestic and sexual violence, continuing the progress that was begun with VAWA 1994 and 2000. VAWA 2005 will continue working to break the cycle of violence and empower victims of domestic and sexual assault.

A broad group of law enforcement, victim service providers, community leaders, and survivors of domestic and sexual violence and stalking evaluated VAWA and recommended the changes necessary to effectively and thoroughly respond to the epidemic of violence against women. Below is a summary of these new provisions included in VAWA 2005.

- VAWA 2005 provides practical solutions to improving the response of the criminal justice and legal systems to help communities respond to domestic and sexual violence. It reauthorizes essential existing VAWA programs and included the development of new services that respond to evolving community needs.

- VAWA 2005 creates the Sexual Assault Services Program, which is the first federal funding stream dedicated to direct services for victims of sexual assault.
- VAWA 2005 provides housing resources to prevent victims from becoming homeless and ensure that victims can access the criminal justice system without jeopardizing their current or future housing.
- Through prevention programs that intervene early with children who have witnessed domestic violence, support young families at risk for violence, and change social norms through targeted interventions with men and youth, VAWA 2005 takes the next step toward truly ending the cycle of violence.
- VAWA 2005 provides a comprehensive approach for assisting children, teens and young adults who live with domestic or sexual violence in their lives.
- VAWA dramatically improves the response to violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women, funding critical research and establishing a tribal registry to track sex offenders and orders of protection.
- In order to improve the health care system's response to violence against women, VAWA 2005 provides for the training and education of health care providers and strengthens the health care system's response to victims.
- VAWA 2005 creates a National Resource Center on Workplace Responses to help employers make their workplaces safer and more productive while supporting their employees who are being victimized.
- VAWA 1994 and 2000 recognized the special circumstances that can apply to non-citizen survivors of domestic violence and provided avenues for battered spouses and children to leave their abusive families without jeopardizing their immigration status. VAWA 2005 makes technical corrections to existing immigration law, resolving inconsistencies in the eligibility for immigrant victims.

VAWA 2005 continues our government's strong commitment to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking and makes additional inroads to end domestic and sexual violence through new targeted, efficient programs. VAWA 2005 is a crucial investment in our communities—it will save lives, prevent future crimes, and result in reduced costs.

Prepared by the National Network to End Domestic Violence. For questions, contact Allison Randall or Monica McLaughlin at policy@nnev.org or (202) 543-5566.

¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The National Institute of Justice, *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence*, (July 2000).

² Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey 6 (2002).

³ Patricia Tjaden & Nancy Thoennes, U.S. Department of Justice, "Full Report on the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women," 22 (2000).

⁴ Charlene K. Baker, Cook, Sarah L., Norris, Fran H., "Domestic Violence and Housing Problems: A Contextual Analysis of Women's Help-seeking, Received Informal Support, and Formal System Response," *Violence Against Women* 9, no.7 (2003): 754-783.

⁵ Tjaden & Thoennes, "Stalking in America," National Institute of Justice, US Department of Justice, (1998).

⁶ Callie M. Rennison, Ph.D., U.S. Dep't. of Justice, Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001 (February 2003).

⁷ Kathryn Andersen Clark et al., *A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994*, 8 *Violence Against Women* 417 (2002).

⁸ Cassandra Archer et al., Inst. for Law and Justice, National Evaluation of the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies Program 14 (Nov. 2002).