***New York Must Transform Its Service Delivery System
to Be More Responsive to the Needs of DV Survivors and Their Families***

Domestic violence (DV) is impacting more New Yorkers than ever before. According to the annual DV Counts nationwide survey conducted by the National Network to End Domestic Violence, on just one day in New York in 2020, more than 8,300 victims of DV received services – 2,500 more victims than the year prior. More than half of these survivors were seeking non-residential assistance and services, including individual counseling, legal advocacy, and children’s support groups.

Yet most of the funding New York earmarks to support DV services is provided to service providers only when DV survivors are in shelter. This per diem reimbursement model diminishes the critical need DV survivors have for non-residential supports and assistance, which DV service providers are required to offer whether survivors are in shelter or not.

The pitfalls of the existing funding model have become painfully clear during the current COVID-19 Pandemic. Because fewer DV victims are seeking emergency shelter now, and because some shelter beds must remain open to comply with social distancing protocols, occupancy rates in many DV shelters have declined – in some cases as much as 50%. As the number of survivors in shelter declines, so too does the amount of per diem reimbursements the DV service provider receives. Several DV service providers have had to rely on short-term Pandemic stimulus relief grants, financial reserves or lines of credit to maintain the continuity of DV services.

**Other challenges of the current per diem reimbursement model include:**

* Requires DV service providers to place an inordinate amount of time chasing down payments from county Departments of Social Services, rather than providing direct care to survivors.
* Halts payments to DV agencies when local counties deny fiscal responsibility. In some cases, DV agencies have waited years to be reimbursed. DV service providers sometimes stop pursuing reimbursement as the increasing staff time involved would make the financial loss even worse than simply writing off the uncollectible ‘bad debt’ with the counties. This ‘bad debt’ can be tens of thousands of dollars per program per year.
* Makes it extremely difficult for smaller DV agencies with sporadic openings in shelter to estimate incoming revenue, wreaking havoc on operational budgets.
* External factors, such as the current COVID-19 Pandemic and recent efforts by federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials to identify undocumented individuals, impact the number of survivors that seek shelter, influencing the funding a DV service provider will receive.
* Local counties often deny reimbursements for minor technical issues, such as a survivor’s refusal to fill out paperwork, discrepancies with sign-in sheets or because a survivor’s shelter stay doesn’t meet the criteria for how New York defines a bed night.
* Does not permit a DV service provider to “hold a bed” for a survivor who has temporarily left shelter to travel out of the area (e.g., for court, a funeral, etc.) or for a child to visit another parent.
* The per diem rate set by OCFS for DV shelter is far below what other related services and programs in New York receive.

**For more information:**

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