

NYSCADV VIRTUAL BUDGET ADVOCACY DAY TALKING POINTS FOR LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS

On Needed Reforms for New York's Domestic Violence Service Delivery and Funding System:

New York State's domestic violence service delivery system is antiquated, having not been updated since it was established more than 30 years ago. As a result, survivors are not able to obtain the support and services they need and deserve. We urge New York State to abolish outdated policies to ensure that victims in need of shelter and other services are able to obtain assistance.

New York consistently has the highest demand for domestic violence services in the country. Yet, under New York's current service delivery and funding model, thousands of New York's survivors do not receive the services they need. In fact, according to the National Network to End Domestic Violence's annual survey, more than 1,900 requests for domestic violence services went unmet in New York one day last year. That's double the daily number of unmet requests the year before.

In 2020, the Governor and Legislature approved \$5 million for OCFS to conduct a pilot study to identify a more innovative approach to funding domestic violence services. Unfortunately, that pilot could not be implemented due to the Pandemic. We urge the Legislature to maintain these funds as a re-appropriation in the current budget so this pilot can be conducted this year.

On \$10 Million Emergency Fund to Reimburse DV Programs for Documented Losses During the Pandemic

New York's antiquated method for funding domestic violence services only reimburses programs for the actual "bed nights" survivors stay in shelter. Although we are required to maintain these facilities 24/7, keeping them staffed, stocked and ready for 100% occupancy, we only get reimbursed for the actual number of survivors in shelter any given night.

This presents numerous challenges for DV programs, even before the Pandemic. Now, however, many DV programs are receiving significantly less revenue because survivors don't want to be in shelter during the public health emergency. Occupancy rates in many shelters have declined as much as 55%, resulting in a corresponding decline in revenues. We estimate New York's domestic violence programs are losing approximately \$1 million a month. New York State must provide an influx of funding to domestic violence programs now to ensure services remain available to all who need them.

Increase TANF Funding for Non-Residential DV Services

[Describe non-residential services]

New York's annual Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant is approximately \$2.7 billion. New York State then matches the grant dollar for dollar. Despite this enormous pot of

federal funding, NYS spends less than 1% on “supportive” programs related to health, mental health, substance abuse, disability services, housing counseling, family support, and DV.

NYS does set aside \$3 million of its federal TANF block grant for non-residential DV services. Unfortunately, this set aside is at the same level today as it was when first proposed 20 years ago. If the funding was adjusted for inflation, it would now be set at \$4.58 million. It is critical for the Legislature to increase the funding for non-residential services to \$6 million.

Restore \$2,356,000 in the State Budget for domestic violence programs and legal services for domestic violence victims

[Describe legal advocacy services]

For several years, New York State has provided \$950,000 for these critical services. Last year, the appropriation was reduced to \$770,000 and this year, the Governor is proposing to eliminate it. We are asking the Legislature to restore this appropriation at its 2019-2020 level of \$950,000.

In addition, the Governor is proposing to eliminate \$1,406,000 earmarked for domestic violence programs and legal services for victims in the DCJS Aid to Localities budget. For several years, the Legislature has restored this funding in the final, approved budget. We are asking the Legislature to again restore this critical funding for domestic violence programs and legal services for victims.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: The Governor is proposing to expand the mission of the state Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. What are your thoughts about the proposal?

A: Currently, NYS relies on federal funding to support DV services. Five state agencies are tasked with administering these dollars, each with different grant cycles, applications, reporting and oversight requirements. We’ve been asking NYS to simplify the administration of this funding and cut the red tape, making it easier for DV programs to comply with the requirements. To the extent the Governor’s proposal will do that, we support it.

We have some questions about the terminology used in the proposal and other elements of the proposal. DV advocates look forward to working with the Governor’s Office and OPDV to discuss the proposal in greater detail.

Q: The Governor is proposing to create a new misdemeanor crime of domestic violence. What are your thoughts about the proposal?

A: The Governor’s goal is to close a loophole in state law that prevents DV offenders from getting entered into the federal National Instant Criminal Background Check System (or NICS database.) Once an offender is entered into the NICS system, they are prevented from purchasing or possessing firearms. We wholeheartedly support the goal of keeping guns out of the hands of DV offenders. But we think it is possible to do that without

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creating a DV-specific crime in NY. DV advocates look forward to working with the Governor's Office and OPDV to discuss the proposal in greater detail.

Q: The Governor is proposing to allow judges, when issuing Orders of Protection, the discretion to make DV offenders cover the costs of a victim's housing or relocation costs, in addition to the costs of any damage an offender causes to a victim's home. What are your thoughts about the proposal?

A: We know that financial abuse is a common tactic used by abusers to gain power and control over their victim. Victims often do not have access to the household finances, a reason many victims stay with their abusers. This is an important issue and we appreciate the Governor's efforts to shine a light on it. DV advocates are continuing to evaluate this specific proposal and I can get back to you with more information shortly.

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