



## Funding Challenges for Domestic Violence Programs: The Impact on Victims

Across the country, domestic violence programs and shelters are operating with less funding and fewer resources and staff. When victims take the difficult step to reach out for help, many are in life-threatening situations and must be able to find immediate safety and support. Stable funding is now more essential than ever to ensure that programs across the country can keep the lights on, answer crisis calls, and provide essential services for victims fleeing violence.

**Decreases in Funding:** Domestic violence programs are experiencing funding cuts or reductions from multiple sources. In a recent survey of NNEDV's 56 member state and territorial coalitions against domestic violence, 69% of coalitions reported that domestic violence programs experienced overall funding decreases from Fiscal Year 2011 to Fiscal Year 2012. Additionally:

- Almost 80% of states reported that their programs were experiencing cuts or reduction in funding from local county and city sources.
- Approximately 90% of states reported that their programs were seeing decreases in private donations.

**Increase in Demand:** At the same time that funding is decreasing, programs across the country are seeing an increase in demand for services. In NNEDV's funding survey, 88% of state and territorial coalitions reported that domestic violence programs have recently experienced an increase in requests. When coupled with the decrease in funding, this creates an unconscionable gap in services.

**Impact on Victims and Programs:** Across the country, shelters are struggling to remain open, and non-residential programs are reducing their services and hours. Programs and coalitions have also been forced to lay off staff and/or to operate with unfilled positions.

- According to NNEDV's funding survey, over 71% of coalitions reported that, in the first 8 months of 2012 alone, some domestic violence programs were forced to reduce staff because of funding shortages, and 66% reported that some DV programs had to reduce victim services. Since 2011, at least 19 local DV programs across the country have been forced to close entirely. Victims suffer the consequences of these cuts, and are often left with no alternative other than returning to their abusers or becoming homeless.
- NNEDV's National DV Counts Census found that on just one day, across the United States and U.S. Territories, 64,324 adults and children received services from domestic violence programs. Unfortunately, 10,471 requests for services went unmet due to lack of resources.
- In FY '09, domestic violence programs funded by FVPSA provided shelter and nonresidential services to over 1 million victims. However, due to lack of capacity, an additional 167,069 requests for shelter went unmet.<sup>i</sup>

### The Potential Impact of Sequestration on Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence

The federal "sequestration" will further threaten the stability of domestic violence programs and services for victims.

Sequestration would result in an estimated 416,500 fewer victims receiving life-saving and cost-effective services, including:

- Approximately 70,120 fewer victims would have access to domestic violence programs and shelters<sup>ii</sup>;
- Approximately 35,900 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<sup>iii</sup>;
- Approximately 310,574 fewer victims would have direct victim assistance services through Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funded services<sup>iv</sup>;

- 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 including affordable housing, mental health services, substance abuse treatment programs, job assistance programs, education, law enforcement.

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<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration & Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget. (2011). Women in America: Indicators of social and economic well-being. Washington, DC: White House Council on Women and Girls.

<sup>ii</sup> According to analyses done by U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), the U.S. Office of Budget and Management., available at

<http://www.harkin.senate.gov/documents/pdf/500ff3554f9ba.pdf>. Harkin's report calculated the impact of an 8% cut; these numbers were adjusted to reflect a 5% cut.

<sup>iii</sup> According to analysis done by the Department of Justice, as reported at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/15/sequestration-vawa\\_n\\_2695465.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/15/sequestration-vawa_n_2695465.html). We believe this number is likely an underestimation of sequestration's impact on victims receiving services under VAWA, and it also does not include the number of service providers who would not receive vital training to respond to domestic violence if sequestration goes into effect.

<sup>iv</sup> According to estimates by the National Association of VOCA State Administrators.