

NNEDV

18th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report

NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

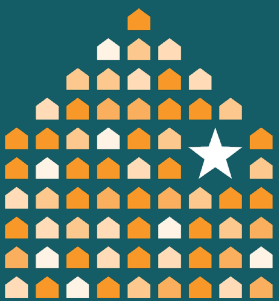
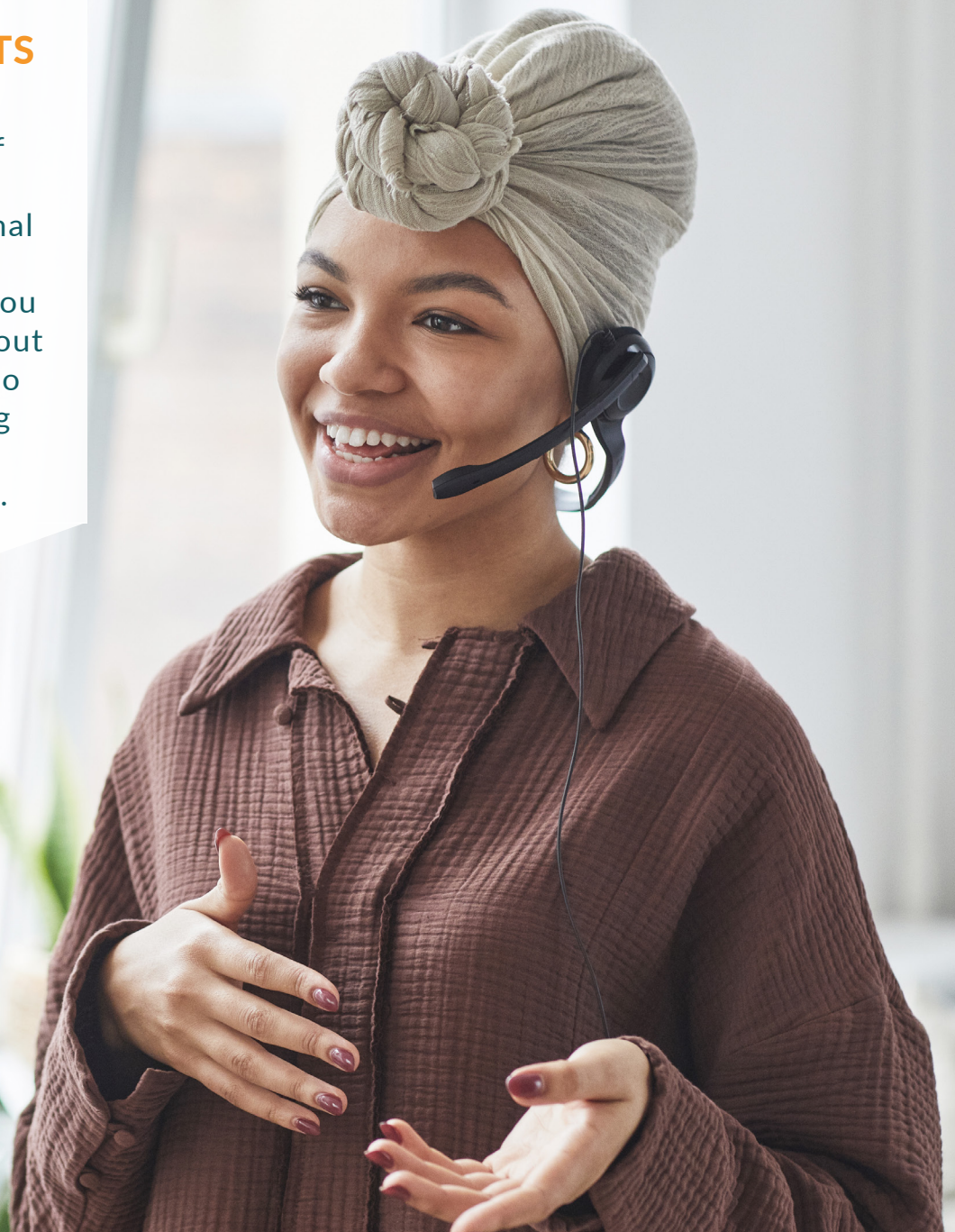


24-HOUR SURVEY
of Domestic Violence
Shelters and Services

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We offer our deep appreciation to the staff of the 1,626 programs participating in this national count of local domestic violence services. Thank you for sharing information about the lifesaving work you do every day and for shining a light on survivors' and advocates' urgent needs.



NNEDV
NATIONAL NETWORK
TO END DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE

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The 18th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report is made possible by:



In Just One Day...

On September 6, 2023, the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) conducted our 18th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Survey, a one-day, unduplicated count of domestic violence services requested and received across the United States. Of the 1,958 domestic violence programs and shelters identified¹ nationwide, 1,626 programs (83%) in all fifty-six states and U.S. territories participated. For eighteen years, Domestic Violence Counts has been the premier trusted source of data on the lifesaving services domestic violence advocates provide to survivors every day.

Every year, the Domestic Violence Counts Report summarizes the survey findings, including the number of people accessing services, the services requested, the number of unmet requests, and the experiences of survivors and advocates.² The report also shares stories of both hope and heartbreak—from advocates connecting domestic violence survivors and their children with lifesaving assistance, to programs being forced to turn away survivors who urgently need help. We tell these stories to inform and educate the public and policymakers at all levels of government about survivors' and programs' needs and to shine a spotlight on the steps that must be taken to create change.

Despite their tireless efforts, advocates and programs simply do not have enough resources. More resources are required at the federal, tribal, state, territorial, and local levels. When survivors can't access services, they often have no choice but to remain with abusers and risk further violence against themselves and their children.

Throughout this past year, NNEDV continued to address these challenges and advocated for resources and legislation to help survivors and advocates, including a campaign to restore funding to the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and general funding increases in Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations. Targeted legislative changes, Administration initiatives, and additional resources are needed to improve system-wide responses, eliminate barriers to safety and justice for all survivors, and ensure that no program is ever forced to turn away survivors or close their doors when faced with a decrease in funding.



✂ **From a South Dakota advocate: “Advocates across the country are working countless, exhausting hours. Every advocate I know would love to work themselves out of a job and have safe, violence-free communities. But domestic and sexual violence aren’t going anywhere. We need financial assistance to make sure we don’t go anywhere, either.”**

¹ For a program to qualify for participation in the Domestic Violence Counts Survey, one of its primary purposes must be the provision of domestic violence services.

² Quotes have been edited for length and to protect victims' and survivors' anonymity.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNTS REPORT NATIONAL SUMMARY

On September 6, 2023, **1,626** out of **1,958 (83%)** identified domestic violence programs in the United States participated in a national count of domestic violence services conducted by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV). The following figures were shared by participating programs, along with state, territorial, and national hotlines, about the services they provided during the 24-hour survey period.

76,975 Victims Served

44,616 adult and child victims of domestic violence found refuge in emergency shelters, transitional housing, hotels, motels, or other housing provided by local programs.

32,359 adult and child victims received non-residential supportive services related to transportation, housing advocacy, legal support, therapy, and more.

Table 1: Top Services Provided on 9/6/23	% of Programs Providing Services
Emergency Shelter	70%
Transportation	53%
Children's Support or Advocacy	52%
Court Accompaniment or Legal Advocacy	52%
Support/Advocacy Related to Housing/Landlord	52%
Support/Advocacy Related to Mental Health	46%
Support/Advocacy Related to Public Benefits/TANF/Welfare	42%
Therapy/Counseling for Adults	42%

23,348 Hotline Contacts Received

Domestic violence hotlines are lifelines for victims in danger, providing support, information, safety

planning, and resources via phone, chat, text, email, and more. Local programs' hotlines received **20,349** contacts; state- and territory-wide hotlines received **320** contacts; the National Domestic Violence Hotline received **2,656** contacts; and NNEDV's WomensLaw Email Hotline received **23** contacts. Altogether, hotlines received nearly **973** contacts every hour of the survey day, or more than **16** contacts every minute.

15,555 People Educated

Programs provided **629** educational sessions and trainings to **15,522** members of the public, addressing topics like domestic violence prevention and early intervention. Community education is essential to raising awareness about domestic violence and promoting available resources.

13,335 Unmet Requests for Services

Victims made **13,335** requests for services that programs could not provide because they lacked sufficient resources. The majority of these unmet requests (**54%**) were for emergency shelter, hotels, motels, transitional housing, and other housing.

Survivors and their children need a safe place to stay as they escape abuse and rebuild their lives. Programs need increased funding to provide shelter, housing, safety planning, and other services to all survivors seeking help, while also working toward preventing violence in their communities.

✘ **From a Michigan advocate: "The work we do saves lives, but funding cuts have severely impacted our ability to pay our staff a competitive wage for this critical work. These cuts also impact the survivors who come to us for help. We implore those in decision-making positions to seriously consider what would happen if organizations like ours did not exist."**

VICTIMS SERVED



REAL STORIES

“Using a rental assistance program, one of our participants was able to get independent housing. We secured transportation for her job along with rental and houseware assistance. She stated that, without our support, she was not sure how she would make it.”

- Florida advocate

“Affordable housing is a challenge that seems to offer no relief. Individuals who are ready to thrive and build a new life are stifled by the lack of housing opportunities.”

- Idaho advocate

Domestic Violence Programs Provide Refuge and Advocacy in Times of Crisis

Domestic violence is all about power and control, and abusers’ manipulation and threats can make it difficult and unsafe for victims to escape and access the resources they need. When survivors make the choice to reach out for help, it is crucial that programs and advocates have sufficient funding, staffing, and resources to meet their needs.

Table 2: Victims Served on 9/6/23	Emergency Shelter	Transitional or Other Housing	Hotel/Motel	Non-Residential Supportive Services	Total
Adults	11,352	9,498	831	26,583	48,264
Children	10,551	11,650	734	5,776	28,711
Total	21,903	21,148	1,565	32,359	76,975

Answering the Call

Domestic violence hotlines are often the first point of contact for survivors seeking help. On September 6, 2023, local, state, territorial, and national domestic violence hotlines received 23,348 contacts, averaging nearly 973 contacts per hour or more than 16 contacts per minute.

Shelter and Housing Provide Safety and Pathways to Stability

Access to safe, affordable housing is a critical, often immediate, need for survivors leaving abusers. However, for survivors staying in emergency shelters, hotels, and motels, the path to securing long-term housing before their temporary stay ends can be challenging. Factors like long waitlists for subsidized housing, unaffordable non-subsidized options, a lack of financial resources, and challenging housing histories caused by the abuse itself can create substantial barriers. Survivors of color, survivors with disabilities, and other marginalized survivors face additional systemic barriers and challenges throughout this process.

Many domestic violence programs offer transitional housing, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, and other affordable housing options to help survivors find a safe place to live. Overcoming systemic barriers and addressing survivors’ housing needs require intentional, sustained partnerships, along with substantial investments in affordable housing at the federal, tribal, state, territorial, and local levels.

Domestic violence advocates work hard to help survivors navigate these and other challenges. A Connecticut advocate shared: “A family in our shelter had several housing applications denied because they had an eviction on their record and didn’t have income. Our advocate reached out to a landlord to discuss our housing program and emphasize the ongoing support we would provide. The landlord shared her own personal domestic violence experience and approved the survivor’s application. The family was able to move into their own apartment and begin their new life.”

Opening the Door

On September 6, 2023: Adult and child victims found refuge in local programs’

emergency shelters (21,903 victims); transitional or other housing programs (21,148 victims); and hotel and motel stays paid for by local programs (1,565 victims). Seventy percent of reporting programs provided emergency shelter; 39% provided transitional or other housing services; and 24% provided hotel or motel stays.

An Arkansas advocate shared: “A victim and her children traveled several hours to our shelter to escape abuse. She shared that it was the first time in weeks that they had been able to get a peaceful night’s rest. She was able to work and secure housing while in our shelter, and the family has now started their new life free of violence.”

Comprehensive and Compassionate Advocacy

In addition to providing a safe place to stay, many domestic violence programs offer a range of non-residential supportive services to help survivors rebuild their lives after abuse, including transportation, housing advocacy, legal support, therapy, and more. These trauma-informed services, along with the advocates providing them, help survivors build a strong foundation to move forward after abuse.

An advocate in Iowa shared: “A mother in our shelter was having a difficult day, feeling guilty about the abuse. One of our advocates supported her, talked about all of her strengths, and reminded her that she did the absolute best she could to protect her child, given the situation. She left feeling empowered.”

These non-residential supportive services are often tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities that face unique and complex challenges. Many programs provide services specifically designed to support survivors of color, LGBTQ+ survivors, immigrant survivors, survivors with disabilities, survivors using substances, and other groups with unique needs. Programs need resources to provide and expand these services and to hire advocates with lived experiences in order to best support victims.

A Hawai’i advocate shared: “I helped a Marshallese/Pacific Islander client successfully complete a public housing application. I spoke the same language as

her and understood her culture, which made the process fast and enjoyable for her.”

Helping Survivors Heal

On September 6, 2023: Programs provided 32,359 people with non-residential supportive services.

Table 3: Top Non-Residential Supportive Services Provided on 9/6/23	% of Programs Providing Services
Transportation	53%
Children’s Support or Advocacy	52%
Court Accompaniment or Legal Advocacy	52%
Support/Advocacy Related to Housing/Landlord	52%
Support/Advocacy Related to Mental Health	46%
Support/Advocacy Related to Public Benefits/TANF/Welfare	42%
Therapy/Counseling for Adults	42%
Bilingual Advocacy	37%

From an advocate in Illinois: “In a counseling session, a survivor was able to identify the abuse, realize it was not her fault, and truly believe that setting a boundary and ending the relationship was okay. The confidence she held was powerful to witness.”

Ending Violence Starts with Community Education

In addition to providing crisis intervention, advocates also educate communities, raise awareness, and change social norms in order to prevent abuse before it occurs. Education is a powerful tool to help people understand the importance of healthy relationships, identify signs of unhealthy or abusive relationships, and access resources.

Advocates design and use specialized trainings to underscore the importance of trauma-informed service provision. When stakeholders like first responders, medical professionals, social service employees, attorneys, and judges grasp the nuances of domestic violence, they can better meet survivors’ needs.

A Massachusetts advocate said: “With the invaluable support of one of our partner agencies, we were



REAL STORIES

“Generational poverty and trauma, and a lack of resources, have an enormous impact on folks we serve. By expanding education and outreach initiatives, we hope to make long-lasting, sustainable change.”

- **Missouri** advocate

“Intense funding challenges can’t match our escalating needs. Our outreach and education offerings have diminished, and our systems-change work has nearly halted. These reductions, impacting numerous lives, arise from continued federal and state funding inadequacies.”

- **Minnesota** advocate

able to facilitate the safe exit of a survivor from their abusive home, place them in a hotel, and extend our support through financial assistance and the services of a dedicated advocate. This successful transition is a testament to the power of collaboration and the positive impact we can make when we unite our efforts.”

Forging Community Connections and Expanding Knowledge

On September 6, 2023: Advocates provided 629 educational sessions and trainings to 15,555 members of the public in order to expand awareness, increase knowledge about available resources, and build community support for victims and survivors.

An advocate in Tennessee shared: “Current Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding limitations do not permit us to engage in prevention activities. Prevention is a fundamental component of breaking the cycle of violence and fostering safer communities. By addressing challenges and ensuring stable, sufficient funding, we would be able to not only respond to survivors’ immediate needs, but invest in proactive measures to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.”

Abusers’ Access to Firearms Continues to Endanger Victims

Domestic violence and firearms are a lethal combination. When a male abuser has access to a firearm, the risk that he will choose to shoot and kill a female partner increases by 1,000%.³ Nationwide, an average of three women are killed by a current or former partner every day⁴ and more than half of women murdered by men are killed with firearms.⁵

Federal law prohibits people under domestic violence civil protective orders from owning firearms. However, in February 2023, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit found this prohibition unconstitutional in *United States v. Rahimi*.

The Supreme Court of the United States is reviewing the dangerous and misguided *Rahimi* decision, and a ruling is expected this summer. In August 2023, NNEDV and the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence spearheaded⁶ an amicus brief signed by nearly 60 organizations urging the Court to support survivors and overturn the Fifth Circuit’s ruling in *Rahimi*.

A North Carolina advocate shared this story: “North Carolina is on pace for a record-setting year for domestic violence homicides. The potential implications of *Rahimi* are terrifying. We must limit access to firearms for domestic violence perpetrators.”

³ Spencer, CM, Stith, SM. [Risk Factors for Male Perpetration and Female Victimization of Intimate Partner Homicide: A Meta-Analysis](#). Trauma Violence Abuse. 2020 Jul; 21(3): 527-540.

⁴ Shannan Catalano, Ph.D. (2013). [Intimate Partner Violence: Attributes of Victimization, 1993-2011](#). U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁵ Violence Policy Center (2023). [When Men Murder Women: A Review of 25 Years of Female Homicide Victimization in the United States](#).

⁶ National Network to End Domestic Violence (2023). [“Domestic Violence Advocacy Organizations File Amicus Brief in U.S. v. Rahimi.”](#)

✘ REAL STORIES

“After the community shelter was shut down during COVID-19, we were the only organization left to provide emergency shelter. The outcry for help grew, but the funds were at an all-time low. While our community supported us with personal protective equipment, staff was burnt out and in fear.” - **Guam advocate**

“A survivor called asking for emergency shelter, but we had to turn her away because we don’t have the funding for shelter capabilities or staff. We tried to help her as best we could, but she was sobbing and scared for her safety.” - **Vermont advocate**

“It’s a challenge for our organization when we are faced with barriers and a lack of resources to meet the needs in our communities. Our staff are being underpaid for their hard work and dedication.” - **U.S. Virgin Islands advocate**



“One client’s soon-to-be ex-partner has continuously harassed and abused her through the court system. She doesn’t have an attorney, but she told me that she was thankful for me because I’m here for her and she knows she’s not alone. She has worked hard to get a good job and a nice house, and she is starting school in the fall. I am proud of her forward movement, and so is she.” - **Montana advocate**

“One survivor received good news in court after the abuser stopped following an order of protection, stalked her, and tried to remove their children from school. This was a major success for her and a lot of effort on the part of shelter staff.” - **Northern Mariana Islands advocate**

“Our funding has been impacted to a great extent throughout the last several years. Overall client need has increased significantly, but funding has not. Costs continue to increase, and grants do not allow for inflation, salary or benefit increases, or attempts to address gaps in services for special populations.” - **Kansas advocate**

“Victim service agencies are significantly dependent on Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds. Efforts to increase funding would help all agencies effectively provide valuable services to survivors. Any efforts to address diminishing VOCA funds would provide the necessary resources.” - **Mississippi advocate**



“One survivor shared: ‘It was a breath of fresh air to finally have someone listen, respect me, and keep me and my children safe. **This place has become a light at the end of my tunnel, and it has given me the tools to rebuild my life and be confident in my newfound independence.** Thank you for going beyond in all you do.’”

- OKLAHOMA
ADVOCATE



DEVASTATING UNMET NEEDS



REAL STORIES

“We have seen a 25% increase in people served since 2021. Temporary crisis funding from private donors and the federal government supported this spike, but that funding is now gone, and the increased need remains.”

- Wyoming advocate

“We have closed our emergency shelter. I am very concerned that, if the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is not replenished, our program, along with so many programs across the nation, will be in jeopardy.”

- Indiana advocate

Insufficient Resources Lead to Devastating Unmet Needs

Domestic violence programs are lifelines for survivors, and no program should ever have to turn away someone in need. However, many programs struggle to maintain stable funding, forcing them to reduce services, lay off staff, and deny desperately needed services to survivors and their children.

Several factors are impacting local programs’ ability to fund their services and serve survivors. In addition to rising costs, programs are facing actual and potential cuts that threaten their ability to remain open. The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) is a key federal funding source for domestic violence shelters and services. VOCA grants are facing continued instability and catastrophic cuts. Reduction in VOCA funds is forcing domestic violence programs to lay off staff, reduce services, and serve fewer survivors. These cuts are impacting communities because, just as COVID relief funds are running out, costs continue to outpace funding, and survivors’ needs continue to escalate.

A Nebraska advocate shared: “We incurred a 42% cut to our Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, which will siphon over \$100,000 annually from our budget. These cuts occur amid economic difficulties, limited housing, and a need for longer shelter stays, which we can no longer confidently provide. Funding challenges will continue to drive tough decisions about who, how, and when we can help.”

Unanswered Requests for Help

On September 6, 2023: Tragically, programs did not have the resources to meet 13,335 requests for services.

Table 4: Unmet Requests on 9/6/23	Emergency Shelter (33%)	Transitional or Other Housing (18%)	Hotel/Motel (2%)	Non-Residential Supportive Services (47%)	Total
Adults	2,600	1,244	180	4,685	8,709
Children	1,849	1,164	106	1,507	4,626
Total	4,449	2,408	286	6,192	13,335

Safe Housing is Difficult for Survivors to Obtain

Having a safe place to live is key to many survivors’ ability to leave abusers, obtain or maintain employment, enroll their children in school, and create a stable life. However, a stark lack of affordable housing across the country means that advocates often can’t help survivors meet this basic need.

On September 6, 2023, as in previous years, the majority of survivors’ unmet requests (54%) were for emergency shelter, hotels, motels, transitional housing, and other housing. These 7,143 unmet requests mean that survivors and their children were left without a safe place to stay in order to escape abuse.

An Alaska advocate shared: “Victims stay at the shelter longer than they want because there is no available housing. The wait for available apartments is at least nine to twelve months, sometimes longer. Some victims opt to go back to abusers and the violence continues. This could have been prevented if only they had an apartment where they could regain their life.”

Without safe, affordable housing, many survivors stay in shelters, hotels, or motels for more time than they would like, which can delay their recovery and prevent shelters from offering space to others. While many programs offer transitional housing, short-term rental assistance, and other options to bridge gaps, these in-demand programs are often at capacity and unable to accommodate all survivors.

Advocates work hard to connect survivors with housing, even when few or no resources are available. In Colorado, an advocate reported: “The majority of people we serve live at or below the federal poverty level, and they often must choose between returning to abusers or becoming homeless. Our services are lifelines to those in crisis. Adequate funding is critical to the success of our programs and the people we serve.”

Even when survivors secure housing, they often continue to rely on services from programs. An advocate in South Carolina shared: “One survivor said that, without the wraparound resources we offer, she would not have been able to overcome the financial and emotional impact of violence. She contacted our agency on a ‘leap of faith’ and told us: ‘I immediately felt a different kind of relief and peace. You assist in ways specific to domestic violence that others cannot. You literally save lives.’”

Loss of Housing Services

Hundreds of programs reported reducing or eliminating housing services due to staffing or funding in the past 12 months.

Table 5: Housing Services Reduced or Eliminated due to Staffing/Funding in Past 12 Months	# of Programs Reducing or Eliminating
Hotel/Motel Stay	172
Transitional or Other Housing (run by DV program)	87
Emergency Shelter	74

Staffing Challenges Exacerbate Unmet Needs

Most domestic violence programs depend on local, state, territorial, and federal government grants, along with fluctuating individual and corporate donations, to keep their doors open. Limited and unpredictable budgets often mean that programs can’t provide staff with competitive wages and

benefits, leading to high turnover in a field that is already prone to burnout and vicarious trauma.

An advocate in Louisiana reported: “More funds are needed to help address low advocate salaries. Many staff work in this area because they are passionate about the movement, but they are rarely compensated at adequate rates. When additional funds are allotted, they are unable to go toward salary increases because we have to meet basic operational needs and keep our doors open.”

Lack of Legal Services is a Significant Barrier

Escaping abuse often comes with lengthy, complex, and expensive legal proceedings, like filing for divorce or custody, obtaining protective orders, and pressing criminal charges. These are especially taxing when survivors can’t afford legal help and must represent themselves in court.

Many abusers choose to manipulate the legal system to further harm victims, and they often have more funds and resources at their disposal. When local programs can provide survivors with legal representation and legal advocacy, it means survivors don’t have to face their abusers in court alone and can pursue the justice they deserve. Unfortunately, hiring and maintaining legal staff is costly, and these positions may be cut when programs face funding shortages.

An Ohio advocate shared: “One survivor called us frantically because her abuser had filed for joint custody of their children. She requested an attorney to assist her with custody and her ongoing divorce, but we do not have any of these resources in our county. She is left to navigate court on her own.”

Loss of Legal Services

Dozens of programs reported reducing or eliminating legal representation by an attorney, court accompaniment, and/or legal advocacy due to staffing or funding in the past 12 months.

Table 6: Legal Services Reduced or Eliminated due to Staffing/Funding in Past 12 Months	# of Programs Reducing or Eliminating
Legal Representation by an Attorney	91
Court Accompaniment or Legal Advocacy	65



“A client told us: ‘It was overwhelming to ask for help, but I am so glad I did. The person on the helpline was kind and compassionate and walked me through my options. At the safehouse, I found shelter and got my first apartment and a job. I can never thank you enough for believing in me, even when I didn’t believe in myself.’”

- MARYLAND
ADVOCATE

✂ From a Maine advocate: “A woman in our supportive housing units needed surgery, but she had no childcare, the bus service has limited routes and hours, and taxis are sporadic in our rural community. We had no resources to assist her. She didn’t have the surgery.”

Lack of Transportation May Further Victimize

Having access to safe and affordable transportation—like personal vehicles, public transit, rideshare services, and transportation provided by local programs—can help survivors more easily access services and appointments, hold down a job, and meet their basic needs. For survivors who want to move away from an abuser or move closer to supportive family and friends, being able to access a bus, train, or plane ticket can be the difference between relocating safely or not.

A number of factors can complicate transportation access, including abusers limiting access to shared vehicles, rural areas lacking public transit and rideshare options, and programs not having enough staff or funding to provide these services. Transportation can be expensive and is often reported by local programs as one of the most-frequently reduced or eliminated services in the 12 months prior to the survey day each year.

A Texas advocate shared: “Because we had general assistance funding, we were able to purchase new tires for a client’s vehicle so she and her children could safely relocate out of the state. The joy and relief that surrounded her was palpable. If we had not had that funding, this story could have ended much differently. The ability to help her break free from her abuser was incredible.”

Loss of Transportation Services

126 programs reported reducing or eliminating transportation services due to staffing or funding in the past 12 months.

Table 7: Transportation Services Reduced or Eliminated due to Staffing/Funding in Past 12 Months	# of Programs Reducing or Eliminating
Transportation	126

Lack of Childcare Hampers Survivors’ Stability

Having safe, dependable childcare is a necessity for any working parent. For domestic violence survivors who are parenting by themselves after escaping

abuse, having childcare is especially vital to their ability to gain and maintain employment, further their education, and meet with service providers. When programs don’t have the funding or staff to provide childcare, survivors’ paths to healing and stability can be compromised.

The cost of childcare across the country creates additional complications for both survivors and programs. Many survivors have limited economic means as a result of the abuse they’ve experienced, and they can be trapped in a vicious cycle where they need childcare in order to work, but also need to work in order to afford childcare. This leaves many survivors and their families in poverty, which makes it even harder to heal after abuse.

A North Dakota advocate shared: “Many women in our shelter have children under school age, and it is next to impossible for them to work because daycares are full. They can’t receive childcare assistance until they have a job, but they are unable to go to job interviews without someone to watch their children. It’s one roadblock after another.”

Loss of Childcare Services

90 programs reported reducing or eliminating childcare or daycare due to staffing or funding in the past 12 months.

Table 8: Childcare/Daycare Services Reduced or Eliminated due to Staffing/Funding in Past 12 Months	# of Programs Reducing or Eliminating
Childcare/Daycare	90

Lack of Therapy Services Hurts Survivors

Domestic violence is not limited to physical abuse. Many abusers choose to tear down a partner’s self-esteem in order to keep power and control over them, even if they never raise a hand against them. The mental impacts of abuse can be devastating, even long after the relationship itself has ended. For children experiencing or witnessing violence, the secondary trauma can follow them long into adulthood and perpetuate cycles of violence.

✂ From a New York advocate: “We had an appointment with a survivor whose abuser had severely injured her. She shared that she felt heard and held by every staff member she spoke to, and that this was the first time in months where she could speak freely and feel safe from her abuser’s reach.”

Advocates at local programs understand the emotional challenges survivors face as they work to piece their lives back together and rebuild their sense of self. Being able to provide professional counseling and therapy can equip survivors with essential tools and coping strategies to overcome the impacts of trauma. Unfortunately, when programs are forced to cut these staff positions, or unable to pay competitive wages in order to hire counselors and therapists, survivors suffer.

A New Jersey advocate shared: “Survivors are coming to us with greater mental health needs, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Many do not have ways to obtain affordable medications or treatment. The lack of resources, as well as the financial obstacles to access services, create huge barriers for our clients.”

Loss of Therapy Services

Many programs reported reducing or eliminating therapy or counseling for adults and/or children due to staffing or funding in the past 12 months.

Table 9: Therapy Services Reduced or Eliminated due to Staffing/Funding in Past 12 Months	# of Programs Reducing or Eliminating
Therapy/Counseling for Adults	88
Therapy/Counseling for Children or Youth	83

Reduction or Elimination of Essential Support

Altogether, hundreds of programs reduced or eliminated critical non-residential supportive services in the past 12 months due to staffing or funding limitations. Of the 1,626 participating programs, 29% reported reducing or eliminating at least one service.

Table 10: Top Non-Residential Supportive Services Reduced or Eliminated due to Staffing/Funding in Past 12 Months	# of Programs Reducing or Eliminating
Transportation	126
Legal Representation by an Attorney	91
Childcare/Daycare	90
Therapy/Counseling for Adults	88
Direct Cash Assistance	86
Therapy/Counseling for Children or Youth	83
Children’s Support or Advocacy	81
Prevention and/or Educational Programs	77
Court Accompaniment or Legal Advocacy	65
Bilingual Advocacy	53
Matched Savings Programs and/or Microloans	51
Support/Advocacy to Teen/Young Adult Victims of Dating Abuse	51

Limited Resources and Services Further Marginalize Underserved Victims

While domestic violence survivors come from all walks of life, survivors experiencing systemic barriers face additional challenges to being believed and accessing resources. Many systems that survivors interact with during, and after, abuse can be inaccessible, unaffordable, and re-traumatizing.

Survivors of color may face racism and police brutality if they interact with the criminal legal system. LGBTQ+ survivors (particularly transgender survivors) may not have access to affirming or respectful advocacy. Undocumented survivors may fear reaching out for help if an abuser threatens them with deportation. Survivors with disabilities may not have accessible programs in their area. Older survivors may have caretakers who prevent them from accessing services, and minor survivors may have parents who do the same. Survivors using substances may worry that they will be judged or arrested instead of helped. Systematic barriers compound the experience of abuse and hinder safety and recovery.

Many local programs and advocates understand, and work to address, challenges faced by marginalized survivors. An advocate from Washington shared: “Participants regularly reflect to us how meaningful it is to have the support of a queer and/or trans advocate at our organization. They value not needing to define or correct language, or explain how systemic oppression impacts them. Our support keeps survivors in our community alive, housed, and fed, and creates further space for envisioning a life beyond survival.”

However, in the face of budget constraints, services for marginalized survivors are often reduced or eliminated entirely, putting survivors at a disadvantage as they are forced to navigate complicated systems on their own.

An advocate from Oregon said: “Our linguistically and culturally specific organization for the Deaf community was not able to continue our Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. This cut will severely harm the people we serve. There is no other place they can get direct services they need in their native language.”

Culturally specific services, which are created and provided “by and for” communities of color, are essential to help advocates meet all survivors’ needs. Federal policy reforms addressing systemic discrimination, along with increased funding for culturally specific services, can help mitigate challenges in marginalized communities and connect these survivors with resources they need.

Table 11: Services Provided for Marginalized Survivors	% of Programs Providing Service on 9/6/23	% of Programs Offering Service throughout Past 12 Months	% of Programs Reducing or Eliminating Service due to Staffing/Funding in Past 12 Months
Bilingual Advocacy	37%	65%	3%
Support/Advocacy Related to Substance Use	26%	74%	2%
Support/Advocacy to Older/Elder Victims of Abuse	26%	78%	2%
Support/Advocacy to LGBTQ+ Victims of Abuse	25%	82%	1%
Support/Advocacy to Teen/Young Adult Victims of Dating Abuse	22%	77%	3%
Support/Advocacy Related to Immigration	21%	70%	2%
Support/Advocacy Related to Disability Issues	19%	65%	1%
Culturally Specific Services to Latino/Latina/Latinx Survivors	18%	39%	2%
Support/Advocacy to Victims of Trafficking	17%	70%	2%
Culturally Specific Services to Immigrant Survivors	16%	37%	2%
Third-Party Translation/Interpretation Services	16%	63%	2%
Culturally Specific Services to Black/African American Survivors	12%	30%	2%
Culturally Specific Services to Asian/Pacific Islander Survivors	6%	23%	2%
Culturally Specific Services to Native American Survivors	5%	23%	2%

✘ From a Washington, DC advocate: “Culturally specific organizations are at the forefront of ensuring that survivors receive the necessary support to regain control of their lives. We create programs that genuinely reflect these needs and are dedicated to providing unwavering support. Additional resources will allow us to expand services, reach more survivors, and provide higher-quality care.”



“The fact that there is such an enormous backlog of cases in the immigration system means we have to help clients for much longer and cannot take on as many new clients without hiring more attorneys. **Victims of Crime Act (VAWA) and U visa wait times have more than tripled over the past few years.**”

- VIRGINIA
ADVOCATE

SPOTLIGHT ON IMMIGRATION

Immigrant Victims Continue to Face Barriers

While many domestic violence victims face a variety of challenges in accessing support and resources, these are often exacerbated for immigrant victims.

Abusers often exploit victims’ immigration status to maintain power and control and to keep victims silent. Immigrant victims are frequently threatened with deportation by their abusers and isolated from support networks, increasing their reluctance and ability to seek help from authorities or programs.

Additional barriers, like language and cultural norms, can make it challenging for immigrant victims to understand their rights and find services that meet their needs. An ever-shifting political landscape and proliferating hostile anti-immigration policies make it harder for immigrants to seek safety, and they have a chilling effect on immigrant survivors’ outreach to programs.

In the 12 months prior to the survey day, likely due to diminished resources, 32 programs reported reducing or eliminating support or advocacy related to immigration, and 36 programs reported reducing culturally specific services to immigrant survivors. This means fewer survivors getting help filing Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petitions, applying for U visas, and pursuing other means

of safety. When programs don’t have funding or resources to support these survivors, they often remain trapped, afraid, and in danger.

“For undocumented survivors, finding affordable housing is especially difficult, since they are not eligible for government-subsidized housing or Section 8 vouchers. Housing is one of the greatest challenges that we encounter and the reason why many survivors stay or go back.” - California advocate

“An immigrant client’s abuser left her homeless and refused to sign her papers. She lived in constant fear due to her lack of documentation, which made it difficult for her to secure employment and financial stability. We stepped in to secure an apartment and other essential resources, and this newfound security has empowered her to regain control over her life.” - Pennsylvania advocate

“As a culturally specific agency, we have witnessed over and over the need for more funding, especially legal funding. Most of our clients are immigrant and/or refugee women with small children who have not only been abused physically and verbally but whose immigration status has been used to manipulate, isolate, and control them.” - Wisconsin advocate

REAL STORIES

“We referred a client to legal aid and accompanied her through ongoing civil and criminal legal matters. She now has a long-term protective order in place, and she is so happy to feel a new sense of freedom that she hasn’t had in about a decade. She is ready for a fresh start.” - **West Virginia advocate**

“A client met with her counselor after moving into her own apartment yesterday. She expressed that it was the first time in more than two years that she was able to fall asleep knowing she was safe, in her own bed, with clean sheets. She said she could not have done it without our agency and the services she received.” - **Delaware advocate**



“We have marginalized communities that face significant challenges, including Samoans from the independent island of Samoa. They have limited jobs and access to services due to their immigration status, and they report higher incidences of domestic violence.” - **American Samoa advocate**

“We are in a rural area where resources are limited, and COVID-19 increased the lack of resources for our small community and made it more difficult for clients to meet their needs. Small communities need additional support, not funding cuts.” - **New Mexico advocate**

“La situación de la pandemia del COVID-19 ha aumentado la violencia de género en la población de mujeres inmigrantes y la reducción de fondos ha afectado los servicios a las mismas.” - **Puerto Rico advocate**

“The majority of our unmet needs are from victims needing shelter to flee abuse. Many of them only have a finite time to make a call and escape. We do everything we can, but every day, we turn away victims due to a lack of resources.” - **Arizona advocate**

“One of the most common challenges for survivors is the lack of shelter availability. More often than not, our staff are unable to secure immediate shelter in times of crisis, leaving individuals in unsafe situations. In trend with the national housing crisis, survivors are also deeply impacted by the lack of safe, affordable housing in our area.” - **Rhode Island advocate**

“Federal funds continue to dwindle and programs are asked to do more with much less. People die when we aren’t available. Congress must stabilize funding, ensure adequate staffing, and prioritize survivors’ lives if we are ever to build strong communities and prevent violence.” - **Kentucky advocate**



“One client had escaped her abusive husband and her beloved cat needed medical attention. She had not been allowed to access funds to provide vet care. We were able to schedule a veterinary appointment the same day, and **she was relieved to know her cat would be healthy as they started their new lives together, free from violence.**”

- GEORGIA
ADVOCATE





REAL STORIES

“Due to a lack of funding, we are unable to address some of our clients’ needs, and this makes it extremely difficult for them to overcome barriers. This can cause stagnation, burnout, and survivors returning to their abusers because it is simply easier for them.”
- **Alabama** advocate

“We need additional emergency shelter beds, more clinical services for mental health and substance use, and increased advocacy dollars. There will be no healing for survivors if basic needs aren’t met.”
- **Nevada** advocate

Ending Abuse Requires Federal Investments

Domestic violence programs help our country move toward a future where everyone can live safely and access supportive resources and services. We cannot, however, create this future without sufficient funding for these programs.

Since the 17th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report was published in March 2023, Congress and the Biden-Harris Administration have taken several important steps to help survivors, thanks in part to the advocacy of NNEDV, our 56 state and territorial member coalitions against domestic violence, and the thousands of local programs and advocates they represent. A few highlights include:

- ★ **Launching the groundbreaking, first-ever National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence: Strategies for Action**, a coordinated, comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to preventing and addressing sexual violence, intimate partner violence, stalking, and other forms of gender-based violence.
- ★ **Proposing sustained or increased funding** in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), and related programs for federal Fiscal Year 2024.
- ★ **Reintroducing the Family Violence Prevention and Services Improvement Act**, which would update the long-standing program with key improvements.

To make additional strides toward a world where domestic violence no longer exists, we urge Congress and the Administration to:

- ★ **Restore steady funding for Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants**, crucial funding sources for domestic violence programs.
- ★ **Invest in VAWA, FVPSA, and domestic violence housing and related funding** in the federal Fiscal Year 2024 funding process.
- ★ **Robustly implement the U.S. National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence** across all federal agencies, with stakeholder input.
- ★ **Advance survivor-centered legislation and Administration policies** that:
 - Create access to safe, affordable housing;
 - Promote economic justice and financial security;
 - Advance reproductive justice and health care;
 - Reduce domestic violence homicides and community violence; and
 - Protect immigrant survivors of violence.

Urge Congress to support these and other necessary measures: [NNEDV.org/TakeAction](https://nnedv.org/TakeAction)

If someone tells you that they have experienced abuse, listen without judgment, support them, and encourage them to seek services if it is safe for them to do so: [NNEDV.org/GetHelp](https://nnedv.org/GetHelp)

SERVICES PROVIDED

Table 12: Services Provided by Local Programs	% of Programs Providing Service on 9/6/23	% of Programs Offering Service throughout Past 12 Months	# of Programs Reducing or Eliminating Service due to Staffing/Funding in Past 12 Months
Emergency Shelter	70%	79%	5%
Transportation	53%	89%	8%
Children's Support or Advocacy	52%	78%	5%
Court Accompaniment or Legal Advocacy	52%	87%	4%
Support/Advocacy Related to Housing/Landlord	52%	88%	4%
Support/Advocacy Related to Mental Health	46%	86%	2%
Support/Advocacy Related to Public Benefits/TANF/Welfare	42%	84%	2%
Therapy/Counseling for Adults	42%	66%	5%
Transitional or Other Housing (run by DV program)	39%	47%	5%
Bilingual Advocacy	37%	65%	3%
Support/Advocacy Related to Child Welfare/Protective Services	28%	79%	2%
Support/Advocacy Related to Substance Use	26%	74%	2%
Support/Advocacy to Older/Elder Victims of Abuse	26%	78%	2%
Therapy/Counseling for Children or Youth	26%	54%	5%
Prevention and/or Educational Programs	25%	77%	5%
Support/Advocacy to LGBTQ+ Victims of Abuse	25%	82%	1%
Hotel/Motel Stay	24%	67%	11%
Support/Advocacy Related to Health Care or Health Care Systems	23%	70%	1%
Support/Advocacy to Teen/Young Adult Victims of Dating Abuse	22%	77%	3%
Support/Advocacy Related to Immigration	21%	70%	2%
Financial Literacy/Budgeting	20%	67%	3%
Support/Advocacy Related to Technology Use	20%	67%	2%
Support/Advocacy Related to Disability Issues	19%	65%	1%
Childcare/Daycare	18%	44%	6%
Culturally Specific Services to Latino/Latina/Latinx Survivors	18%	39%	2%
Job Training/Employment Assistance	18%	56%	2%
Support/Advocacy to Victims of Trafficking	17%	70%	2%
Culturally Specific Services to Immigrant Survivors	16%	37%	2%
Third-Party Translation/Interpretation Services	16%	63%	2%
Legal Representation by an Attorney	14%	31%	6%
Culturally Specific Services to Black/African American Survivors	12%	30%	2%
Direct Cash Assistance	11%	31%	5%
Safe Exchange/Visitation	6%	21%	2%
Culturally Specific Services to Asian/Pacific Islander Survivors	6%	23%	2%
Support/Advocacy to Active Duty or Veteran Victims in U.S. Armed Forces	6%	49%	1%
Culturally Specific Services to Native American Survivors	5%	23%	2%
Alternatives to the Criminal Legal System (Transformative, Restorative Justice)	4%	21%	2%
HIV/AIDS Information and/or Support	3%	31%	1%
Onsite Medical Services	3%	12%	2%
Matched Savings Programs and/or Microloans	2%	9%	3%

SUMMARY DATA

State or Territory	Response Rate ⁷	Adults Served	Children Served	Total People Served	Service Requests Unmet	Hotline Contacts Received	People Educated	People Served in Shelter	People Served in Transitional Housing or Other Housing	People Served in Hotels or Motels	People Served in Non-Residential Supportive Services
AK	100%	304	178	482	29	138	31	281	101	13	87
AL	100%	387	262	649	32	161	536	242	220	0	187
AR	69%	232	167	399	91	120	2135	218	89	7	85
AS	100%	0	5	5	5	0	0	5	0	0	0
AZ	66%	485	390	875	109	155	114	365	143	7	360
CA	65%	2809	1545	4354	1180	1221	912	954	1364	97	1939
CO	74%	521	335	856	187	262	46	254	163	23	416
CT	100%	910	319	1229	107	457	62	249	158	79	743
DC	100%	453	303	756	35	199	129	48	522	7	179
DE	100%	79	77	156	31	29	33	58	43	10	45
FL	59%	1289	1023	2312	28	370	181	1066	973	0	273
GA	73%	1415	1211	2626	389	584	150	718	747	44	1117
GU	100%	26	32	58	4	17	0	33	0	0	25
HI	100%	318	263	581	20	110	6	145	220	0	216
IA	100%	484	280	764	89	641	60	317	206	20	221
ID	95%	380	270	650	565	220	29	157	199	37	257
IL	95%	2259	1056	3315	726	1025	619	707	955	88	1565
IN	100%	1192	771	1963	124	668	420	686	544	8	725
KS	91%	524	222	746	79	280	66	256	149	12	329
KY	100%	674	391	1065	115	214	187	426	294	14	331
LA	100%	464	450	914	221	314	214	203	451	5	255
MA	84%	1448	447	1895	463	455	111	351	344	55	1145
MD	100%	805	330	1135	299	227	67	228	307	20	580
ME	100%	338	152	490	25	107	28	75	142	20	253
MI	92%	1662	1257	2919	625	759	421	947	1036	36	900
MN	56%	1150	469	1619	164	503	127	473	164	16	966
MO	92%	1307	832	2139	696	546	65	828	643	68	600
MP	100%	16	15	31	0	3	0	17	14	0	0
MS	100%	192	116	308	60	121	89	125	84	2	97
MT	63%	199	155	354	38	152	50	150	138	4	62
NC	79%	697	377	1074	176	575	142	526	106	27	415

State or Territory	Response Rate ⁷	Adults Served	Children Served	Total People Served	Unmet Requests for Services	Hotline Contacts Received	People Educated	People Served in Shelter	People Served in Transitional or Other Housing	People Served in Hotels or Motels	People Served in Non-Residential Supportive Services
ND	100%	220	81	301	70	101	105	83	38	2	178
NE	86%	228	192	420	60	161	172	112	101	22	185
NH	100%	250	86	336	11	146	50	67	70	13	186
NJ	94%	865	590	1455	166	564	185	411	269	257	518
NM	82%	441	300	741	51	243	150	287	250	21	183
NV	94%	495	197	692	40	292	28	327	102	9	254
NY	92%	5756	3655	9411	1045	1573	1896	2401	2713	59	4238
OH	100%	1490	955	2445	404	658	207	792	549	44	1060
OK	69%	619	324	943	712	199	282	371	234	4	334
OR	63%	1088	849	1937	374	454	1294	218	749	53	917
PA	93%	2063	1039	3102	827	800	712	806	930	56	1310
PR	77%	198	248	446	7	108	212	72	128	0	246
RI	100%	316	84	400	63	107	21	78	69	10	243
SC	85%	225	140	365	95	105	58	105	67	20	173
SD	63%	137	119	256	6	89	263	194	21	2	39
TN	83%	759	364	1123	87	401	333	399	206	17	501
TX	86%	5167	2807	7974	1444	1758	843	2019	2010	46	3899
UT	93%	540	421	961	159	238	436	295	319	5	342
VA	72%	1096	690	1786	123	464	558	545	436	64	741
VI	100%	28	30	58	4	25	0	15	18	5	20
VT	92%	194	73	267	31	96	0	97	33	33	104
WA	82%	1387	931	2318	470	562	83	398	876	74	970
WI	82%	1262	643	1905	305	654	463	506	299	26	1074
WV	100%	323	113	436	12	130	61	135	116	3	182
WY	87%	98	80	178	57	108	113	62	26	1	89
TOTAL	83%	48,264	28,711	76,975	13,335	20,669	15,555	21,903	21,148	1,565	32,359

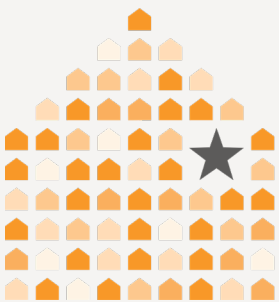
✘ From a New Hampshire advocate: “A survivor was fleeing a high-lethality situation and looking for shelter. Unfortunately, we were at capacity and could not meet this need. With a lack of programs and services readily available for survivors in need comes a lack of safety across our nation.”

⁷ The response rate refers to the percentage of identified primary purpose local domestic violence programs in the state or territory that participated in the 18th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Survey.



“One survivor wrote this letter to our staff: ‘Thank you for all that you have done for me and my child and for making us feel safe and welcome. I appreciate you always treating me like a person you were proud of. I have never had that in my life. Because you saw me that way, I started to see myself that way as well.’”

- UTAH ADVOCATE



NNEDV
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