

New York's Method for Funding DV Services must be Transformed to Ensure All DV Survivors Get the Help and Support They Need

New York's domestic violence programs are in an existential crisis. Several factors are occurring simultaneously to create this serious, unsustainable situation:

- **More than 90% of the funding New York State uses to support DV services comes from the federal government.** This includes funding under the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Title XX, and Solutions to End Homelessness Program (STEHP).
- These federal dollars flow to numerous state agencies for distribution to DV programs providing DV services to survivors – services such as emergency shelter, legal advocacy, help getting public assistance, information and referral services, group counseling, and more. Each state agency has its own contracting, reporting and data collection requirements, contracting cycles, and definitions for service units, service provision and the like. **This means that DV programs are investing significant resources on the administration of multiple contracts with the state, rather than on services for DV survivors.**
- New York State's contracts require DV programs to provide services first, submit payment vouchers in the subsequent fiscal quarter, and then wait several more months for reimbursement. These delays impact a DV program's ability to manage its operational costs and expenses. Several DV programs are currently in danger of missing payroll, seeking state waivers for reduced personnel levels, cutting programming and/or opening costly lines of credit to maintain operations. Some have, or are contemplating, furloughs or layoffs as they wait for reimbursements.
- DV programs are required to maintain and fully staff emergency shelter for 100% occupancy at all times, yet are only reimbursed for the number of survivors in shelter on any given night – causing a significant differential in their costs versus the reimbursement they receive. To make matters worse, the nightly per diem rate New York sets for shelter reimbursements is hundreds of dollars less than those for related services (e.g., group residences, group homes or boarding homes).
- DV programs remain in a staffing crisis with hundreds of vacancies across the state. This is largely because advocates and staff have historically been left out of salary increases and cost-of-living adjustments aimed at the nonprofit human services sector. Dozens of employees have left positions at DV agencies for better paying positions elsewhere. **Staff vacancies translate into a loss of services for DV victims.**
- Most concerning, the federal government has threatened to freeze and restrict multiple federal funding streams – including those that are used to support vulnerable individuals such as the undocumented, immigrants, and LGBTQ+ survivors. New York State law requires DV programs to provide emergency shelter and supportive services to all DV survivors. **If a freeze in federal funding were to occur for any period of time, this would jeopardize DV programs' ability to perform their mission and comply with New York State law.** This situation remains extremely tenuous for DV programs as the federal government continues its assessment of the availability and use of federal funding.

New York's domestic violence services have never been more at risk. And DV victims are paying the price.

On just one day in 2024, more than 1,700 requests for DV services could not be fulfilled because DV programs lacked sufficient resources and/or staffing – a 64% increase in unmet demand from the year before. New York has the highest demand for DV services in the country with more than 10,600 adults and children seeking help on any given day.

It is critical for the Governor and Legislature to act now to transform New York's DV service delivery model – moving away from its near total reliance on federal funding streams; ensuring DV services are sufficiently funded so all victims continue to receive survivor-centered, trauma-informed care; and ultimately ensuring the long-term continuity and sustainability of DV services across the state.

With a DV Services Transformation and Stabilization Program, New York could expand DV programs' capacity to support DV victims, **with a goal of significantly lowering the number of requests for DV services that cannot be fulfilled each year.**

Program funding would be used to support development of a more innovative, sustainable, trauma-informed and survivor-centered system, that, at a minimum:

- Relies primarily on state resources, rather than federal funding, to provide greater flexibility to local DV programs and the statewide DV coalition so they can best meet the evolving needs of DV survivors in their communities;
- Reduces the number of state agencies administering funding for DV services;
- Significantly streamlines the process for local DV programs and the statewide DV coalition to contract with the state for DV service provision and reduces DV programs' administrative costs in maintaining such contracts;
- Provides a majority of funding to DV programs via non-competitive grants that do not include match requirements, which often disproportionately impact rural, culturally specific and under-resources organizations;
- Removes the responsibility of county Departments of Social Services to contract with DV programs for residential and non-residential services;
- Permits DV programs to receive funding at the initiation of a contract and to receive subsequent payments in a timely manner; and,
- Supports DV programs' ability to be culturally responsive to their local community; and enhances the work of culturally specific programs created by and for specific unserved, underserved and inadequately served cultural communities.

Program funding also would be used for planning grants and to support the participation of local DV programs and the statewide DV coalition in system transformation efforts without disruption. Further, funding would be used to ensure local DV programs can continue their life-saving supports for all DV victims, in compliance with New York State law, even if federal funding is no longer available or if significant restrictions are placed on the use of federal funding.

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